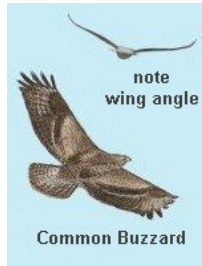
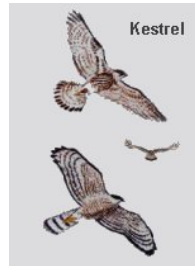


Glider Pilots' guide to Soaring Birds



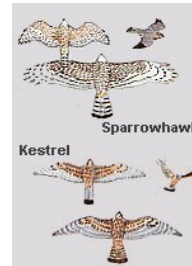
Widespread. Soars frequently. Enjoys company of 'big white birds'. This is the bird most frequently encountered



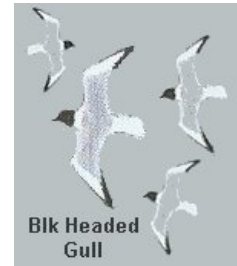
Familiar hovering over roadside verges, Can be confusing when soaring. Compare Sparrowhawk



Does not hover, but soars well Chases smaller birds, sometimes in dive

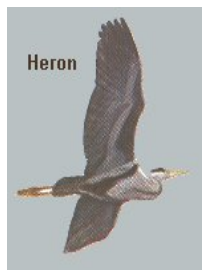


Kestrel long pointed wings. Sparrowhawk blunter. If it shows signs of hovering, it's a Kestrel. Flap-glide is typical of Sparrowhawk

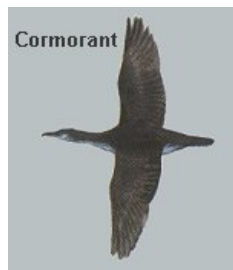


The most likely gull to be seen soaring, often in loose untidy gaggles

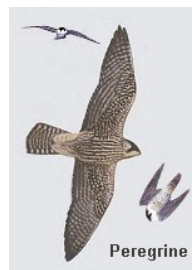
Here we have birds that you are less likely to find casually, except of course the Common Swift. Swifts don't soar but are excellent thermal markers



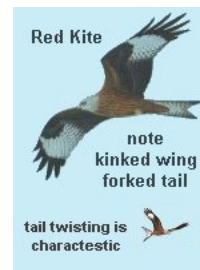
The familiar Heron does sometimes soar. Note kinked neck.



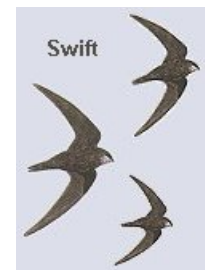
Looks very dark in flight. Common over lakes and gravel pits England. Soars only occasionally.



Magnificent, uncommon raptor. Surprisingly small. Dives at prey. Nests cliffs, quarries, even tall buildings



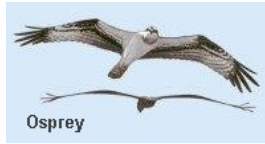
Rapidly increasing in abundance. Now common in the Chilterns, particularly around the M40 cutting. Colonies many other areas. Expert at low level soaring.



Swifts chase insects that have been caught in thermals, sometimes to great heights. Often in large flocks.

Swifts are summer visitors, May to early August. Don't confuse with Swallows and House Martins. Scimitar shaped wings are the clue

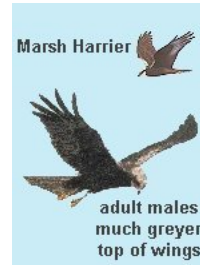
The juvenile Black Headed Gull is common but might confuse the unwary into thinking they have found a rarity. But the others are good find



Summer visitor to Scotland and now Rutland Water. Migrating birds seen near lakes and reservoirs April and again August to October. Outline almost gull shape. A very black and white bird



Much smaller than Osprey and not really likely to confuse. All gulls soar but are difficult to identify. Black Headed adults are commonest



Fairly common on coastal districts. Also Fens. Flies absurdly slowly with wings held high. Rarely soars



Extremely rare visitor (plus some escapes from bird collections). Soars magnificently with far fewer continual adjustments - it flies much more like a real glider

The real rarities



May to September only. Very rare. No more than about a dozen pairs in Britain. HQ around the Wash. Note black line along wings (Marsh Harrier does not have) Example shown is male. All adult male Harriers grey on wings. Females and juveniles brownish



Very rare summer visitor (May to September) HQs near the Wash and Clumber Park, Notts



Honey is similar to Common Buzzard Main clue is angle of wings when soaring, but also but "pigeon head" (less fierce)



Golden Eagle needs a trip to the north west of Scotland. They might be seen on the ridge at Feshie. The amount of white on the underside of the wing varies with age being most on younger birds

Nearly all "Eagles" reported by birdwatchers are in fact Buzzards

This is not an exclusive list - for example Rooks and Ravens will soar. Fulmars fly magnificently along cliffs. There are other birds that you are most unlikely to see - Cranes need a visit to the Norfolk Broads (where they are very rare anyway)

Images loosely adapted from Collins, Helm, Pica and other guides

I don't suppose this has whetted your appetite for birdwatching. But just in case it has, may I recommend a good guide? "Pocket Guide to the Birds of Britain" from Pica Press. ISBN 1-873403-496 [Link to order guide](#)

Birding needn't clash with gliding. Some of the best birdwatching is in the depths of winter when we get an influx of Northern birds that think our winters are warm!
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