

Two Shikra *Accipiter badius* records from Turkey

LUKE (DOĞAN) SMITH

With Shikras *Accipiter badius* recorded recently from Azerbaijan (Heiss & Gauger 2009) and Armenia (Ananian *et al* 2010), I am reporting two records of this species from Turkey. Northeast Turkey, along the Black sea coast and Çoruh river valley, contains one of the largest raptor migration bottlenecks in the OSME region. In September 2009, I conducted a sparrowhawk *Accipiter* ringing project in cooperation with local falconers along this bottleneck. During the project I continually questioned falconers about rare raptor species they had captured, especially whether they had caught Shikras.

Several falconers told me of a man, Oğuz Balmumcu, near the city of Hopa (Artvin province, Turkey), who a few years before had trapped a sparrowhawk that met the description. Upon meeting Oğuz, I was excited to see that he had even had the bird photographed with himself from various angles (Plates 1, 2a–d). In the photos it can be seen that it was indeed an immature Shikra. The bird was trapped in early September 2006 when it was travelling in the same migration path as the majority of other raptor species that day. The trapping location was c4 km east of Hopa. At first, all the falconers thought it was a hybrid between a Levant Sparrowhawk *Accipiter brevipes* and Eurasian Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus*. Immature Shikras have yellow eyes like a Eurasian Sparrowhawk, but



Plate 1. Oğuz Balmumcu with Shikra *Accipiter badius* near Hopa, Turkey, September 2006 (photo of a photo). © Luke (Doğan) Smith



Plate 2a–d. Further photos of photos of the Shikra *Accipiter badius* of Plate 1. © Luke (Doğan) Smith

vertical streaking on the breast as a Levant Sparrowhawk. Oğuz also described the nature of the bird as being much calmer than a Eurasian Sparrowhawk. After feeding, watering, and showing the bird to many other falconers, he released it back onto the migration path at the same location it had been trapped.

While discussing this photographed bird many other falconers had gathered at Oğuz's house. After seeing the photos of this bird and hearing the stories about its nature, I asked if they had seen any other birds like this one. I also described to them the adult form. Oğuz and the other falconers living near his home had never seen an adult before. Oğuz remembered that he had seen an immature just like this one about forty years ago. During the late 1960s another man had trapped it three km north of where he had trapped this one. Oğuz explained that, after he trapped this Shikra, immediately the memory of the one he had seen before came into his mind. After observing this second one he remembered that the behavior of that first Shikra was just the same. Another older falconer confirmed that he had also seen this first Shikra and that it had been kept in captivity for some time. These two birds are the only records I have found of Shikra in Turkey, obtained after questioning over 500 sparrowhawk falconers who have been trapping raptors since childhood. All of the falconers were of middle to elderly age.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I express my sincere gratitude to Ahmet Şenyürek for taking the time to listen to my raptor descriptions and for introducing me to Oğuz Balmumcu. Oğuz Balmumcu (Tepedeki market, Kuledibi Mahalesi, Hopa, Artvin) is my hero, for not only having seen the only two known Shikras in Turkey, but for taking good care of his and releasing it in great health.

REFERENCES

- Ananian, V, K Aghababayan, S Tumanyan, G Janoyan & K Bildstein. 2010. Shikra *Accipiter badius* breeding in Armenia. *Sandgrouse* 32: 151–155.
- Heiss, M & K Gauger. 2009. The rediscovery of breeding Shikras *Accipiter badius* in the Western Palaearctic. *Sandgrouse* 31: 134–137.

Luke (Doğan) Smith, Cigdem no 13, Eksioglu Akkaya Sitesi, Cayir Onu Cd, Dudullu, Umraniye, Istanbul, Turkey.
yirticidata@gmail.com