

**Size comparisons between the Sparrowhawks:**

	Black		Ovambo		Little	
	M	F	M	F	M	F

Length (approx)	40cm	52cm	30cm	37cm	23cm	25cm
Wingspan (approx)	64cm	95cm	60cm	70cm	39cm	50cm
Weight (approx)	540g	900g	140g	260g	74g	106g

**Over the next few months we will be printing a series of pamphlets featuring the raptors seen on our CCJ estate.**

**These include the Black Sparrowhawk, Little Sparrowhawk, Ovambo Sparrowhawk, Gabar Goshawk, Long-crested Eagle, Common Buzzard, African Harrier Hawk, European Honey Buzzard and Spotted Eagle Owl.**



**Want to learn more about the exciting environment of the Greater Woodmead Estate?**

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chelseak@ccj.co.za**



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**THE COUNTRY CLUB**  
JOHANNESBURG



## **Black Sparrowhawk**

**No.1 in our series:  
Raptors of the Woodmead Estate**



Black sparrowhawks are built for dense arboreal habitats. They are large, robust and powerful birds of prey and are a regular sighting on the Woodmead estate. They can be identified by their impressive size and black and white pied plumage. The female is considerably larger than the male (female 900g, male 540g). An adult female measures up to 52cm with a wingspan of around a metre.



### ***Polymorphism:***

There are two colour morphs among the Black sparrowhawks: The white-morphs have black upper parts and are predominantly white on their chest, belly, and legs. This is the common variation found across the range of the species. The rare black-morphs are mainly found in the coastal regions of South Africa where they are almost completely black.



### ***General Habits:***

Solitary and spend time perched quietly below tree canopies. They are aggressive towards Egyptian Geese as these geese often bully them off their nests. They're also aggressive towards Hyraxes (dassies) of which we have an increasing number.

### ***Food:***

It feeds predominantly on birds, especially doves and pigeons, rarely feeding on small mammals. It will chase prey for up to 1,5kms and forage for food in a 10-15km area around its nest site. They become problematic in rural areas where they also hunt chickens. Black sparrowhawks occasionally prey on other raptors like shikras, wood owls, and even other sparrowhawk species. Females generally hunt larger prey than males.

### ***Distribution:***

Widespread from Senegal and somalia, south to South Africa.



### ***Breeding:***

Monogamous, solitary nester. The stick nest is built by both sexes, starting 50-145 days before egg laying. The nest lining of green leaves is typically brought by the male up to one month before egg laying. One nest is known to have weighed over 10kg. Usually three eggs are laid between May and December. Incubation period is 36-38 days and the female will spend 90% of her day on the nest. The male provides for the female during her incubation period. Black sparrowhawks are particular about their nests, and they usually return to the same nest each year.



### ***Development and care of the young:***

At 29-36 days the chicks are almost fully feathered. At 35-40 days the chicks will start climbing amongst the branches near the nest. The chicks will continue to be fed by the adults up to 60 days after fledging; thereafter the adults move away forcing independence.