

Pallid Harrier
Witborspaddavreter
Circus macrourus

The Pallid Harrier is a central Eurasian nonbreeding migrant to the grasslands of the Sahel and eastern regions of Africa, but also spreads into southern Africa where it is generally sparse. It is usually encountered singly but may roost in small groups.

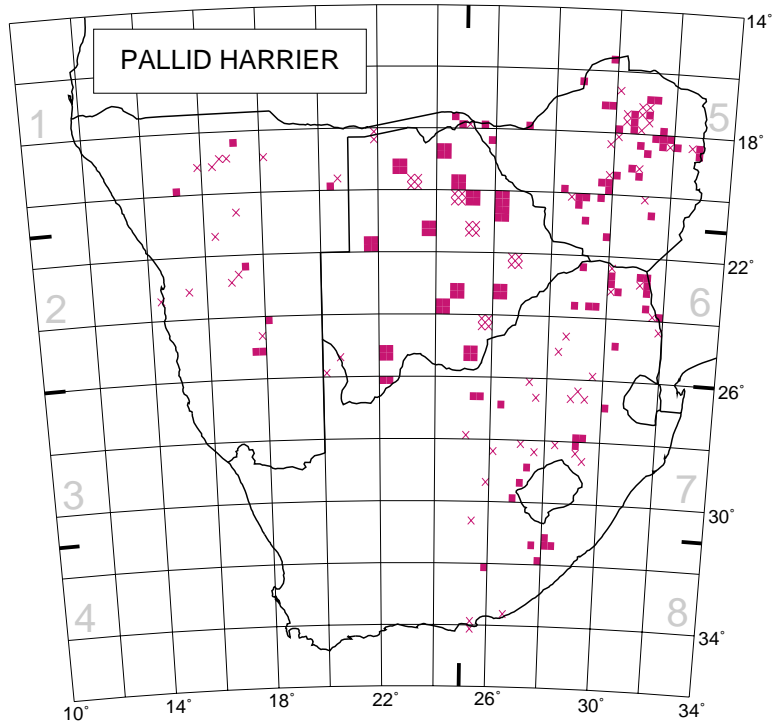
The male is distinctive, although some novice observers may have confused it with the Black-shouldered Kite *Elanus caeruleus*. Females and immatures of Pallid and Montagu's *C. pygargus* Harriers can be confused easily, suggesting that they may both have been under-reported if observers followed the motto: 'If in doubt leave it out.'

It forages over natural grasslands and open areas in woodland, as well as in agricultural fields. The vegetation analysis reveals that it inhabits a similar range of vegetation types to Montagu's Harrier, but it occurs more frequently in the west than does Montagu's Harrier, although it is generally less common than that species (e.g. Abernethy & Herremans 1994; Penry 1994). Both species can regularly be found alongside each other in grasslands in northern Botswana, such as the Savuti and Mababe depression (1824B,C), Deception Valley (2123), Lake Xau (2124B) and the Makgadikgadi Pans (Penry 1994; M. Herremans pers. comm.). They arrive and depart at about the same time but, unlike Montagu's Harrier, the Pallid Harrier seems to appear at the same time in the western half of the subcontinent compared with the eastern half.

It appears to have declined generally (e.g. Tarboton *et al.* 1987b) and it is now the rarest migrant harrier in Zimbabwe (A.J. Tree pers. comm.). It has decreased even more alarmingly on its breeding grounds than Montagu's Harrier, owing to habitat loss and pesticides (Del Hoyo *et al.* 1994). It is now regarded as a globally near-threatened species (Collar *et al.* 1994).

R.E. Simmons

Recorded in 209 grid cells, 4.6%
 Total number of records: 268
 Mean reporting rate for range: 2.0%



Reporting rates for vegetation types

