# School bans outdoor play after aggressive buzzard attacks in Essex village



In a surprising turn of events, a dive-bombing buzzard has prompted Dame Tipping Primary School in Havering-atte-Bower, Essex, to prohibit outdoor activities for its students following a series of alarming attacks. Since Easter weekend, residents have reported multiple encounters with the aggressive bird of prey, which has become increasingly confrontational towards villagers in the tranquil area near Romford.

The headteacher, Ms McCarthy, acknowledged the challenges posed by the protected species, with the school announcing, “nothing can be done” other than to keep pupils indoors. To ensure the well-being of students during recess, the school has implemented additional indoor breaks featuring engaging activities, such as traditional board games and cup stacking competitions. While Louise Whittle, a parent, remarked that the situation has provided an unexpected educational opportunity for the children, she voiced concern about prioritising the birds over student safety. “It’s absolutely bonkers that there is a buzzard attacking people,” she said, adding her hope for a return to normalcy once the bird departs.

The local council has noted that the buzzard's aggressive behaviour might be linked to its protective instincts towards its nest or chicks, advice corroborated by representatives from the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA). Due to the bird's protected status under UK law, options for intervention remain limited, with local authorities suggesting that warning signs might be the most feasible solution.

This surge of buzzard-related incidents in Essex follows similar events across the UK. In Scotland, for instance, Ewan Cameron endured severe head injuries from an aggressive buzzard while jogging near Friockheim. He described the experience as akin to being punched, recounting that the bird attacked him multiple times. The RSPB emphasises that such confrontations, while rare, often stem from parental protection during the nesting season, which typically lasts from mid-April for several months.

In Bedfordshire, reports have emerged of residents being similarly targeted by birds of prey, with one woman sustaining a head injury while out walking. Jeff Knott from the RSPB indicated that these occurrences, although unusual, should prompt locals to be cautious, especially during breeding periods.

Adding to these accounts, a recent incident in Worcestershire highlighted an earlier and severe buzzard attack on a 71-year-old man. Despite being rare, these incidents underscore a broader issue of wildlife interactions in populated areas and the complexities of managing protected species. Conservationists continue to advocate for maintaining a balance between human activities and wildlife, asserting that the threat posed by buzzards is often overstated. They call for a greater appreciation of these birds, which have rebounded in numbers across the UK.

As communities adapt to these extraordinary circumstances, the potential for future incidents remains a concern, sparking discussions on the need for strategies that ensure public safety without compromising wildlife protections.

