

The movements of English Chick E21251 in 2003

24 September 2003

At 0342GMT this bird was 40 kilometres SE of Le Mans in France, presumably roosting in the Forêt de Berce as four hours later there was a signal from the same area. It clearly flew across the English Channel and on into France on 23rd September, the same day as its sibling.

25 September 2003

At 2313GMT on 25th September, it was in wooded country just south of Dax, in south-western France after flying 474 kilometres in two days - an average of 238 kilometres per day. It is now very close to the western end of the Pyrenees.

27 September 2003

A poor quality signal suggested the bird was just over the Pyrenees in Navarra, northern Spain; just 76 kilometres further south in two days but the weather has been cloudy, with rain forecast.

29 September 2003

A series of brief signals, with none of any accuracy, suggests it was in deep wooded valleys. Another poor quality signal at 0400GMT on 1st October and also on 2nd was from an area about 30 kilometres north of Zaragoza.

04 October 2003

A poor quality signal near Cartagena on the SE coast of Spain showed that the bird had reached the Mediterranean and was heading for Africa. A day later the younger chick was only about 50 kilometres behind its older sibling.

06 October 2003

At 0833am, the bird was in the vicinity of Sidi Bel Abbas, Algeria, just inland of the North African coast. This is due south of Cartagena and suggests that the bird flew 200 kilometres straight across the Mediterranean sea; the distance from the 4th October position is 222 kilometres. Young honey buzzards are known to fly across open water more than the adults which tend to go to the narrower crossing at the Straits of Gibraltar.

08 October 2003

Early morning it was heading into the mountains north-west of Tendirra in Morocco, having covered nearly 300 kilometres from Sid Bel Abbas.

09 October 2003

By 2256GMT the bird was approaching the Erg Er Raoul Plateau in Algeria. It had flown 405 kms in two days and was well north east of Tabelbala.

11 October 2003

By the evening, it was over sand deserts NE of Bordj Fly Ste Marie.

13 -23 October 2003

This morning, poor quality signals came in for a position in the Sahara Desert south east of Chegga, in Mauritania. This is 411 kilometres from its position on 11th so it is migrating steadily over the deserts in fresh easterly winds. Unfortunately, the only signal received during the early hours of the 15th was poor quality and no position was received. The bird was probably roosting out of direct radio view of the satellite. Transmissions on 17th and 22nd were also of poor quality.

Today, I have looked at the latest signals in detail, and conclude from the activity sensor that the young honey buzzard is alive but the battery strength is falling and we may not receive any more accurate transmissions from this radio. No more news from radio which has stopped transmitting.

Out of the blue news about E21251

We heard no more until the British Trust for Ornithology received the following details: found freshly dead on a railway line on 21 August 2007 at Auffay in Seine-Maritime in northern France. This was four years, two weeks after it was ringed; so it did not die in the desert but returned successfully on several migrations to Europe, and may have even started breeding. But we do not know if it was breeding in southern England or was it in northern France. We will never know but this young honey buzzard, which crossed the middle of the deserts on its first migration, lived for over four years.