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Ornithological Observations accepts papers containing faunistic information about birds. This includes descriptions of distribution, behaviour, breeding, foraging, food, movement, measurements, habitat and plumage. It will also consider for publication a variety of other interesting or relevant ornithological material: reports of projects and conferences, annotated checklists for a site or region, specialist bibliographies, and any other interesting or relevant material.

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## **EURASIAN KESTREL *FALCO TINNUNCULUS* BROOD FOOD AND FEEDING IN POTOHAR, PUNJAB, PAKISTAN**

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## EURASIAN KESTREL *FALCO TINNUNCULUS* BROOD FOOD AND FEEDING IN POTOHAR, PUNJAB, PAKISTAN

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Ecologists study raptor diets to understand their niches and relate it to community ecology (Lewis 2004). The raptor diets provide valuable information on prey distribution, abundance, behaviour and vulnerability. Knowledge of a species' diet should therefore be an integral component of any management and conservation plans for that particular species. The Eurasian Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus* is a small raptor that is widespread in open country and is an opportunistic forager that catches what is locally available (Village 1982). Habitat composition and prey availability for different kestrel subspecies change greatly along with geographical distribution.

Potohar (N 32° 33' and 34° 03', E 71° 89' and 73° 37') is the northern part of the province of Punjab which includes the districts of Rawalpindi (including Federal Capital Area), Chakwal, Attock and Jhelum. Potohar is bordered on the north by the Margalla and Kala Chitta hills and on the south by the Salt Range which is separated from the main mountain ranges of the west by the Indus River. The rough high-lying Potohar Plateau (305-610 m asl) connects the Salt Range to Himalayan foothills towards the north. The western and eastern sides of the plateau are flanked by the rivers Indus and



**Fig 1** – An Eurasian Kestrel with an Indian Spiny-tailed Lizard in its talons.

Jhelum, respectively. The average annual rainfall in Potohar varies from 1500mm in the northeast to about 380mm in the southwest (Anon. 1976).

On 9 July 2013 we were conducting a raptor survey in Potohar. The weather was hot. I observed a nest of an Eurasian Kestrel in a hole on a cliff. One bird was observed guarding the two nestlings in the nest cavity. No fledgelings was seen in the vicinity of the nest. One member of the pair remained in the close proximity of the nest to protect the nestlings from possible predators. The other member of the pair arrived about five minutes later with a lizard in its talons. The prey was identified as an Indian Spiny-tailed Lizard *Saara hardwickii*



**Fig 2** – The Eurasian Kestrel at the entrance of the nest cavity with the Indian Spiny-tailed Lizard clearly visible in its talons.

(syn *Uromastyx hardwickii*). This observation of prey taken by these kestrels corresponds with the findings of Steen (2011).

The nest cavity measured 42cm in length and 25cm in width and it was 150m from the ground level in the cliff face.

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