

Buzzard - Funky Facts

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Buzzards (*Buteo buteo*) have wide, round heads, short necks, broad wings and a short, broad tail.

As with many other birds of prey, the female buzzard is larger than the male.

Although the colour can vary, the plumage is mostly medium-brown with a pale, half-moon shape on the breast. The wings have pale flight feathers and brown wing-linings.

The top of the wing is a darker, more uniform brown. Wingspan will measure 100-130 cm, and the females can weigh as much as 1.3 kg. The oldest recorded individual in the wild was 25 years of age!


In flight, the Buzzard holds its wings in a shallow V-shape whilst soaring and gliding through the air, the head hardly extending in front of the wings. They sometimes spread their feathers, in a resemblance of 'fingers' (see image below, right).

Whilst searching for prey, when not airborne, the Buzzard is often seen perching on poles and posts from where it can easily spot prey.

Preferred prey for Buzzards includes small mammals, small birds and insects, amphibians, earthworms and carrion.



Buzzards in Scotland will rarely move further than 50 km from their nest, although the species is migratory in other parts of Europe. Currently, Buzzards are the most common raptors in Scotland.

Silhouette of buzzard in flight. 



Historically, Buzzards used to be widespread across Britain, but Myxomatosis (a disease which caused rabbit populations to decline, reducing available food), toxic chemicals and unlawful persecution also reduced Buzzard numbers during the 20th century.

Although the birds are widespread now, some birds are still killed each year due to illegal poisoning and other types of persecution.

Reference: *RSPB handbook of BRITISH Birds. 3rd ed. Peter Holden and Tim Cleeves 2012 (re-print). HELM Bloomsbury Publishing PLC London.*

Bird silhouettes and reference: *Edinburgh Hawkwatch, www.edinburghhawkwatch.org.uk*

All photos: *Dean Bricknell Photography, www.deanbricknellphotography.com*

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