

Rogers, M. 1987

Record of Red Kite Milvus sp. 615 in Nepal. Unpublished.

(16)

RARE BIRD REPORT - NEPAL

SPECIES Red Kite

No. of birds: One Sex: n/a Age: ?

PLACE Khali-Gandaki Valley, about two km south of JOMSOM.

DATE 3rd March 1987 circa 1100 hrs local.

OBSERVER: M. J. Rogers
Flat 4, Pentland Flats, St Mary's, Isles of Scilly,
Great Britain TR21 OHY. Tel. 0720 - 22112.

Other Observers: Nil.

Optical aids used: Leitz 8 x 40 binoculars

Distance from bird: See account

Previous experience of species: Plenty in Europe many years ago but more especially, frequent sightings of one on Scilly October, 1986 and one three years previously.

Experience of similar species:
What can be regarded as "similar" ?

Weather conditions: Light northerly wind;
Immediately above observer, clear blue sky with some cloud from mountaintops. Bright sunlight and 100% visibility. See also the account.

Circumstances:
I had been walking southwards from Jomson for some while. It was my first visit to this area and also Nepal. I was therefore much interested when I noticed a number of birds of prey on the wing high above me and stopped to study them through binoculars. Almost immediately I noticed about 300 m above me a raptor which was immediately recognizable as a Red Kite. I noted it as of interest because I had not seen any since arriving in Nepal on 22nd February. In my ignorance I did not know that the species was so little known on the Indian Sub-Continent. As a result I did not take notes at the time but, having realised the significance of my observation after my return to Khatmandu, and my books, on 19th March, made the notes shown overleaf whilst my visual memory was still clear.

From Carol Inskipp 0044-1354-610531

As stated overleaf the Red Kite appeared almost directly above me. It was drifting northwards into the wind and was in view for perhaps four minutes as it moved along the slope of the mountains. As I immediately recognized its identity I made no deliberate effort to estimate size but it was clearly longer-winged and longer-tailed than the Black Kites I had been seeing so frequently in the Khatmandu area for the previous few days. Head size in relation to body bulk was similar.

The tail was grey and deeply forked, showing as a deep notch when closed and as a broad "vee" when being fanned for steering purposes in the manner of this species. When opened the tail showed dark tips to the outer tail feathers. The underside of the body was a rich chestnut and the chin pale. The underside of the wings presented a generally very dark appearance being somewhat shadowed but there was a more chestnut hue to the fore part of the inner wing. Most conspicuous were the bright whitish patches towards the tip of each wing, i.e. all but the tips of the primaries. The tips were black and, again typically of this species, slightly spread, though not to give the broad and blunt-ended wing appearance of buzzards. Against the whiteness of the primaries the blackish patches outside the carpal joint i.e. the primary coverts, were very conspicuous. The long wings were held (shaped) in the manner of Red Kite, forward as far as the carpal and then straight (difficult to describe really), the carpal joint looking much further from the body than in other large raptors.

My retrospective and somewhat concerned reaction to this identification in the light of its significance is somewhat tempered by the fact that weather conditions in the Himalayan region had been unusual during the period since December, perhaps reflecting the equally unusually severe weather in Siberia and Europe as a whole. During the week prior to this observation there had been such weather patterns as to bring heavy (6") of snow to Jomson, ~~600~~ which closed the airport for five days. I also heard that there had been quite exceptionally severe wintery weather in SE Europe and the Middle East during early March. Whilst I was in Khatmandu the previous week severe stormy frontal systems regularly came over from the west. There is, of course, no knowing how long this bird had been in the region....

M. J. Rogers
13.5.87