

# **The movements of adult male 21253 in 2002**

## **05 September 2002: Migration starts**

The male bird was still around the nest area at 1108 am on 5th September; by which time its young had been flying for nearly two weeks. By 1922 pm it had flown 140 kilometres to the south-east and was presumably roosting in woodland, about 5 kilometres north-west of the city of Dundee.

## **06 September 2002**

He crossed the Tay estuary and the Firth of Forth on a similar heading and reached the Scottish Borders, near Yetholm, by 1856 pm. This was a further daily flight of 115 kilometres.

## **08 September 2002**

He was near Riding Mill, west of Newcastle at 0957 am and by 1948 he had reached an area about 10 kilometres north of Harrogate, where he roosted overnight. The male has covered 435 kilometres in 4 days and is at present heading to the east of south towards a possible short sea crossing into France.

## **10 September 2002**

A poor quality signal was received from near Snaith, north of Doncaster, at 1056am. By 1903 pm the male was 12 kilometres NNW of Oxford, having covered at least 210 kilometres during the day.

## **12 September 2002**

Received two rather poor definition signals. The first was at 1004 am and was near Fougères, north east of Rennes. The bird must have crossed the English Channel yesterday. It is most likely to have flown out from the Isle of Wight to the Cherbourg peninsula. By 2200 today, after dark, the male was east of La Rochelle, possibly roosting in the Forêt de Benon. It travelled at least 250 kilometres during the day and the journey distance since leaving its nests is now

about 1300 kilometres. Today's heading suggested the bird is heading for the western end of the Pyrenees. Its direct journey through the UK and into France is a clear sign of an experienced adult travelling a well known journey (in contrast to last year's youngsters).

### **14 September 2002**

The first signal at 0921 local time was west of Dax with the male travelling over the forests of the Landes; he was clearly heading for the western end of the Pyrenees. The next signal (10 hours later) was very accurate (to within 150 metres accuracy) and was near Ausejo, 25 kilometres ESE of Logrono in La Rioja, Spain. He had travelled 190 kilometres. Once he had crossed the Pyrenees he appears to be heading directly for the Straits of Gibraltar.

While we have enjoyed summer like weather in Scotland, low pressure off Portugal brought rain and strong winds to Spain. In consequence, the male honey buzzard had only travelled 260 kilometres in two days, keeping to a southerly route - east of Madrid. The lack of good signals also suggested he was low down roosting in woodland some of the time.

### **18 September 2002**

In the morning the male was along the west side of the Sierra de Segurra and probably by now in company with other honey buzzards heading towards Africa. About 120 kms had been covered by evening and the bird had now changed direction to the SW and on towards the Straits of Gibraltar.

### **20 September 2002**

By this evening, the bird had travelled to an area NW of Khenifra in Morocco. This was in the middle Atlas mountains and about 350 kilometres south of the Straits of Gibraltar. It is not known if our male travelled through Gibraltar or went straight across the sea. I emailed John Cortes (Gibraltar Ornithological and Natural History Society) and he replied that on the 19th and 20th the conditions at the Rock were calm and only small numbers of honey buzzards were seen. He thought they could be crossing to the west from Spain or even taking the longer eastern passage over the sea. He also added that they had had an excellent autumn migration with nearly 30,000 honey buzzards being counted migrating over the Rock, with the peak days being 5092 on 3rd September and 4332 on

6th. These would be mainly adult birds from western and middle Europe and Scandinavia.

### **22 September 2002**

Both signals today were from the same location as on the 20th, possibly a little bit to the north-west. The weather map shows a band of cloud over the area where the honey buzzard is located, with north east winds, so presumably he is waiting for clear skies before continuing on into Africa.

### **24 September 2002**

During the night of 23rd-24th, the male honey buzzard was south of the Jebel Sarho mountains and well south of the High Atlas, about 250 kilometres south of his previous position. On 24th, he was actively migrating SSW and by evening had arrived near Khorb el Ethel, in the western deserts of Algeria. A day journey of about 300 kilometres shows that he is moving steadily towards the wintering range.

### **26 September 2002**

The male was migrating over the Sahara Desert in Algeria and approaching the border with Mali. He is clearly heading straight across the deserts and heading for the equatorial forests. Today the weather is clear over the area where he is travelling and the wind is light to fresh north-easterly.

### **28 September 2002**

He had a very good day's migration today, covering nearly 400 kilometres to the SSW into Mali. He had left the main deserts and was crossing the Sahel, with the larger river systems and woodlands in front of him. This was his 23rd day on migration.

### **30 September 2002**

At 0290am the male was roosting near Dialakoro, just south of Bamako - the capital of Mali. He had covered 283 kilometres since the last signal. His migration heading was more to the south-east as he crossed south over the Niger River. Winds are light and there are thunderstorms to the east. He appears now to be heading for the Ivory Coast and his position today is 5032 kms from Inverness. By 2308pm he was near the river Bagoé, near Ouola, in southern Mali after migrating SE for 165 kilometres during the day.

