

Birds

RESIDENT AND MIGRATORY BIRDS OF THE
GIBRALTAR NATURE RESERVE

Peregrine Falcon

(Falco peregrinus)

Length: 38-51 cm

Wingspan: 89-113 cm



The Peregrine Falcon is a medium to large sized raptor that feeds mainly on birds captured in flight. In a dive to catch it's prey, this bird can travel at speeds of up to 320 km/hour, making it the fastest animal on Earth.

Griffon Vulture

(Gyps fulvus)

Length: 95-110 cm

Wingspan: 230-265 cm

The Griffon Vulture is a common migrant seen crossing the Strait of Gibraltar. A highly migratory species, populations can be seen nesting in a variety of locations from the mountains of Turkey, to the Southern tip of Spain.

Adults can be identified by their white neck ruff which is contrastingly brown in juveniles.

Flight heavy, this bird can often be seen gliding in search for updrafts that provide relief from their weight.



Barbary Partridge

(Alectoris Barbara)

Length: 32-35 cm



Gibraltar's Barbary Partridge is thought by many to be Gibraltar's "National Bird". Endangered in other parts of Europe, Gibraltar is the only place in the whole of mainland Europe where these birds can be found. Favouring rocky slopes as its habitat, Gibraltar is an ideal location for these birds.

Common Kestrel

(Falco tinnunculus)

Length: 31-37 cm

Wingspan: 68-78 cm

The Common Kestrel is a small falcon that is typically found in open country such as heaths and marshes. Generally a solitary bird, these are usually seen only in pairs during the breeding season.

Hunters by day, they prefer to feed on small mammals such as voles, shrews and mice. They will also hunt birds, bats, swifts, frogs, lizards, and insects.



Lesser Kestrel

(Falco naumanni)

Length: 27-33 cm

Wingspan: 63-72 cm



Similar to the Common Kestrel, the Lesser Kestrel varies slightly in its colour, and shorter wings and tail. It prefers to nest in the holes of buildings or cliff crevices in large colonies.



The Eurasian Sparrowhawk is a small raptor with short, blunt-tipped wings and a long tail. They prefer to nest in dense woodland and breed between May and July. Female sparrowhawks are typically twice the weight of males, giving this species one of the largest differences between sexes in any bird of prey.

Eurasian Sparrowhawk

(*Accipiter nisus*)

Length: 29-41 cm

Wingspan: 58-80 cm

Short-toed Eagle

(Circaetus gallicus)

Length: 62-69 cm

Wingspan: 162-178 cm

The Short-toed Eagle is a large, pale eagle with a broad head. It winters in Africa and visits Europe during the months of late March to October.

Nesting in trees , they prefer open arid country with mountains and scattered wood where it can hunt.





The Black Kite is a medium-sized bird with overall dark plumage. Spending the winter months in Africa, these birds travel back to Europe and as far as Britain and Ireland during the warmer months.

A common migrant through Gibraltar, Black kites nest in trees and can be identified by its slightly forked tail.



Black Kite

(Milvus migrans)

Length: 48-58 cm
Wingspan: 130-155 cm

Little Owl

(Athene noctua)

Length: 23-27.5 cm

Wingspan: 50-57 cm

The Little Owl is a small owl that breeds across Europe in a variety of settings from fields and vineyards, to open woodland. They like to feed on insects, birds, small amphibians and snakes. Most active at dawn and dusk, they generally hunt from a perch, typically a fence post where it can easily blend into its surroundings and surprise its prey.



