

A REVIEW OF THE ROUGH-LEGGED BUZZARD'S RECORDS.

The aim of this short note is to review the records of the Rough-legged Buzzard *Buteo lagopus* in Malta in the light of new information. Hereunder we are listing the records chronologically as recorded by various authors adding, where necessary, our comments.

(a) One in 1843 (Gulia 1858-63).

(b) One taken at Zurrieq in 1859 (Gulia 1858-63).

(c) One taken at Birzebbuga on 21st September 1916 (Despott 1916).

Despott (1917) reported this bird as being taken in summer 1915.

Before the auction sale of the late T. Conti's collection we were fortunate to examine some of the meticulous notes written by T. Conti himself regarding some of the specimens in his collection. One such note stated that the *Buteo lagopus* reported by Despott as taken at Birzebbuga on 21st September 1916 was in fact a Booted Eagle *Hieraaetus pennatus* and was to be found in his collection.

(d) One taken at Bahar ic-Caghaq on 29th September 1966 (De Lucca 1967).

This specimen in fact is also another *Hieraaetus pennatus* (Sultana et al. 1975).

(e) One taken at Buskett on 3rd October 1956 (De Lucca & De Lucca 1959).

This specimen, which is correctly identified as *Buteo lagopus*, is held at the National Museum of Natural History. Later this record was listed as occurring on 8th April 1956 (Vella-Gaffiero 1975). To add to the confusion Bannerman & Vella-Gaffiero (1976) stated "there has been a single definite occurrence in Malta during autumn, one male shot on 8th April 1956".

We have lately visited the Natural History Museum where Mr. J. Vella Gaffiero kindly showed us the documented record list of the collection, including the specimen of *Buteo lagopus* in question, which was donated by C. De Lucca to the Museum. The typewritten date against *Buteo lagopus* is 8th April 1956. If one examines the paper in the *Rivista Italiana di Ornitologia* by De Lucca & De Lucca (1959) where the record of the *Buteo lagopus* in question was first published, one notes that there is the same sentence for both *Buteo buteo buteo* and *Buteo lagopus lagopus* respectively, i.e. "Un giovane maschio fu ucciso vicino al Boschetto il 3 Ottobre 1956". Though one can never be certain, it appears probable that this could have been an overlooked misprint. On the other hand one can also argue that there could have been a typewritten mistake in the list which includes the April date. Furthermore it is also more likely for a *Buteo lagopus* to appear in autumn than in spring.

In view of the above, it is recommended that the records of the *Buteo lagopus* should read: one in 1843, one at Zurrieq in 1859 and one at Buskett in 1956, though Gulia's records may also be considered doubtful.

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