

Book review

The Goshawk

Robert Kenward: *The Goshawk*. T & A.D. Poyser, an imprint of A&C Black Publishers Ltd. 2006. ISBN-10: 0-7136-6565-3. 360 pp.

For most ornithologists being hooked on a specific species, the emergence of a monograph with “your species” in the eminent T & AD Poyser species monograph series is probably one of the most expected publication events. At least I had already for some time been waiting for the emergence of a high-quality Northern Goshawk book. Thus, when I some two years ago learned that a Goshawk monograph written by Robert Kenward, one of the very experts on the species, will be published from T & AD Poyser my expectations were high.

The author, Robert Kenward, is a raptor biologist who due to his more than 30 year long involvement with the Goshawk has managed to amass huge amounts of knowledge of the species. He has successfully managed to encompass this information in a very impressive way between two covers, and together with the beautiful Goshawk illustrations made by Alan Harris, Kenward’s expertise makes *The Goshawk* a book that is a mere joy to read. The book consists of 10 individual chapters. Each of the chapters starts with a short epilogue picked from Kenward’s personal Goshawk experiences during the years and ends with a section on conservation and management. For example, in chapter one which deals with taxonomy and systematics, the reader gets a glimpse of the author’s thoughts and feelings when he in the early 1980s studied the diversity in feather colouration among the Goshawk specimens in the museum collections in Moscow. This way of introducing each chapter not only helps bringing the scientific content to a “down-to-earth” level, but also makes one realise that the author’s relationship towards his study object is more than merely scientific. While it in chapter one becomes clear that the Goshawk is to be divided into several racial types across Eurasia and North America, including the almost

mythic and more or less completely white *albidus* found in the Beringian forest tundra, the within-year and geographical diversity in size and shape among Goshawks are the main topics of chapter two. The variation in size of Goshawks is described in extreme detail and is nicely accompanied by figures. Personally I especially enjoyed acquainting myself with the facts on the variation in sexual size dimorphism. Chapters three and four then describe the secrets of Goshawk nesting and chick rearing behaviour. In these chapters Kenward has done extensive work on amassing information from a wide range of published material (including not only literature written in English). Considering that reproduction is an aspect of avian biology that has always been of special interest among scientifically inclined ornithologists these two chapters are therefore definitely highly valuable for anyone interested in the details in reproduction of Goshawks. Much of the reviewed literature is nicely presented in figures and is thereby quickly digested.

In chapter five, the author pursues presenting information on Goshawk dispersal and migration – nicely analyzing differences between Europe and North America. Chapters six and seven are devoted to diet, foraging and predation. Being a large-sized bird of prey hunting prey appreciated also by humans, it is quite natural that this aspect of Goshawk biology has been, and is, among the most studied ones. As the Goshawk is found widely distributed in boreal forests over most of the Holarctic region, the variation in the diet and foraging behaviour as compared between areas is therefore naturally large. Even if this variation could be thought as being difficult to present in a short and easily comprehensive way, the author has succeed very well in this task by capturing the essentials. Consequently, both these chapters are highly valuable as literature sources. Chapter eight then deals with the state of art in population biology, demography. As a long-lived and large sized raptor, the Goshawk is difficult to monitor for consecutive years, which is needed to get reliable de-

mographic estimates. Therefore, it is rather impressive to read how much the Goshawk still has been studied in this respect. The last two chapters both deal more with aspects related to management and conservation, chapter nine with falconry and management, chapter ten with various human impacts on Goshawk population size such as pesticides and habitat destruction. By reading these chapters it becomes clear that – while the Goshawk is not threatened on a global scale – intensive land use and human caused prey deficits are problematic in many parts of its range. Also direct killing of Goshawks may have a locally important impact on a population. While falconry perhaps not is a part of the everyday life of the average reader of this book, the inclusion of a chapter describing this special relationship between man and Goshawk is still very welcome. After all, there is a long tradition of keeping tame Goshawks for falconry purposes in many parts of the world.

Personally, I enjoyed reading the book very much and at this point I can unveil that it definitely fulfilled the high expectations I had when I heard that it was still at the printer's office. Thus, I think that *The Goshawk* is more or less excellent in almost every aspect. The perhaps best aspects of them all are yet the many informative figures – without these it would have been clearly less enjoyable than what it now is. It was further astonished how informative and well-written the text is all through the book – Robert Kenward has succeeded very well with the difficult task to write an excellent species monograph. Last but not least, the extensive reference list is extremely useful for anyone interested to enter more deeply into the fascinating life of Goshawks. I can warmly recommend this book for any person being interested in Goshawks, birds of prey or birds in general.

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