# Essex primary school bans outdoor play as territorial buzzard attacks children



A village primary school in Havering-atte-Bower, near Romford, Essex, has taken the unusual step of banning children from outdoor activities due to an alarming series of dive-bombing attacks by a local buzzard. Since the Easter weekend, this seemingly innocuous bird of prey has left residents, including children, visibly shaken and concerned for their safety.

According to reports, Dame Tipping Primary School's headteacher, Ms McCarthy, stated that the school has "no choice" but to keep pupils inside, as the buzzard is a protected species under UK law. This legal protection, while imperative for wildlife conservation, leaves the school with limited options to manage the situation effectively. As a response, they have introduced a range of engaging indoor activities, from classic board games to competitions, in an attempt to maintain a positive environment while ensuring safety.

One resident, Nikki Dix, recounted a particularly distressing encounter during which the buzzard left scratch marks on her head. "He was giving me an evil eye, so I began swinging my bag above my head," she shared, illustrating the fear that has gripped the community. Another parent, Louise Whittle, underscored the absurdity of the situation, calling it “bonkers” that a buzzard is attacking people. Yet, she also acknowledged the educational benefit for children, who have learned about these birds, despite the challenges posed by their aggressive behaviour.

The local council spokesperson noted that the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA) believes the buzzard may be acting defensively, potentially protecting its nest or chicks. This rationalisation aligns with previous reports of similar territorial behaviours exhibited by birds during their breeding seasons. Just recently, runners near Haverhill, Suffolk, experienced similar attacks, describing the sensation of the buzzard's talons scraping their heads. Such incidents suggest a concerning trend of aggressive behaviour among buzzards across various regions of the UK.

While buzzards were once on the brink of extinction due to persecution and pesticide use, their resurgence in British ecosystems has been a significant conservation success story. However, this recent spike in aggressive encounters draws attention to the delicate balance between wildlife protection and community safety. Historically, incidents involving aggressive birds of prey, like the attacks from a rogue hawk in Hertfordshire that injured numerous individuals, highlight the complexities that can arise with wildlife resurgence.

Despite the challenges posed by the buzzard in Havering-atte-Bower, some in the community express hope that the situation will resolve itself as the breeding season passes. Parents like Whittle are optimistic that the buzzards will move on, returning life to normal for the village and allowing children to resume their outdoor activities. Until then, the school and local authorities are left navigating the fine line between nurturing wildlife and ensuring the well-being of their community.

### 📌 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.suffolknews.co.uk/haverhill/news/colliding-talons-sounded-like-crashing-cutlery-runners-at-9369376/)
* 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.essexlive.news/news/essex-news/bird-of-prey-shot-thrice-8070705.amp)
* Paragraph 3 – [[2]](https://www.suffolknews.co.uk/haverhill/news/colliding-talons-sounded-like-crashing-cutlery-runners-at-9369376/), [[5]](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-tayside-central-65601462)
* Paragraph 4 – [[6]](https://www.hertfordshiremercury.co.uk/news/uk-world-news/fears-small-children-after-buzzard-7213334), [[7]](https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-beds-bucks-herts-57853325)
* Paragraph 5 – [[3]](https://www.essexwt.org.uk/wildlife-explorer/birds/birds-prey/buzzard), [[6]](https://www.hertfordshiremercury.co.uk/news/uk-world-news/fears-small-children-after-buzzard-7213334)

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## 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.suffolknews.co.uk/haverhill/news/colliding-talons-sounded-like-crashing-cutlery-runners-at-9369376/> - Runners near Haverhill, Suffolk, have reported being attacked by a buzzard on a country road near Helions Bumpstead. Jack Tappin described the sensation as feeling like being hit in the back of the head, while Andy Gage recounted the sound of the buzzard's talons scraping on his skull. The attacks are believed to be territorial behaviour during the breeding season. ([suffolknews.co.uk](https://www.suffolknews.co.uk/haverhill/news/colliding-talons-sounded-like-crashing-cutlery-runners-at-9369376/?utm_source=openai))
3. <https://www.essexwt.org.uk/wildlife-explorer/birds/birds-prey/buzzard> - The Essex Wildlife Trust provides information on buzzards, the most widespread UK bird of prey. Once suffering from severe persecution and pesticide poisoning, buzzards have made a stunning comeback to most of the UK. They are known for their cat-like 'kee-yaa' calls and can be found soaring over grassland, farmland, and woodlands. ([essexwt.org.uk](https://www.essexwt.org.uk/wildlife-explorer/birds/birds-prey/buzzard?utm_source=openai))
4. <https://www.essexlive.news/news/essex-news/bird-of-prey-shot-thrice-8070705.amp> - A buzzard was found near Colchester, Essex, with three bullets inside its body. Despite the brutal attack, the bird survived and received treatment. The incident highlights ongoing issues with the illegal shooting of birds of prey in the region. ([essexlive.news](https://www.essexlive.news/news/essex-news/bird-of-prey-shot-thrice-8070705.amp?utm_source=openai))
5. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-tayside-central-65601462> - In Friockheim, Angus, a runner was left with painful claw marks on his head after being attacked by a buzzard. Multiple other runners reported similar experiences, with the attacks attributed to the buzzard defending its territory during the breeding season. ([bbc.co.uk](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-tayside-central-65601462?utm_source=openai))
6. <https://www.hertfordshiremercury.co.uk/news/uk-world-news/fears-small-children-after-buzzard-7213334> - In Royal Wootton Bassett, Wiltshire, a woman claimed a buzzard or red kite swooped and tried to grab her chihuahua. The incident has raised concerns about the safety of small children and pets in the area. ([hertfordshiremercury.co.uk](https://www.hertfordshiremercury.co.uk/news/uk-world-news/fears-small-children-after-buzzard-7213334?utm_source=openai))
7. <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-beds-bucks-herts-57853325> - In Flitwick, Bedfordshire, several residents were 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, believed to be a buzzard protecting its nest. ([bbc.com](https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-beds-bucks-herts-57853325?utm_source=openai))