

# Cuckoo Hawk

Koekoekvalk

*Aviceda cuculoides*

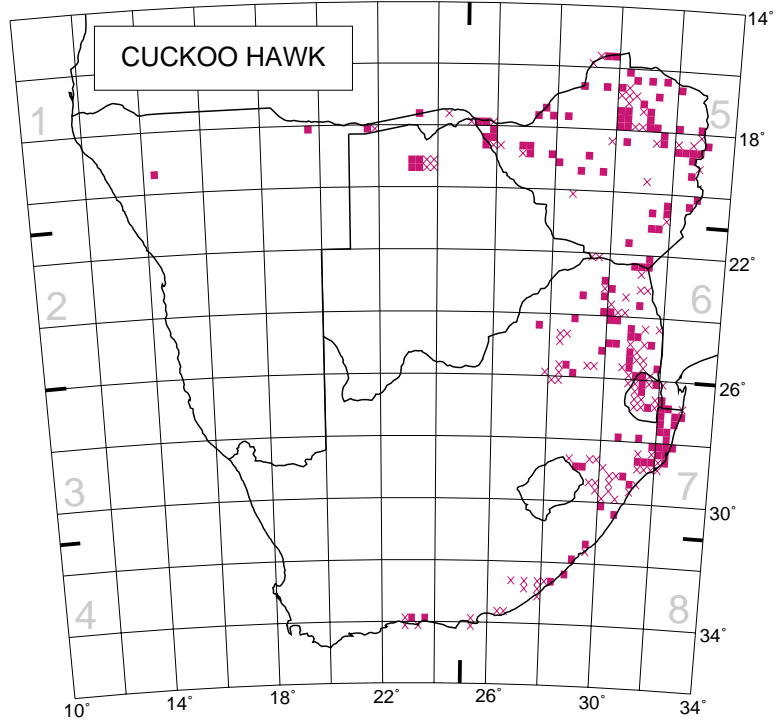
The Cuckoo Hawk is found in moist, well-vegetated areas throughout sub-Saharan Africa. The distribution map shows the Cuckoo Hawk to be mostly confined to the eastern half of the atlas region, especially Zimbabwe, the eastern Transvaal and northeastern Kwa-Zulu-Natal. Post-atlas records from Grootvadersbosch (3320D) (Ryan & Moloney 1995) and Somerset West (3418BB) (B. Kakebeeke pers. comm.) extend its known distribution into the southwestern Cape Province.

It is secretive and easily overlooked, but is thought to be uncommon throughout its southern African range (Steyn 1982b). Immatures can be confused with the African Goshawk *Accipiter tachiro* which frequents similar habitat. However, if seen clearly, plumage, general appearance and habits are all unique, and it is unlikely to have posed an identification problem for most observers.

The vegetation analysis confirms its preference for woodlands, forests and riparian habitats. It nests and roosts in medium to large trees, and tends to forage in and around dense habitats. Reporting rates were highest in the Eastern Zimbabwe Highlands and Miombo vegetation types, known to be favoured by this species in Zimbabwe (Irwin 1981; Steyn 1982b).

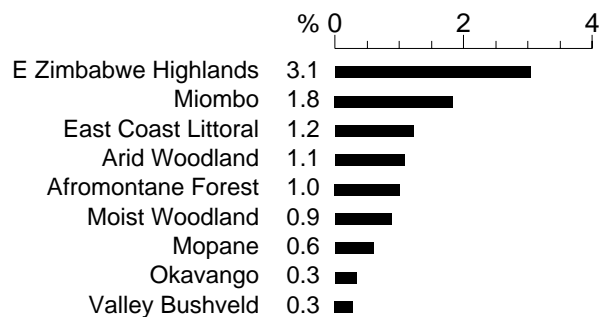
Seasonal movements are suspected in the Transvaal (Tarboton & Allan 1984) and in Zimbabwe (Irwin 1981), but not confirmed by the present analysis. Occurrence at any one site is often erratic (A.J. Tree *in litt.*). The models show a pre-breeding increase in reporting rate which may relate to increased conspicuousness due to breeding display flights and calling during this time. Breeding occurs in midsummer (October–February) when prey (insects and reptiles) are most abundant (Steyn 1982b; Hall *et al.* 1991). The atlas breeding data span November–May.

Its conservation status is listed as ‘indeterminate’ in South Africa (Brooke 1984b), but there is nothing to suggest a recent decrease in the population. It has been found to breed in suburban areas and in plantations of alien trees (Chittenden 1984; Hall *et al.* 1991). The Cuckoo Hawk may have suffered some loss of natural habitat in recent times, but afforestation and the spread of alien trees has probably compensated for this in many areas (Brooke 1984b; Ryan & Moloney 1995; Allan *et al.* 1997).



Recorded in 247 grid cells, 5.4%  
 Total number of records: 717  
 Mean reporting rate for range: 2.3%

### Reporting rates for vegetation types



A.R. Jenkins