Eurasian Eagle Owl

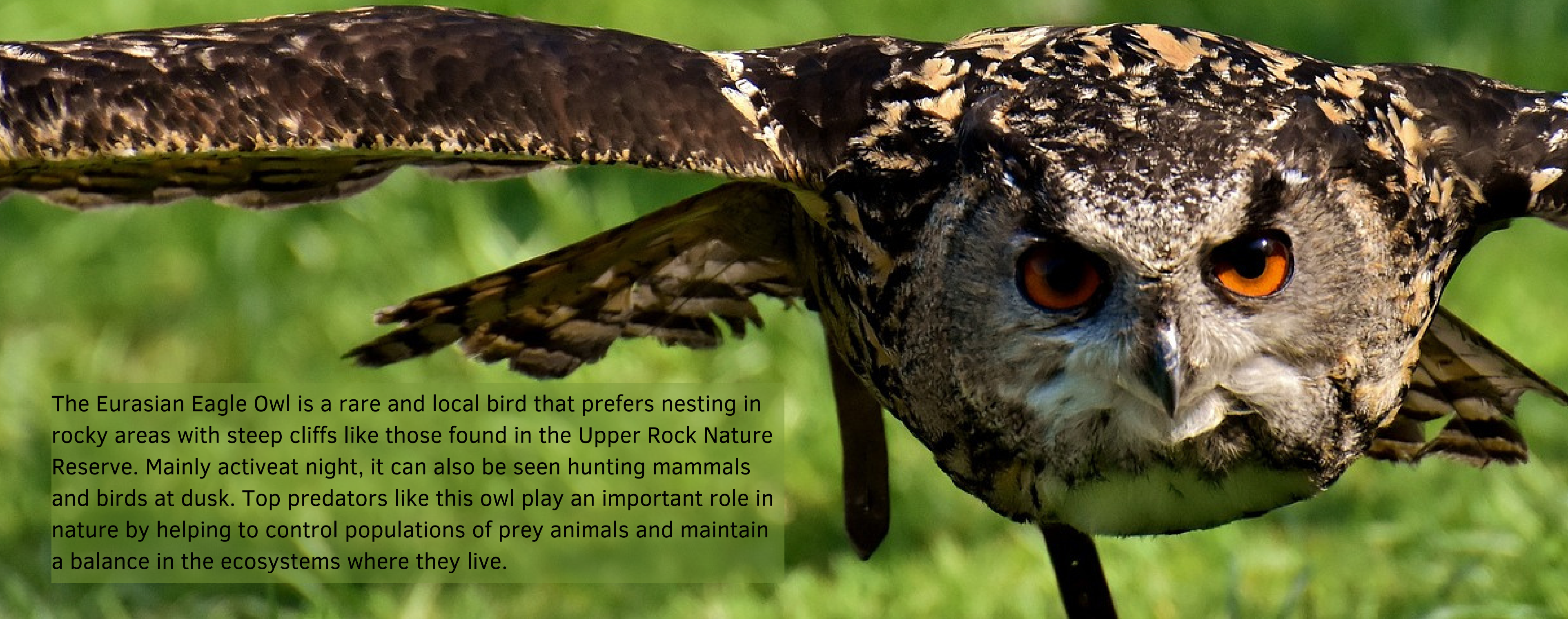
(*Bubo bubo*)

Length: 59-73 cm

Wingspan: 138-170 cm



The Eurasian Eagle Owl is a rare and local bird that prefers nesting in rocky areas with steep cliffs like those found in the Upper Rock Nature Reserve. Mainly active at night, it can also be seen hunting mammals and birds at dusk. Top predators like this owl play an important role in nature by helping to control populations of prey animals and maintain a balance in the ecosystems where they live.





Yellow-Legged Gull

(Larus michahellis)

Length: 52-58 cm

Wingspan: 120-140 cm

The Yellow-Legged Gull is a local resident which uses the Upper Rock Nature Reserve as its main nesting site. Occuring in large flocks, this species is known to be very territorial and often attack migrating birds travelling across Gibraltar from Africa to Europe, or vice versa. Due to their large population, licensed culling of this species has taken place for many years to keep the population numbers from increasing further.



The largest variation of Harrier, adults of this species can be identified by their distinct set of black wing tips. It breeds on shallow freshwater lakes or rivers with extensive reed beds.

Feeding on small mammals, birds and insects, a small population of these has established in eastern parts of Britain which migrates to winter in Africa.

