

## A second Uganda record of Red-footed Falcon *Falco vespertinus*

On Sunday 5 October 2014, a crystal clear morning with the Rwenzori chain clear of cloud cover, I drove north from Fort Portal with my wife Jean to Lake Saka and we walked on from there to the grassy escarpment overlooking the Lake Albert rift valley. From here we witnessed a memorable passage of raptors. First to appear were three Steppe Buzzards *Buteo buteo vulpinus* travelling south overhead. Then, as the morning progressed, more birds began to arrive, with “kettles” of Steppe Buzzards and Lesser Spotted Eagles *Aquila pomarina* appearing overhead as they climbed up the rift. At about 10:00 we were watching a circling European Honey Buzzard *Pernis apivorus* when a small falcon appeared with it, initially no more than about 25 m above us. It was pale grey above, slightly darker on the head, tail and wing coverts, and pale grey below with an obvious orange/red vent area, the under-wing coverts and tail being slightly darker. We watched it through binoculars for a couple of minutes, soaring with the Honey Buzzard, before both birds gained height and drifted south. Although its soft part colours could not be seen, the falcon could only have been a male Red-footed Falcon *Falco vespertinus*, a bird I am familiar with from Europe and from spring passage in Cameroon. That morning, in addition to the falcon, we finally counted the following migrant raptors: 45 Steppe Buzzards, 9 Lesser Spotted Eagles, 4 European Honey Buzzards, 5 Black Kites *Milvus migrans* and a Booted Eagle *Aquila pennata*.

The Red-footed Falcon has been accepted by the EARC as the second confirmed record for Uganda, the first being a bird at Murchison Falls National Park on 4 October 2000 (Skeen 2014). The only two documented autumn records from Kenya were also from mid October (Lewis & Pomeroy 1989). Red-footed Falcons from eastern Europe and Asia cross the eastern Mediterranean but most would appear to pass west of our region en route to wintering grounds in southwest Africa (Ferguson-Lees & Christie 2001).

### References

- FERUSON-LEES, J. & CHRISTIE, D.A. 2001. *Raptors of the world*. London: Christopher Helm.
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- SKEEN, R.Q. 2014. A review of birds in Uganda: records updating the Uganda Atlas and notes on species unrecorded since 1980. *Scopus* 33: 53–63.

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