



Tawny Eagle and a Black Drongo perching on topmost branches.

Habitat: Prefer plain semi-desert or desert country; dry deciduous vegetation and agricultural cropland. Also visit semi-arid plateaus and coasts.

Habit: Perch on tree tops.

Kleptoparasitic raptor and scavenger. Flocking is recorded. Nose-diving flights during the breeding display are spectacular. In flight, wings are held horizontal in line with body.

Distribution: Occurs in India, Pakistan, Nepal, Bangladesh and Myanmar.

Status: Resident. Widespread. Endemic to the Indian sub-continent.



The male Tawny Eagle is attacking intruders to drive them away from its nest site during the breeding season.



Blue Rock Pigeon.



Decapitated rodent.



Dressed rodent.



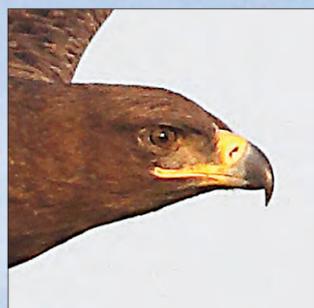
Rodent with hanging entrails.

Food: Hunt rats, mice, shrews, birds and reptiles. Often steal food from smaller hawks, kites and crows. Scavenge on carrion, garbage and carcasses in company of vultures, kites, crows, egrets, dogs, etc.

Key Features:



Female is larger than the male - reversed sexual dimorphism



Gape line ends level with mid eye.



Yellow toes and dark talons.



Feathered trousers and dark tail feathers.

- Variable plumage from buff-white to tawny to dark brown.
- Dark nape and throat in some morphs. Dark trailing edge on underwing.
- Pale wedge on inner primaries on underwing.
- Wings reach tail tip when perched.
- Gape line ends level with the center of the eye.
- Iris yellow. Nostril oval.
- Legs and tarsi feathered.
- Feet yellow. Claws – horny black.

Variable Plumages:



Cultural Aspects:

Sanskrit names: **Pichabaan** (literally Tail – Arrow) alluding to the use of quills to feather arrows; **Ragpakshi** means an angry bird.

Etymology: *Aquila* (L), an eagle; *rapax* (L), rapacious, grasping; due to quarrelsome nature. (Pande, Satish. 2009).

Related Aquila Eagles:

Steppe Eagle (*A. nipalensis*), Imperial Eagle (*A. heliaca*), Greater Spotted Eagle (*A. clanga*) and Golden Eagle (*A. chrysaetos*) are winter migrants while Indian Spotted Eagle (*A. hastata*) is resident Indian endemic.

Nest Building:



Both the male and the female eagles bring sticks and small branches to build nests.

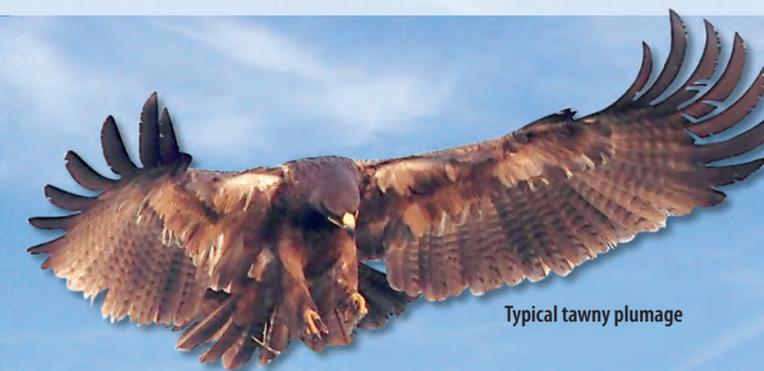


The pair of Tawny Eagles perching near the prospective nest site.



Tawny Eagle alighting on the nest built in the canopy.

On trees such as *Ficus*, *Prosopis* and *Acacia* species; *Dalbergia sissoo*, *Azadirachta indica*, etc. near villages or cropland. Nest is made of sticks and branches and lined with leaves. Incubation is by female and male feeds her. Both share parental duties.



Typical tawny plumage

Courtship and Mating



Male bringing food to the nest for the female in the nest - an act of courtship.



Mating continues after eggs are laid and it is believed to strengthen the pair bond.

Threats:



Rodenticide residues enter in the diet of eagles due to their habit of scavenging on dead rats and mice that could have previously consumed such rodenticides. Habitat loss and change in land use pattern are other major threats.

Economic importance and conservation: Controller of agricultural pests. Poultry lifting invites the anger of villagers. Once caused nuisance to falconers when they chased trained falcons mistaking their trailing jesses for prey. Protected under Indian Wild Life (Protection) Act.

FACT FILE: Tawny Eagle *Aquila rapax* Franklin, 1831.

Type locality: Vindhya Hills, central India.

Suparna (Sanskrit); **Garud** (Marathi); **Ragar, Okaab** (Hindi); **Deshi Jummdi** (Gujarat); **Bursawul** (Yerkali); **Parmar** (Sind); **Ali** (Tamil); **Aldwa** (Telugu).

- **Size:** 63 - 71 cm.
- **Weight:** 2400 - 2700 g.
- **Wing:** Male 500 - 535 mm; Female 510 - 560 mm.
- **Breeding season:** November to April.
- **Clutch:** 2-3 eggs.
- **Eggs:** Greyish white with red-brown spots. 66.0 mm x 52.8 mm (Baker).
- **Incubation:** 44-45 d.
- **Nuptial displays:** Noisy nose-dives and feeding by male.
- **Nesting success:** Undetermined. Apparently poor due to feeding poisoned rats to chicks.
- **Call:** Loud, raucous *kaak, kak*. Also *kraa, kek, kek*. Chicks utter loud chips.



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Tawny Eagle

- **Order:** Falconiformes. ● **Family:** Accipitridae. ● **Status:** Resident.
- Endemic to the Indian Subcontinent.

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Fantastic Flight



Soaring.



Landing.



Flapping.

Amazing Eagle Facts:



Female defends an attacking Black Kite by vocalizing.



Nestling defends an attack from an intruder by threat display.



The chick has white plumage which is eventually replaced by brown feathers.

Tawny Eagles chase other birds to pirate prey from them and in turn the nesting eagles are mobbed by kites and crows for stealing prey brought by them for feeding the young! The chicks are white and eventually acquire brown adult plumage.

Phenology:



Two weeks chick and male.



Three weeks chick.



Female with five weeks chick.



Six weeks chick.



Eight weeks chick practising wing flapping.



The first flight of a juvenile is often clumsy and covers short distances.



Black Kite harassing a fledgling. Such attacks can inflict mutual injuries.