

Agostini N., Premuda G., Mellone U., Panuccio M., Logozzo D., Bassi E., Cocchi L. 2004. *Crossing the sea en route to Africa: autumn migration of some Accipitriformes over two Central Mediterranean islands*. Ring 26, 2: 71-78.

Abstract

Observations were made on the autumn migration of Accipitriformes over the islands of Marettimo and Pantelleria, located between western Sicily and Tunisia (Central Mediterranean). A total of 7451 raptors was counted between 24 August and 12 September 2003, mostly adult Honey Buzzards *Pernis apivorus* - 4045, and Black Kites *Milvus migrans* - 2489. Mixed-age flocks were regularly reported for the Black Kite (1956 adults and 533 juveniles estimated) confirming information transmission concerning orientation behaviour in this species. Although in the Honey Buzzard juveniles tend to migrate later than adults, crossing the Mediterranean on a broad front mostly after mid-September, we observed some mixed-age flocks, estimating the passage of 3830 adults and 215 juveniles. In particular, over Pantelleria we recorded in seven cases juveniles in flocks of adults heading towards WNW, presumably learning (similarly to juvenile Black Kites) the shortest route over water to reach Africa from this site. A total of 72 Egyptian Vultures *Neophron percnopterus* - 62 adults, 6 juveniles and 4 sub-adults - was counted over Marettimo confirming that their greatest concentration during autumn migration through Italy occurs at this island. In this species, all juveniles were seen migrating in flocks of adults. Finally, the passage of hundreds of Marsh Harriers *Circus aeruginosus* was reported, mostly over Pantelleria. Among adult harriers, it was possible to estimate the passage of birds belonging to different sex classes; unlike in the previous studies made in central, southern continental Italy and Malta during autumn migration, adult females outnumbered adult males (372 vs 298 individuals). Finally, considering the huge number of *Accipitriformes* observed, Pantelleria, so as Marettimo, should be enclosed among Important Bird Areas for the autumn migration of raptors in the Mediterranean basin.

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