

African Hobby Falcon

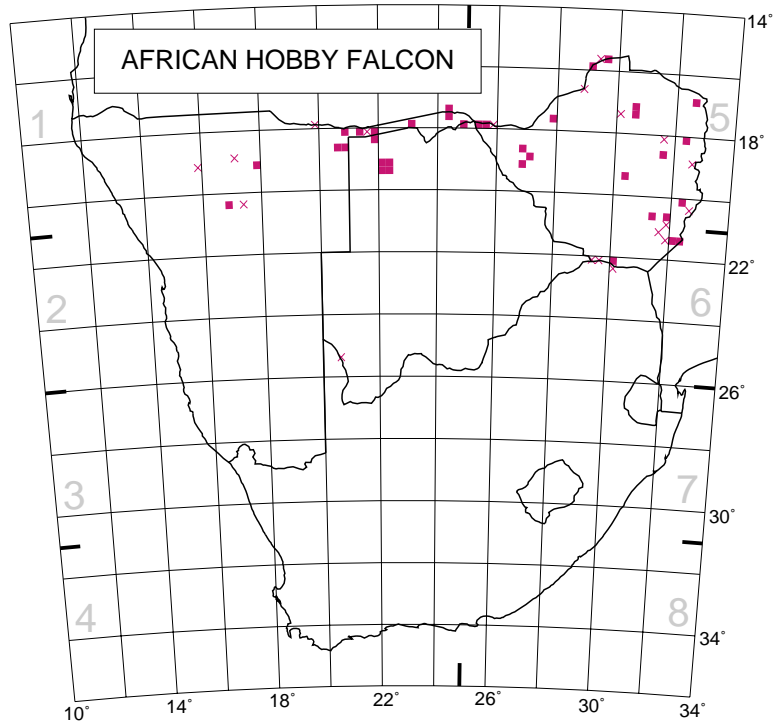
Afrikaanse Boomvalk

Falco cuvierii

The African Hobby Falcon is poorly known, inconspicuous and generally uncommon throughout its range in tropical and subtropical Africa, although it can be locally common in some areas, such as the forest-savanna ecotone in West Africa and the Lake Victoria Basin (Del Hoyo *et al.* 1994). The great majority of records in southern Africa are from Zimbabwe and northeastern Namibia. It occurs regularly in the Hwange National Park (1826, 1926) (Irwin 1981) and is not uncommon in the Caprivi and adjoining eastern Kavango region (pers. obs). During the atlas period only a single record was received from south of northern Namibia and Zimbabwe, of two vagrants recorded together in the Kalahari Gemsbok Park (2520BC) (Herholdt 1989). It has previously been recorded four times in the Transvaal (Tarboton *et al.* 1987b), and twice in the eastern Cape Province: the original type specimen, presumably a vagrant, in 1830, and a subsequent record from Bushman's River (3326DA) (Tree 1973b). A single record from KwaZulu-Natal (Cyrus & Robson 1980) requires confirmation, as do some of the other South African records.

Several factors suggest that it may be more common, at least locally, than is commonly thought: it is usually active only in the late afternoon and early evening, its rapid flight seldom allows good views and clear identification, and it may be mistaken for the European Hobby Falcon *F. subbuteo* which is more conspicuous and numerous in the region.

In Zimbabwe, it appears to associate preferentially with palms, while broadleaved (*Baikaea*, *Burkea* and Mopane) woodland is favoured in Namibia. It usually hunts insects, small birds and bats in open clearings and over waterholes. It often joins flocks of European Hobbies and other raptors feeding at termite alate emergences. Irwin (1981) suggested that it may be a summer migrant to southern Africa; atlas data support this with the great majority of records being September–April. There are very few breeding records in southern



Recorded in 56 grid cells, 1.2%
 Total number of records: 83
 Mean reporting rate for range: 2.5%

Africa; the use of old Wahlberg's Eagle *Aquila wahlbergi* and Yellowbilled Kite *Milvus migrans parasitus* nests is reported in Zimbabwe, eggs being laid September–November (Steyn 1982b).

There is no evidence to suggest a change of range in historical times. Elsewhere in Africa, the African Hobby Falcon is common in some densely populated areas, including cities (Del Hoyo *et al.* 1994).

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