### 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/buzzard-havering-atte-bower-romford-essex-dame-tipping-school-b2761867.html), [[2]](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/buzzard-havering-atte-bower-romford-essex-dame-tipping-school-b2761867.html)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/buzzard-havering-atte-bower-romford-essex-dame-tipping-school-b2761867.html), [[4]](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-beds-bucks-herts-57853325)
* Paragraph 3 – [[3]](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2023/05/16/buzzard-attacks-runners-scotland-ewan-cameron/), [[5]](https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-scotland-tayside-central-65601462)
* Paragraph 4 – [[4]](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-beds-bucks-herts-57853325), [[6]](https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-hereford-worcester-13725474)
* Paragraph 5 – [[7]](https://www.essexlive.news/news/essex-news/bird-of-prey-shot-thrice-8070705.amp)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/buzzard-havering-atte-bower-romford-essex-dame-tipping-school-b2761867.html> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/buzzard-havering-atte-bower-romford-essex-dame-tipping-school-b2761867.html> - A dive-bombing buzzard has forced a village primary school to ban children from going outside following a spate of attacks. The bird of prey has been attacking villagers in Havering-atte-Bower, near Romford, Essex, since Easter weekend, according to residents. Dame Tipping Primary School said “nothing can be done” but to keep pupils inside due to the animal being a protected species. Resident Nikki Dix, 37, said she was “dead shocked” after the bird left scratch marks on her head while she was walking through a park in March. Footage showed the buzzard swooping down on Louise Whittle, a parent of a pupil at the school, as it appeared to aim for her head. Headteacher Ms McCarthy said: “We have also introduced additional indoor breaks with lots of engaging activities including traditional board games, cup stacking competitions and puzzles.” A Havering Council spokesperson said: "The RSPCA has advised that the buzzard may be protecting its nest or chicks, which lines up with the information we have received. Buzzards are protected under UK law, therefore our intervention options are very limited, and we have advised that warning signs would be the easiest solution at this time."
3. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2023/05/16/buzzard-attacks-runners-scotland-ewan-cameron/> - Runners in Scotland have been advised to wear helmets after an aggressive buzzard left a runner with head injuries following a terrifying attack in a tranquil Scottish village. The bird of prey left Ewan Cameron, 46, with six wounds on his head while he was jogging around three miles from Friockheim, Angus. Mr Cameron said it was the third time the combative animal with a wingspan of up to 60in had attacked him, sinking its sharp talons into the back of his head. The RSPB said the bird was likely to have been an “overprotective parent” protecting its young in a nearby nest.
4. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-beds-bucks-herts-57853325> - Several residents of Flitwick, Bedfordshire, have been attacked by a bird of prey while out walking or jogging. Eva Ruby suffered a wound to her head after being swooped on by the bird of prey in Flitwick on 10 July. It is believed the bird could be a buzzard protecting its nest. Jeff Knott from the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) said events of this nature were "extremely rare". He advised local residents to avoid the area during the breeding season, which begins in mid-April and can last a few months depending on how many eggs are laid.
5. <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-scotland-tayside-central-65601462> - A runner in Friockheim, Angus, was left with painful claw marks on his head after being attacked by a buzzard. Ewan Cameron, 46, was out for his run when the bird of prey swooped on him. After sharing his story online, multiple other runners came forward saying they had experienced similar attacks. Mr Cameron said: "It's like someone is punching you in the back of the head." He told the BBC Scotland's Drivetime he was running around three miles outside his village when the attack happened. "The talons are very sharp and they just sunk into the back of my head effectively. I've got a collection of about six holes in my head as a consequence of the attack."
6. <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-hereford-worcester-13725474> - A 71-year-old man was left pouring with blood after being attacked by a buzzard in a field in Worcestershire. Nick George suffered deep claw injuries to his head when the bird dive-bombed him on a path in a wheat field near Severn Stoke. Experts have said such incidents were rare, but were usually the behaviour of a parent protecting its young. Mr George had been planning a route for the Tewkesbury University of the Third Age walking group when he spotted the buzzard being "mobbed" by a group of crows. At one point, it flew close to him and he shooed it away with his walking poles. Later, as he returned to his car, the bird swooped at him. "I thought I'd been hit on the head with a stick or a brick and I staggered forward with my walking poles which luckily kept me on my feet," said Mr George. Falconry expert Mark Palmer said such attacks by buzzards were rare. "June is the month when young buzzards will be leaving their nests and trying to find their way in the world and some of them might not be that good at flying, so they may land on the ground or a low branch," he said. "Like any good parent, the buzzard is going to do its best to protect [its young] if it feels they are threatened."
7. <https://www.essexlive.news/news/essex-news/bird-of-prey-shot-thrice-8070705.amp> - A buzzard was found with three bullets inside its body near Hardy's Green just outside Colchester. The Essex Police Rural, Wildlife and Heritage Crime team shared an x-ray of the bird, which showed three bullets inside its body, one in the shoulder, the neck and pelvis. The team found the injured buzzard on January 11, 2023. The RSPB said: "Birds are still shot and, being carrion feeders, they are also particularly vulnerable to poisoning. This may be limiting breeding numbers in these areas. There is currently no specific conservation action for buzzards, but general conservation work aimed at broad scale habitat management will benefit buzzards by increasing the availability and abundance of prey. We have successfully provided information to gamekeepers on how to reduce the impact on pheasants of birds of prey, though research has shown that such losses are small. The majority now accept that the threat posed by buzzards to humans is overstated, and we should celebrate the beauty of the once again ‘common’ buzzard."