

The movements of English chick E28661 in 2003

23 September 2003

This bird flew across the English Channel and was located moving at sea over the English Channel at midday; by mid afternoon it had reached the French coast near Le Havre. It continued into France and by 5pm local time was north of Alencon, where it probably roosted for the night in the Foret d'Ecouves. By late afternoon of the following day it was 25 kilometres north of La Rochelle after a day's flight of about 280 kilometres.

25 September 2003

It continued southwards over France and by night had flown 158 kilometres and was roosting north of St Andre on the Dordogne, north of Bordeaux. Next day it flew a further 97 kilometres but headed more to the SSE and was roosting at night near St Michel de Castelnau, heading into a valley leading to the mountain chain of the Pyrenees. The present weather conditions of low cloud and rain will not encourage it to cross the mountains.

28 September 2003

On the 27th it flew 125 kilometres further south, moving a little west during the day. At 8am on 28th, the bird was near Marianne, east of Orthez. During the 28th the young honey buzzard covered at least 174 kilometres and it appeared to cross the Pyrenees at one of the high passes at the head of the Vallee d'Aspe. The pass is at 1632 metres above sea level (5300 feet).

29 September 2003

In light NE winds and good conditions, it covered 174 kilometres in the morning and by midday was near Used, near Daroca, with an accurate location at 1021 GMT near the Embalse de las Torcus. The younger chick has now overtaken its older sibling by taking a more eastern and higher route over the mountains. Midday, on 30th September, it had reached Galamocho and continuing south. Poor signals on 1st October were from a similar area.

02 October 2003

On 2nd October, it was near Pozondon, north of the Sierra de Albarracin and overnight on 3rd/4th October it was near Bunol, West of Valencia on the Mediterranean coast after a migration of 142 kilometres. The following night, 0324GMT on the 5th October, the young honey buzzard was near Orihuela, just NE of A Murcia having covered 144 kilometres. It was just 50 kilometres of where its older sibling had been the previous day. Both birds should cross into Africa over the next few days.

06 October 2003

At 0813am, it was just inland of the Algerian coast, near Ghazaouet, just north of Ahfir, eastern Morocco. It was 363 kilometres from its previous position and must have made the crossing of the Mediterranean Sea on the 5th, either a 300 kilometres flight from Cartagena in a SSW direction, or possibly down the coast to Cape de Gata and a 180 kilometres direct south flight to North Africa. It is very interesting that both chicks are keeping up with each other although not travelling together. Weather conditions have been good with light to fresh NE winds, clear visibility, cloudy with sunny spells in the western Mediterranean.

07 October 2003

Two signals showed that it was actively migrating into Africa near Ain Beni Mather in Morocco, having travelled 97 kilometres from the previous day's position. By early afternoon it had travelled a further 138 kilometres in about 4 hours and was west of Tندرera. It was now ahead of its older sibling but surprisingly close in the same region.

08 October 2003

It had flown a further 185 kilometres south and was west of Bechar, having crossed back into Algeria.

09 October 2003

Late afternoon, the young honey buzzard was migrating south over the deserts of Erg er Raoul in Algeria in calm and hot sunny conditions with a temperature of

30C. By midnight, it was in the northern desert of the Sahara, well south east of Tabelbala, Algeria having covered 277 kilometres since yesterday.

On 9th October, positions were received from the Argos tracking station for the older chick E21251 at 2256GMT and for the younger chick E28661 at 2254GMT. It is incredible that they are only 97 kilometres apart after a journey of 2500kms.

10 October 2003

Overnight on 10th/11th October the bird was 202 kilometres further south in sand deserts near Hassi Bou Bernous. Twenty fours later it was 148 kilometres further south near Grizim in Algeria. On 13th October, it was south of the Mali border, north of Tmaza and had flown a further 243 kilometres in fresh easterly winds.

14 October 2003

Early afternoon the young honey buzzard was in a most remote part of the deserts called the El Djouf in eastern Mauritania. It had flown an amazing 600 kilometres since its position early on the 13th. By the following late afternoon, 15th October, the bird had just about completed its crossing of the Sahara and was east of Aoundaghost in southern Mauritania, heading south through the Sahel towards the Montagne de l'Affole. This was a further 282 kilometres. It has already flown 3872 kilometres in 23 days giving a daily average 168 kilometres per day.

17 – 29 October 2003

Overnight on 16th/17th October, the bird was in Niora in western Mali and overnight on 17th/18th October very good signals from Diema, western Mali. Overnight on 18th/19th October it was near Lac de Marantali, Mali after a day's migration of 209 kilometres. Next day it flew 105 kilometres and early morning on 20th it was west of Kabaya. A day later in the morning of the 21st it was near Tamba, Guinea having travelled just 33 kilometres to cross the border. Last night, 22nd October it had migrated a further 90 kilometres and was near Dinguiray in Guinea. It was still in the same area on 26th and 29th October, so it has either halted its migration or found a suitable place to winter.

Signals through to 25th November from same area and the bird has stopped its migration. The location of the wintering area appears to be in the headwaters of the river Niger. This place is 4581 kilometres from its nest area in SE England.

The radio has now switched to a 10 day interval, so up dates will be less frequent.

15 December 2003

After dark, poor quality signals came in from an area on the Ivory Coast/Liberian border in the coastal district. This place is 805 kilometres south-east of Dinguiray in Guinea. Poor quality signals are likely to be due to the honey buzzard living in dense forest which makes it difficult for the satellite to fix the bird's position. In view of the poor quality signal, I waited for another set of transmissions. Overnight on Christmas Day, the bird was roosting in forests south east of Buchanan in Liberia. This is 263 kilometres northwest of the birds position 10 days earlier and is 610 kilometres from its original wintering area. Both these sets of data are poor quality so the positions may not be accurate but undoubtedly the young honey buzzard has moved and is now in the coastal region of Liberia. A very similar position was given on 5th January 2004 so the bird is now in a second wintering area. Poor quality signals on 15th and 25th January and 4th February gave no accurate locations, but the bird was alive. The battery is now exhausted and we are unlikely to get any more useful data. But this bird's journey has been most interesting and has told us more about the ecology and migration of the species.