



BIRD OF THE YEAR 2026

BLACK HARRIER (CIRCUS MAURUS)

LESSON PLAN 7: MIGRATION AND SURVIVAL OF THE BLACK HARRIER INTERMEDIATE PHASE (GRADE 4-6) SUBJECT LINKED: SOCIAL SCIENCES

Learning objectives:

By the completion of this lesson plan, learners should be able to:

- Describe the regional migration patterns of the Black Harrier.
- Explain why animals migrate.
- Identify threats such as renewable energy developments and climate change.
- Discuss how human activities affect biodiversity.
- Suggest ways to protect endangered species.

What is Migration?

Migration is the seasonal movement of animals from one place to another in search of food, breeding areas, or better weather conditions.

Regional movement of the Black Harrier:

The Black Harrier is a bird of prey found mainly in South Africa.

- It moves between:
- Western Cape (breeding areas in winter rainfall regions)
- Eastern Cape & Northern Cape & Free State + Lesotho areas (non-breeding season)
- Migration of a Black Harrier is not long-distance like some birds, but it is regional (within South Africa & Lesotho)
- Movement depends on:
- Availability of prey (e.g. small mammals and birds)
- Rainfall patterns
- Habitat conditions

Why do animals migrate?

- To find food when conditions in their breeding areas are not optimal
- To find safe breeding areas with enough food for raising chicks
- To avoid harsh weather
- To increase chances of survival

Threats to the Black Harrier:



1. Renewable Energy Development

- Wind farms are increasing in South Africa
- Wind turbines can cause collisions and disturb nesting areas
- Poor placement of wind farms can also cause deaths as birds migrate

2. Climate Change

- Changes rainfall patterns
- Affects grasslands where Harriers hunt
- Reduces the availability of prey
- Can disrupt migration timing

3. Other Human Threats

- Habitat destruction (farming, development)
- Pollution
- Disturbance of nesting sites

Conservation

- Protecting habitats
- Planning wind farms away from key bird areas
- Monitoring endangered species
- Raising awareness

Activity 1: Short questions

1. What is migration?

2. Name two reasons why the Black Harrier migrates.

3. Identify two threats to the Black Harrier.

4. Explain how climate change affects the Black Harrier.

5. Suggest one way to protect the species.

Activity 2: Map Migration

Use the map of South Africa below to:

- Label the Western Cape, Eastern Cape, and Northern provinces;
- Draw arrows showing migration routes; and
- Label breeding and non-breeding areas of the Black Harrier.



Map of South Africa

Activity 3: Cause and effect table

3.1 Use the table below to identify and explain the causes and effects contributing to the decline of the Black Harrier. The first one has been done as an example for you:

Threat	What happens	Effect on Black Harrier
Habitat loss	Less space	Fewer nesting areas

3.2 Is renewable energy always good for nature? Give reasons and suggest solutions, such as the better placement of wind farms.

Activity 4: Creative Poster

Create a poster about the following topic: Save the Black Harrier

Make sure to include:

- Migration routes;
- At least two different threats that the species faces; and
- Two solutions that could help protect the species.