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About Our Cover

This beautiful rufous crab hawk (*Buteogallus aequinoctialis*) was photographed in a well-conserved mangrove ecosystem, in the Itapicuru River estuary, in Conde, Bahia, Brazil, during a research field trip coordinated by Charbel N. El-Hani (Federal University of Bahia and National Institute of Interdisciplinary and Transdisciplinary Studies in Ecology and Evolution/INCT IN-TREE, Brazil). This hawk is known as Gacici in the traditional fishing villages of the estuary. As a local saying tells us, if "Gacici sang, the tide turned." This is part of the traditional fishing knowledge the researchers are investigating in the local villages. The Gacici's calls are used by the fishermen as an indication that the tide will be low after some time and they need to retrieve the captured fish from their nets.

The conserved estuary where the picture was taken harbors a healthy population of this near-threatened species, a top predator that is among the first animals affected by mangrove degradation. Gacici and other rare birds found in this ecosystem play an important role in the establishment of sustainable birdwatching tourism that can generate income for local fishers, who are being trained as guides by the research team.

Available knowledge about this hawk is relatively limited. In Google Scholar, one can retrieve only 43 works dealing with different aspects of its biology. Its size ranges from 42 to 46 cm, and it weighs 600–800 g. In the picture, we can see an adult animal perched in a mangrove tree, as they are commonly seen in the estuary, where many birdwatchers have already had the pleasure of finding them. From these perches, they dive to feed on crabs, their main prey. Before mating, the couple puts up a show, performing aerial acrobatics, with chases, circular flights, and dives. In the nests, also commonly seen in the Itapicuru estuary, the female lays a single egg.

This digital image was recorded with a Canon PowerShot SX50 HS camera. The photographer is Rafael Félix, a researcher from INCT IN-TREE, Brazil. For more information, please contact charbel.elhani@gmail.com and rafafelix29@gmail.com.

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