

## Young Buzzards

A common sight and sound at this time of the year is a young buzzard circling around and plaintively calling “pee-ooooo”. This can be roughly interpreted as “foo-ooooo”! They have left the nest but are by no means independent and will rely on their parents for food for several weeks. Indeed, young buzzards do not find it easy to learn how to find food - three quarters of young buzzards die, mostly from starvation, before they mature at three years old. It takes them a while to learn how to catch rabbits, rats and voles, and also how to fill up on frogs, worms and beetles when the mammals are not forthcoming!



Young buzzards at this time of the year often look very smart, sporting their new feathers, compared with the care-worn adults, who have started to moult and are usually missing a few wing feathers. But young buzzards can often be a bit confusing - they can look long tailed, compared with an adult - and this can make you wonder if you are looking at something perhaps more interesting like a Goshawk or a Honey Buzard. This “long tailed” look is actually due to the fact that their wing feathers are a bit short - they grow them very fast in the nest and they are not quite up to the standard of adult wing feathers!

With the reduction in persecution, and the ban on DDT, buzzards have made a rapid and dramatic spread into parts of the UK where they were never previously seen. My brother in Hertfordshire now has buzzards breeding near his village whereas only a few years ago a trip to Wales was needed to see them!