Western Marsh Harrier

(Circus aeruginosus)

Length: 43-55 cm

Wingspan: 115-140 cm

Montagu's Harrier

(Circus pygargus)

Length: 39-50 cm

Wingspan: 96-116 cm



A lightly built hawk, Montagu's Harrier is a slim and long tailed bird. Favouring heathland, arable fields and other open plains, it is mainly spotted in flight. It prefers to feed on small birds or mammals, along with lizards and insects.

European Honey-buzzard

(Pernis apivorus)

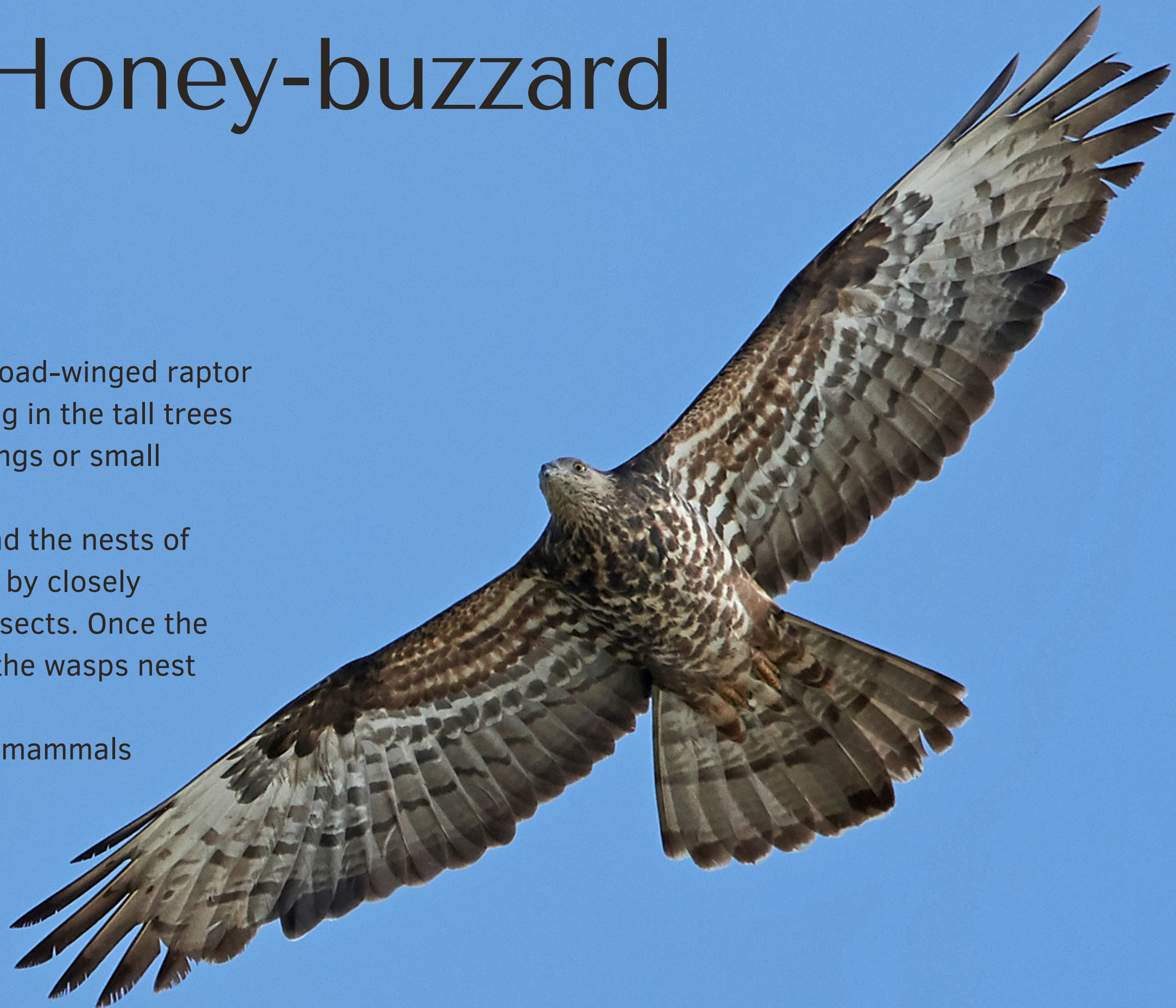
Length: 52-59 cm

Wingspan: 113-135 cm

The European Honey-buzzard is a broad-winged raptor that winters in tropical Africa. Nesting in the tall trees of forests, it prefers to hunt in clearings or small wetlands.

