



Laggar Falcon *Falco jugger* and
Common Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus* - a probable
case of Interspecific competition

A dead Common kestrel (*Falco tinnunculus*) female was spotted with a Laggar falcon (*Falco jugger*) perched over the top branch at Blackbuck National Park, Bhavnagar. As per the local guide, it was the result of interspecific competition. The observation brings out the probability of interspecific competition. Although I have not captured any direct evidence of a fight between the two birds of prey, death due to intraspecific competition cannot be overruled. Many records of birds of prey killed by another bird of prey have been reported (Hammond & Pearson 1993). As per the study by Gause (1934), species sharing similar resources can result in competition, and the superior species will dominate the inferior species. Both the Laggar falcon and Common Kestrel food niches overlap. Overlapping food niches are an indication of competition (Lack 1946).

During winter, Blackbuck National Park and its surrounding grasslands host large accumulations of birds of prey owing to their large food sources. As per Ganpule et al. (2022), the Laggar falcon is an uncommon to rare resident of the state, whereas the Common kestrel is a common wintering bird of prey. Laggar falcons and Common kestrels share the same phylogeny, habitat, and prey base in a habitat, even though the size difference is conspicuous.

I have noted many inter- and intraspecific competitions between different Falconiformes species reported at Velavadar. Niche breadth (understanding the diversity of resources utilised by a species) and niche overlap (resource sharing between two or more species) are affected by competition, and the study of these parameters can help determine community structure (Griffiths 1986). Calculating food niche overlap statistics can elaborate on existing competition coexisting in an area (Pianka 1973). Sutherland (1998) suggests importance of Behavior study in conservation biology. A more detailed study of the inter- and intraspecific competition of birds

of prey at Blackbuck National Park is required for behavior study vis-à-vis conservation science.

References

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