

Short Communication**Return of Verreaux's Eagle *Aquila verreauxii* to Southern Jordan after 15 Years**Atef I. Khawaldeh^{1*}, Malik S. Nanah¹, and Ricardo Tomé²¹ECO Consult, Amman, Jordan, ²The Biodiversity Consultancy (TBC), Portugal*Received: July 26, 2026; Revised: July 30, 2026; Accepted: July 31, 2026***Abstract**

A Verreaux's Eagle (*Aquila verreauxii*) was observed and photographed in Wadi Alyoutom, Aqaba, southern Jordan, on 6 October 2025. This represents the first confirmed national record of the species in 15 years. The sighting was made during ecological monitoring conducted under the Environmental and Social Impact Assessment (ESIA) for the Aqaba–Amman Water Desalination and Conveyance Project. This record highlights the value of systematic ecological monitoring for documenting regionally rare or uncommon species in southern Jordan.

Keywords

Middle East, Raptor, Aqaba, rare bird record, biodiversity monitoring.

Introduction

The Verreaux's Eagle (*Aquila verreauxii*) is a large raptor widely distributed across sub-Saharan Africa and parts of the Arabian Peninsula. It is typically associated with rugged, mountainous terrain, and preys mainly on rock hyraxes (*Procavia capensis*) (Ferguson-Lees & Christie, 2001). Although listed as Least Concern by the IUCN (BirdLife International, 2024), the species is rarely reported in the Middle East, where its distribution is limited and records are sporadic (Ferguson-Lees & Christie, 2001). In Jordan, confirmed sightings of Verreaux's Eagle have been exceedingly rare, with the last verified record in the 29th April 2010 (Al Awaji *et al.*, 2010). The present

report documents the return of the species to southern Jordan after a 15-year absence, based on field observations conducted as part of an environmental impact assessment project.

Observation

On 6th October 2025, an adult Verreaux's Eagle was observed in Wadi Alyoutom (29°38'22.61" N, 35°10'25.49" E), approximately 35 km north of Aqaba, southern Jordan. The bird was detected at a distance approximately less than 1 km soaring along the slopes of a rugged mountain wadi at 08:00 h under clear weather conditions. occasionally, the bird perched on some rocks (Figure 1).

The observation was made by the authors during bird survey conducted for the Environmental and Social Impact Assessment (ESIA) of the Aqaba–Amman Water Desalination and Conveyance Project. The bird was identified based on the species' large size, characteristic all-black plumage, white sides of the mantle forming a large U-shaped marking on the upperparts in flight, white rump and upper tail-coverts, slightly wedge-shaped tail and distinctive large white patch formed by the primaries' bases underneath. Photographs taken during the observation clearly confirmed all these features (Figure 1). No additional individuals were observed, and the bird was not seen during subsequent visits to the area.

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Figure 1. Verreaux's Eagle photographed in the field

Discussion

This record represents the first confirmed sighting of *Aquila verreauxii* in Jordan since 2010, when the species was last recorded in the Dana area (Al Awaji *et al.*, 2010), approximately 200 km to the north-northeast of Aqaba. The reappearance of

the species after 15 years is noteworthy and could represent occasional dispersal from populations in the Hijaz Mountains of north-western Saudi Arabia, although the origin of the observed individual remains unknown. The record highlights the ecological significance of southern Jordan's arid and mountainous environments, which

may provide habitat for regionally rare or uncommon species. It also demonstrates the importance of systematic biodiversity monitoring associated with major infrastructure projects, which can yield valuable data for conservation planning. Continued environmental monitoring and habitat protection are important for safeguarding these ecosystems, particularly given the expansion of development activities in southern Jordan.

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