



Gabar Goshawk

Witkruissperwer

Micronisus gabar

The Gabar Goshawk is an Afrotropical species which is frequent to common in the areas north of about 26°S. The distribution to the south of 26°S is more patchy and is largely attributable to suitable habitat provided by *Acacia*-dominated watercourses and to trees around homesteads in arid regions. Brown (1986a) found three nests spaced 4.3 and 5.8 km apart and Simmons (1994) reported breeding densities of at least 0.3 pairs/100 km² in both the eastern Transvaal lowveld and at Matobo (2228CD).

It is most closely related to the chanting goshawks (Colebrook-Robjent 1986; Kemp 1986) but in size, shape and habits it is more similar to, and easily confused with, the small accipiters (Black & Ross 1970). The obvious white rump as seen in flight usually helps avoid confusion. It is also more conspicuous than the accipiters in its more open habitat. The melanistic form is found in about 6–14% of individuals in southern Africa (Brown 1986a). It usually occurs singly or in pairs.

Habitat: It is found in open woodland, especially *Acacia* parkland and *Acacia*-dominated riverine communities, and less commonly in closed woodland and forest. It also occurs in some urban areas and in trees around farmsteads in arid areas, but it has not benefited from the spread of alien trees to the extent shown by the accipiters (Allan & Tarboton 1985). It extends far into the arid regions avoided by most of that group. Its habitat requirements are reflected in the high reporting rates in the Okavango, Kalahari, Mopane, Namibian Escarpment and woodland vegetation types. In the Karoo, Namib and grassland vegetation types, suitable habitat is provided locally by *Acacia*-dominated riparian communities.

Movements: It is regarded as sedentary and the models indicate that it is present throughout the year in all parts of its range. Although the atlas data do not suggest major seasonal movements, the models for most Zones show increased reporting rates outside the breeding season (April–July). The reasons for this are not clear but could be related to enhanced conspicuousness through increased and wider movements, and the dispersion of first-year birds. For example, monthly counts made in the central Kruger National Park indicated a March–July influx, possibly of immatures (Kemp & Snelling 1973). In its range to the north of southern Africa, it has been reported to undergo north–south migrations, with distinctions being made between breeding and nonbreeding populations (Brown *et al.* 1982).

Breeding: The atlas data indicate that breeding occurs throughout its range. Breeding was recorded mainly August–January with an October–November peak. This coincides with the breeding season given in the literature, namely August–March, with an egg-laying peak September–November (Irwin 1981; Brown *et al.* 1982; Brown 1986a; Tarboton *et al.* 1987b). The fact that breeding occurs in the southern parts of the range (Zones 4 and 8) indicates that the species is a resident rather than a nonbreeding visitor.

Historical distribution and conservation: There has been no apparent change in the distribution of this raptor in the Cape Province (Boshoff *et al.* 1983). However, encroachment of *Acacia* species, especially *A. karroo*, in overgrazed areas and along watercourses in arid areas has probably extended the range of the species in the southern parts, e.g. in the Karoo and drier grassland regions. Overall, the current distribution in southern Africa is considered to reflect the historical distribution. The conservation status of the Gabar Goshawk is considered to be good (e.g. Tarboton & Allan 1984).

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Recorded in 1806 grid cells, 39.8%
Total number of records: 8662
Mean reporting rate for range: 11.7%

Reporting rates for vegetation types



