

BirdLife Australia Rarities Committee

Unusual Record Report Form

This form is intended to aid observers in the preparation of a submission to document a major rare bird in Australia. Its use is NOT mandatory. Please attach and/or include all relevant information including any digital images. Please Email the completed form/submission to the BARC Chair, Tony Palliser tonyp@bigpond.net.au

BARC considers submissions that include a minimum of the submitter's name(s), the bird species claimed and the location and date(s) of the record. However, more information and evidence will usually be required for BARC to accept a record. So, please submit as much detailed information about the bird as possible.

If you choose not to use this form please make sure all relevant information requested in this form is included in your submission. However, it is our preference that you fully complete sections "A" and "B", or follow their headings, so that BARC has some continuity between all submissions.

Section A: Submitter details	
Your name(s) Joint submissions are fine	Graham Barwell (GB) & Richard Baxter (RB)
Your email, phone or address	

Section B: Record details	
Common and scientific names Include subspecies if relevant	Long-tailed Honey-buzzard <i>Henicopernis longicauda</i> (HBW-BirdLife Int.)
Site location (with GPS if possible)	Kaumag Channel, between Kaumag Island and Saibai Island, northern Torres Strait, Qld, 9° 22' 49" S; 142° 42' 32" E
Date(s) and time(s) of record (First and last date of occurrence if known)	13 March 2020, c. 13: 30 hrs AEST
How many individuals were there?	one
What was the distance to the bird(s)?	about 400m when first seen, coming as close as c. 150m, then moving further away
Habitat description	seawater channel bordered by strips of dense mangrove forest on each bank; observations were made from the upper deck of the MV <i>Eclipse</i> , anchored near the south side of the channel
Sighting conditions (e.g. weather, visibility, light conditions)	mainly sunny with a hazy sky, light wind, c. 32°; these conditions made it difficult to pick up all the plumage details with the naked eye or binoculars, as, against the hazy sky, the bird appeared mainly dark with a pale belly
How confident are you in the identification (as a %) and why?	100%; one of us (RB) has seen this species previously and, by sending a photo, obtained confirmation of the identity from the author of a standard PNG field guide (Phil Gregory)
Did you find and/or identify the bird initially? Who else recorded the bird and do they agree with the identification?	The bird was first seen by GB as the bird approached from the west, flying fairly low over the mangrove forest on the south side of the channel, astern of the boat. He drew the attention of the tour group and RB identified it immediately. Everyone had good views as the bird passed by the boat and away over the mangrove forest to the east of us, gradually gaining height. No-one disputed the identification. Apart from GB and RB, the other observers were Darryel Binns, Carol Butler, Mike Carter, Hickson Fergusson, Bob James, Robert Shore, Jenny Spry and Tom Wheller.

What experience have you had with this species?	GB has no previous experience of this species; RB had seen what he was certain was an immature bird of this species at Dauan Island, Torres Strait, 20 Oct. 2012.
Has this species been seen at this location before? When?	No. There are no accepted records for Australia. The sighting at Dauan Island, about 20 km west of this Saibai sighting, was not accepted by BARC (Case #765). One of the comments added to the Facebook report (see below) stated that the species had been seen near Warul Kawa/Deliverance Island in the western Torres Strait “a few years ago”, but this sighting was not otherwise reported.
Have photographs of the bird or discussion of it occurred on the internet? (Please provide the site name, a summary, electronic link, etc.)	Several photographers took a number of good photos of the bird. Later adjustments to the lighting in these photos enabled the finer details of the bird’s plumage and features to be seen quite clearly. News of the sighting (with photos) was posted to the Facebook Australian Twitchers group on 14 March: https://www.facebook.com/groups/718576241555767/
Do you permit BARC to display your images etc. electronically (credited with your name)	yes; the photographers’ names are given after each photograph

You may choose to delete or ignore this page, but please include as much of the requested information in your submission as possible, especially Sections C and E.

Section C: Supporting evidence

Please include evidence that supports the identification, such as photographs, video, call recordings, etc. Digital images can be pasted into this document below, at the end, or provided separately. Digital video and sound recordings can be sent separately to this form. Label photos etc or insert captions to make note of relevant features they show.



Photo with light levels unadjusted showing the distinctive profile of the bird from below, but with the finer details of plumage and features difficult to make out. Note the small head, the bulge in the inner rear underwing, the pale belly and the long, round-tipped tail. Photo by Jenny Spry.



Photo by Jenny Spry



Photo by Robert Shore

Two dorsal views with light level adjusted. Note the four dark bands of roughly even width, evenly spaced, in the tail. Note also the bands across the rear wings and pale streaking on the upper wingcoverts.



Dorsal view with light level adjusted. Note the seven primaries extended as “fingers.” Photo by Robert Shore



Head on shot with light level adjusted. Note the pale streaks on the head. Photo by Richard Baxter.