Their food source is mainly larvae and the nests of wasps. They are able to locate these by closely observing the movements of adult insects. Once the nest has been spotted, they dig out the wasps nest with their claws.

Food sources can also include small mammals especially during the rainy months.



Common Buzzard

(Buteo buteo)

Length: 48-56 cm

Wingspan: 110-130 cm

The Common Buzzard is a medium to large sized bird that is widespread throughout Europe. Nesting in trees, it prefers to breed in small forests with open land where it can hunt voles, other birds, rabbits and other sources of food more easily.



Egyptian Vulture

(Neophron percnopterus)

Length: 55-65 cm

Wingspan: 155-170 cm

The Egyptian Vulture is a declining species that is medium to large in size. A regular visitor from Africa to the Iberian Peninsula during the summer months, they can be found nesting on cliffs. Their yellow cere and bare skin on the face make them an easily distinguishable look.



Common Hoopoe

(Upupa epops)

Length: 25-29 cm

Wingspan: 44-48 cm

The Common or Eurasian Hoopoe is a small, exotic looking bird with bright colours and a striking crest on the crown of its head. The Hoopoe spends a lot of time on the ground feeding on worms and other insects that form part of its diet. These birds nest are adaptable and can be found nesting in trees or stone walls.



Booted Eagle

(Hieraaetus pennatus)

Length: 42-51 cm

Wingspan: 110-135 cm

The Booted Eagle is a small eagle that can occur in two colour variations. One is distinctively pale with a white underbody, and the other morph has a dark underbody.

Nesting predominantly in trees, they can be found in forests with a mixture of open ground or hills.

This species also winters in Africa, travelling north for the summer months.



European Bee-eater

(Merops apiaster)

Length: 25-29 cm

Wingspan: 36-40 cm

European Bee-eaters are small slender birds with exotically rich and distinctive plumage colours. Specialists in catching flying insects, they are social birds often seen in flocks.

Breeding in open and semiopen terrain, this summer vagrant travels to Europe for the months of May to August before returning to South Africa for winter.



Eurasian Blue Tit

(Cyanistes caeruleus)

Length: 10.5-12 cm

The Eurasian Blue Tit is a small bird that can be easily recognized by its attractive colours and pattern. A social bird, Eurasian Blue Tits can often be spotted in gardens in family flocks.



Eurasian Blackcap

(Sylvia atricapilla)

Length: 13.5-15 cm

The Eurasian Blackcap forms part of the insect eating Warbler family. Light grey in colour, males and females of this species are easily distinguished by the colour of their crown. Males as shown exhibit a small black cap, and females a chestnut one.



Sardinian Warbler

(Sylvia melanocephala)

Length: 13-14 cm

The Sardinian Warbler is a small bird with a rather large head for its size. Very active and not at all shy, it prefers to breed in tall bushes and open woodland. Commonly found in Mediterranean habitats, this species is a common resident in Gibraltar.





Blue Rock-thrush

(Monticola solitarius)

Length: 21-23cm

The Blue Rock-Thrush is a medium-sized bird with a slim and long bill. Breeding in rocky coastal habitats, Gibraltar is an ideal location for this bird which is classified as a resident. It feeds on insects, plant matter and small lizards, and can be found nesting in cliff cavities.



Department of the Environment,
Sustainability, Climate Change
and Heritage

HM Government of Gibraltar

Information sourced from the Collins Bird Guide, 2nd edition.