### **02 October 2002**

The male honey buzzard is in the tropical forests of Ghana. During the night of 1st/2nd October he was near Ouo in Burkina Faso. The visibility was excellent, light south-west winds, over 80F during the day with occasional thunderstorms. On the 2nd October the bird travelled 343 kilometres and by nightfall was in the forests beside the White Volta river, south of New Tamale in northern Ghana. He is now in typical wintering habitat for honey buzzards but he may continue to move to his chosen wintering site, which is probably where he lived in previous winters. His journey from Scotland has taken just 28 days and the direct great circle distance is 5399.8 kilometres. His true flight distance over the ground, calculated from the transmission locations en route, is 6239 kilometres or 3900 miles. This is an average daily journey of approximately 223 kilometres (139 miles).

The radio on the male will continue to transmit every two days until 1st November so we will be able to find out if he continues to a chosen wintering area or moves around. After that the radio's program will slow down and send transmissions to the satellite every 10 days. Once his spring migration starts it will return to a two day cycle and show us his return to Scotland, assuming he survives the winter in Africa.

### **04 October 2002**

The male moved eastwards through Ghana and in the morning was in the Oti river area in the east of Ghana; 158 kilometres east of his position on 2nd. By nightfall, he had travelled a further 105 kilometres to the north-east into the Republic of Togo, and appeared to be in forested regions NW of Bassar. The weather reports were overcast with light south-west winds and scattered thunderstorms. Some of the changes in migration directions may be due to avoiding the worse thunder areas, but this old experienced bird will be well used to tropical thunderstorms. He is clearly still heading towards his wintering site.

## **06 October 2002**

The bird was in Benin today. I received two very accurate positions from the Argos tracking station. Overnight on 5th/6th, he was roosting just E of Djougou and by the evening he had moved 148 kilometres to the ENE across Benin. He has not yet reached his wintering grounds.

## **08 October 2002**

The male honey buzzard was migrating actively through Nigeria today. By chance, I received good positions during the night when the bird would have been roosting. Overnight on 7th/8th he had moved 75 kilometres from his previous position in Benin, but during the 8th, he flew 245 kilometres ESE through Nigeria and crossed the River Niger.

## **10 – 20 October 2002**

He spent the whole day of the 10<sup>th</sup> near Abuja, 93 kilometres east of his position on the 8th. Signals on 12th, 14th and 16th came from the same locality and it is starting to look as though this may be the wintering site. His present wintering area is 7063 kilometres from his breeding site and his migration lasted 35 days.

After spending 10 days in the Abuja area, with daily journeys of up to 20 kilometres, the male moved on 20th October. Overnight he had roosted in his usual location but by nightfall he had moved 210 kilometres to the SSE to locality to the south of Okua.

Over the last 8 days the male has migrated a further 1124 kilometres to the south, bringing the total distance from its Scottish nest site to 8420 kilometres.

## **22 – 30 October 2002**

On the 22<sup>nd</sup> he migrated 170 kilometres through Nigeria to rest the night on the Cameroon border. Next day he moved a small distance further south, but on 24th he flew for 240 kilometres, starting near Mundemba in Cameroon, he passed the 13325 feet high Mount Cameroon during the day and reached a coastal area near Kribi by dusk. On the 25th, he moved 184 kilometres to an area SW of Bata in Guinea and next day he flew for 200 kilometres, passing Libreville during the day, and crossing a big inlet of the sea to reach Donguila in Gabon. On the 27th, he crossed the Equator and roosted overnight in the eastern border of the

National Park of Wonga Wongue, Gabon. Yesterday, he flew a further 53 kilometres to reach coastal forests in the Ogooue Maritime of Gabon.

It is most interesting that the male honey buzzard restarted his migration, after spending 10 days in Nigeria and we wonder how much further south he will travel. A honey buzzard ringed by Brian Etheridge in the Scottish Highlands was reported from Guinea in 1991. He had moved a further 20 kilometres to the south by 30th October and is now settled there in coastal forests of Gabon. A transmission on 12th November was from that locality. The transmitter has now switched to 10 day intervals and will remain in that mode until April when we hope to track the return migration at two day intervals. Updates will now occur several times per month when interesting data is received.

Transmissions have been received at 10 day interval between 12th November to 12th March 2003. His positions on these dates were all within 20 kilometres of each other in his wintering area, and some of the earlier ones indicated that he was not roosting in the same place each night. An incomplete signal was received on 22nd March. No signals have been received since then, even though the radio was due to change to fast transmissions on 21st April, and we have to conclude that the battery is finished.

On 24th May, Darrin Madgin reported a honey buzzard carrying a satellite transmitter flying west over Sussex, and we think that this was likely to be the male, whose radio stopped transmitting in March.