In a detail from this picture (below left) and from a picture by Jenny Spry (below right), it is just possible to make out the yellow iris.





Side on view with light level adjusted. Note the pale grey bill and legs, the dark streaks on the upper breast and forepart of the flanks, the white belly and the seven primaries forming obvious fingers on the wingtips. There is no sign of any black band through and behind the eye. Photo by Richard Baxter



Ventral view with light level adjusted. The bill has a small black tip (difficult to see). Photo by Jenny Spry



Ventral view with light level adjusted. Photo by Robert Shore.

In the photo above and in the preceding photo by Jenny Spry, note the streaking on the throat and upper breast, the pale belly, the faintly buffy tinge to the underwing coverts, the noticeable bulge in the rear profile of the inner wing, and the three dark bars visible on the undertail.

Section D: Description of the bird(s)

Please provide a description of the bird(s) including all identification features recorded. Provide all possible details that might corroborate the identification.

Plumage	head and neck dark brown with creamy streaks, this pattern extending onto the throat, upper breast and forward part of the flanks; the back and upperwing coverts dark brown with paler streaking and mottling with a series of dark and creamy brown bands extending the primaries and secondaries from wingtip to wingtip, obvious on both the upper and underwing; the creamy, long, round-tipped tail similarly patterned with four evenly-spaced dark brown bands of roughly even width on the uppertail and three on the undertail; the underwing coverts have a faintly buffy tinge and faint dark streaks; the belly is creamy white
Bare parts	the bill is pale grey with a small black tip; the legs are pale grey; the iris is yellow
Moult details	the bird did not appear to be moulting
Structure and ‘jizz’	a long-tailed, long-winged raptor with a small head, obviously fingered wingtips and a distinct bulge in the profile of the rear wing; difficult to determine size with confidence, since there was nothing to compare it with at the time of the sighting, but would estimate it to be about the size of a Whistling Kite. Certainly considerably smaller than the Gurney’s Eagle seen less than an hour later at the same spot.
Calls	no calls

Behaviours	as the bird flew past and away from us, it once or twice twisted and turned in its lazy, soaring flight, gradually gaining height before being lost from view
Age, sex and/or taxonomy	sex undetermined, but possibly an immature, as indicated by the reduced black on the very tip of the tail and the tips of the primaries and secondaries. See plate 10, fig. 16bx, in Ferguson-Lees & Christie (2001). Those authors note (334) that, while the species is apparently sedentary, there is perhaps some dispersal by immatures. IOC spells the common name slightly differently, i.e., Long-tailed Honey Buzzard.

Section E: Confusion species

Please indicate other species that the bird(s) might be confused with and how they can be eliminated

Possible New Guinea confusion species can be eliminated as follows by distinctive features in the bird seen:

- (1) Papuan Eagle—by size (not huge), streaking on throat, neck and upper breast, tail bands of roughly equal width, soaring flight
- (2) Doria's Goshawk—by long wings, lack of a black stripe through and behind eye, pale grey legs, maximum four thickish tail bands of roughly equal width, soaring flight
- (3) Black Honey-buzzard—by dark brown and creamy plumage, especially on head, upperwings and underparts, long distance from the normal New Britain range of that species
- (4) Pacific Baza—seemed too big, longer-winged with more obvious “fingers,” different pattern of bands on the tail and lacking the chest bands and grey hood of that species

Possible migratory Asian confusion species can be eliminated:

- (5) Oriental (Crested) Honey-buzzard—evenly spaced bands of roughly even width on undertail, streaked brown and cream head, creamy white belly, only faintly buffy underwing coverts, seven “fingers” at wing tip and dark rump. NB: this species has not yet been recorded in Qld or in New Guinea, though it is likely to occur (Pratt and Beehler 2015: 293)

Section F: References and aids

Did you use books, journal articles or on-line sites or pages to help you prepare this submission? Which ones?	<p>Cornell Lab of Ornithology. <i>Birds of the World</i>. https://birdsoftheworld.org/bow/home</p> <p>Ferguson-Lees, James, and David Christie (2001). <i>Raptors of the World</i>. London: Christopher Helm.</p> <p>Gregory, Phil (2017). <i>Birds of New Guinea Including Bismarck Archipelago and Bougainville</i>. Barcelona: Lynx Edicions.</p> <p>Menkhorst, Peter, Danny Rogers, Rohan Clarke, Jeff Davies, Peter Marsack and Kim Franklin (2017). <i>The Australian Bird Guide</i>. London: Christopher Helm-Bloomsbury.</p> <p>Pratt, Thane K., and Bruce M. Beehler (2015). <i>Birds of New Guinea</i>. 2nd ed. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.</p>
Would you like to acknowledge the assistance of others in the identification process or preparation of this submission?	<p>Robert Shore and Jenny Spry for their excellent photographs, and Jenny for the provision of some reference material and for discussion about this species.</p> <p>Phil Gregory for his assistance in the identification.</p>