

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



Ovambo Sparrowhawk

**No.2 in our series:
Raptors of the Woodmead Estate**



Named after the Ovamboland region in northern Namibia.



Identification:

Medium-sized sparrowhawk that is normally grey, but there is a rare black morph (see pic below). Shows diagnostic white streaks along the central part of the tail, but these are hard to see. The legs and the base of the bill are yellow to reddish. On the typical grey birds, there is grey barring below which is finer and denser on the chest and throat than in other grey sparrowhawks. Call is a fast kwee-kwee-kwee ascending in tone when male approaches with prey. Main contact call is a sustained kiek-kiek-kiek.... kiek-kiek-kiek.



Distribution and movements:

It occurs in sub-Saharan Africa and breeds mostly south of the equator. The main range is in southern Africa where it extends from the southern DRC to Northern Namibia, Botswana, northern South Africa, Eswatini and Mocambique. In western Africa it is found from the Central African Republic in the east to the Ivory Coast in the west.

Habits:

The Ovambo sparrowhawk is almost exclusively a hunter of birds. Its hunting technique is more like that of a falcon rather than a typical sparrowhawk, hunting by soaring at a relatively high height and swooping on any prey spotted, then chasing it for 100–200m. However, it often perches quietly within the tree canopy, when not hunting.

Breeding:

The Ovambo sparrowhawk is territorial and the female does most of the nest-building, creating a platform of sticks lined with bark chips and occasionally green leaves. It is typically placed in the canopy of a tree, either a native tree or an alien tree such as pine or eucalyptus. The eggs are laid during August to November, peaking in August and September and the clutch is between one and five eggs. The female incubates the eggs, while the male brings her food, usually 2-3 times a day. The male continues to be the sole provider of food for both the female and the chicks for 18 days after hatching, after which the female starts to hunt too. The young fledge after 33–39 days and become fully independent about a month after that.



Food:

Feeds mainly on small birds, which it usually captures after fast pursuits. Mostly hunts from an exposed or concealed perch, but also soars at times and swoops at prey.

Prey is normally taken in the open, close to the ground, not pursued into cover. Approximately 14% of hunts are successful.



Confusing species:

Shikra and Gabar Goshawk

