

A feeding record of the Short-tailed Hawk *Buteo brachyurus* in its southern range

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Recebido em 28 de abril de 2005; aceito em 17 de maio de 2005

RESUMO. Um registro de alimentação do gavião-de-cauda-curta *Buteo brachyurus* no sul de sua distribuição. Embora *Buteo brachyurus* tenha uma distribuição extensa nas Américas, o conhecimento de sua dieta é restrito a populações do norte de sua distribuição. Eu reporto um evento de predação de *B. brachyurus* sobre *Crypturellus parvirostris* num fragmento de floresta semidecídua em Gália, SP, no sul da distribuição deste gavião. Este é provavelmente o registro da maior ave já capturada por esta espécie.

KEY WORDS: Accipitridae, Atlantic forest, *Crypturellus parvirostris*, predation.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Accipitridae, *Crypturellus parvirostris*, Mata Atlântica, predação.

The Short-tailed Hawk *Buteo brachyurus* occurs from south USA through Central America, and south to northern Argentina and Chile (Thiollay 1994). This species is found to be uncommon, although widespread in large areas of South America (Robinson 1994, Manosa *et al.* 2003, Blendinger *et al.* 2004). *Buteo brachyurus* search for prey while soaring above the canopy, suddenly diving on prey (Ogden 1974, Robinson 1994). In the only long-term study carried out with this species Ogden (1974) reports the Short-tailed Hawk as a specialist bird hunter: 95 birds were observed as prey in 98 feeding records in south Florida, USA. The other records refer to small rodents. Nevertheless, very little has been documented regarding the species diet out from its northern range. Additional food items known for this species, including reptiles and insects, come from anecdotal records or museum specimens, most of them from the northern range (Ogden 1974, and references therein). However, as Bierregaard (1995) pointed out, we still need data from representative areas in different portions of the species' range in order to have a better picture of the natural history and conservation needs of *B. brachyurus*. Since the review of Thiollay (1994) virtually no information has been added to the natural history of *B. brachyurus*. Here I report on a prey capture by the Short-tailed Hawk in southeastern Brazil, in the southern range of the species.

On 8 October 2000, during a study at an Atlantic forest fragment at Estação Ecológica dos Caetetus (2,148 ha, 22°22'S, 49°42'W) in Gália, western São Paulo state, Brazil, I was driving through a dirty road at the edge of the fragment near a patch of fruiting *Mabea fistulifera* (Euphorbiaceae) trees when I saw a Short-tailed Hawk on the ground, holding a medium-sized bird in the talons. Soon afterwards, the hawk flew to a nearby tree, leaving the prey laying on the ground. I approached to check the prey, a Small-billed Tinamou *Crypturellus parvirostris*, which was

still warm. The head of the tinamou had been already eaten by the hawk, with the exception of the bill, and the feathers of the tinamous's breast, where a deep wound could be observed, had been pulled out. I left the scene in order to not disturb the hawk, and I came back 20 minutes latter, but the hawk had disappeared. The tinamou, which weighed 215 g (without the head), was deposited at the ornithological collection of the Museu de História Natural da Unicamp (ZUEC 2223). This is the largest bird prey ever recorded for *B. brachyurus* (see Ogden 1974, p. 99-101), which represents nearly 41 % of the body weight of an adult female Short-tailed Hawk (530 g; Thiollay 1994). An analysis of the gut contents of the tinamou revealed several intact *M. fistulifera* seeds, and thus, the tinamou had been probably captured while foraging on those seeds on the ground.

Buteo brachyurus was occasionally sighted soaring single or in pairs above the canopy near the edge of the forest fragment. They probably get involved in opportunistic predation events such as that recorded. However, the scarcity of long-term studies in the whole range of *B. brachyurus* constrains an evaluation of the spectrum of prey size, and how local conditions (e.g. prey availability) influence its diet. While knowledge on natural history of several raptors is far from complete and long-term studies are demanding, opportunistic records are step by step increasing the information available for poorly known species in the Neotropics (Martuscelli 1996, Whittaker 1996).

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I thank Mauro Galetti for calling my attention to the scarcity of data on the diet of *Buteo brachyurus*, and Milene M. Martins, Marco A. Pizo and an anonymous reviewer for comments on the manuscript. AVC is supported by a fellowship from FAPESP.

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