

HONEYBUZZARD

pernisapivorus

Not a buzzard
& doesn't eat
honey!



FactFile

Length: 52cm –60cm

Wingspan: 135cm –150cm

Weight: 0.40kg –1.00kg

Habitat: Woodland where bee & wasp nests are plentiful. Builds its own nest in tall trees and is made of leafy twigs. Clutches normally contain 2 eggs which are incubated for about 37 days. Unusually for raptors, the young are fed regurgitated food – normally bee & wasp combs from which they pick the larvae. Fledging is at about 40 days and independence at up to 100 days.



The Honey Buzzard is a migratory breeding visitor to Britain and is only present between mid -April and mid -August. Winters are spent in Africa, south of the Sahara. Despite a large European summer population, it is a very rare bird in this country but one pair regularly breeds in Norfolk.

Despite its name it is neither a honey eater nor a buzzard but is a specialised predator of wasp and bee larvae in a family of its own. It detects nests by observing the movements of the insects whilst soaring or hovering above and then digs out the larvae. It has special adaptations to cope with this particular food source. Scale -like feathers on forehead and cheeks protect it from stings whilst its long, narrow head enables it to investigate comparatively small holes in the ground. The feet are adapted for digging having short, blunt talons and thick scales and its nostrils are thin slits, less prone to being clogged with soil.

It can supplement its diet with small mammals, birds, eggs and invertebrates and will even eat fruit and berries.