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## 7. OCCURRENCE OF THE NORTHERN GOSHAWK *ACCIPITER GENTILIS* IN AND NEAR MYSORE, KARNATAKA

The Northern Goshawk *Accipiter gentilis* is considered a rare winter visitor to north India, straggling to Gujarat and Sind (Ali and Ripley 1987). It has been recorded from Bhavnagar (Dharmakumarsinhji 1954) and Hingolghadh (Khacher and Mundkur 1989) in Gujarat, Poona (Ingalhalikar *et al.* 1987) in Maharashtra and up to Bangalore, Karnataka (Prasad and Karthikeyan 1994) and Wynaad, Kerala (Zacharias and Gaston 1993) in south India.

A solitary male bird of this species was observed at Gujjegowdanapura (12° 5' N, 76° 31' E) on January 1, 2000 in an undulating, hilly area with patches of scrub forest, a eucalyptus plantation and several scattered trees of *Acacia nilotica*, *A. leucophloea*, *Casuarina equisetifolia*, *Terminalia chebula*, *Strychnos potatorum* and *Mangifera indica*. The location is roughly 22 km southwest of Mysore city (12° 18' N, 76° 33' E). The bird was seen resting at 1600 hrs in a cluster of *Acacia* trees at the border of a gram field close to Gujjegowdanapura lake. The large size, sooty black cap and face, distinct white supercilium, slaty grey upperparts and white underparts, finely barred black, readily identified the bird as a male *A. gentilis*.

Juveniles of this species were observed on two occasions at separate locations. The first of these sightings took place at Meenakshipura on the south bank of the Krishanarajasagara reservoir (12° 24' N, 76° 26' E), 24 km northwest of Mysore city, on January 8, 2000. A large *Accipiter* raptor was seen as it took off from a well-wooded area close to dry land cultivation. It was mostly brown in colour, with bold, dark, vertical streaks on dirty creamy-buff underparts and a barred tail. In flight, its rounded wings, mode

of flight and characteristic barring on the underwing identified it as a juvenile Northern Goshawk. The bird was observed in pursuit of a Black-naped Hare *Lepus nigricollis* across a short stretch of open field, and successively through a thick patch of *Cassia* sp. and *Pongamia glabra* trees lining a streambed. It successfully caught the hare after a masterly display of deft twisting, turning and ducking through the narrow path, matching and finally overcoming the hare's tactics in escape.

The second sighting of a juvenile was on February 30, 2001 at the foot of Chamundi hill in Mysore city. The bird was observed in a *Eucalyptus* grove bordering thick scrub vegetation of *Ziziphus jujuba*, *Z. oenoploea* and *Dichrostachys cinerea*. It was also observed in flight, and was constantly mobbed by a band of *Turdoides affinis*.

These sightings and those of Zacharias and Gaston (1993) and Prasad and Karthikeyan (1994) indicate that the Northern Goshawk is possibly a rare winter visitor to southern India.

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