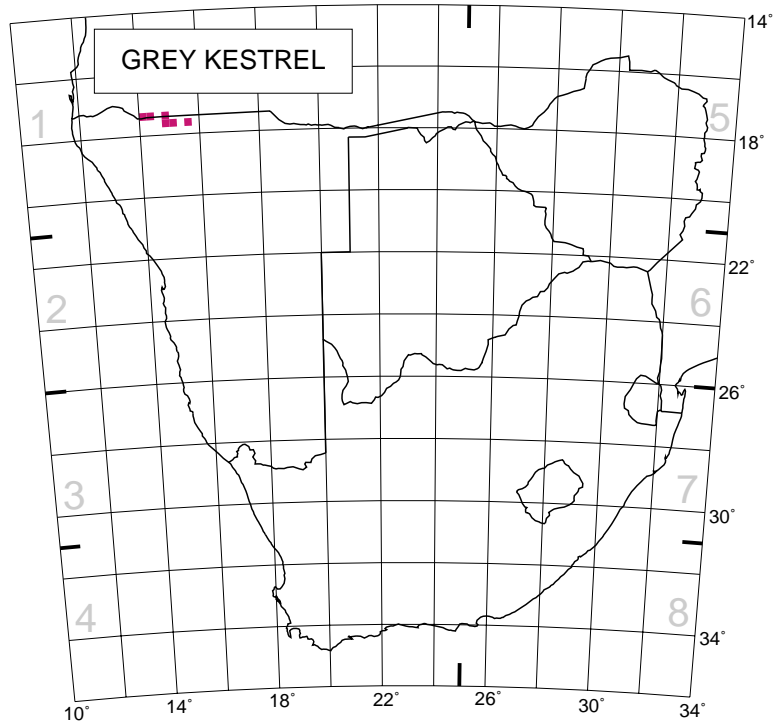


Grey Kestrel
 Donker Grysvalk
Falco ardosiaceus

Extraliminally the Grey Kestrel occurs as an uncommon resident in the tropical, mesic savannas of western and central sub-Saharan Africa (Brown *et al.* 1982; Cade 1982). It occurs only in the extreme northwest of the atlas region, in the Owambo and northeastern Kunene regions of northcentral Namibia. Until recently it was considered a peripheral species to southern Africa, with no substantiated breeding records (Maclean 1993b) and few accepted sightings. However, a study by Brown *et al.* (1997) showed it to be a breeding resident within its Namibian range, with a population of c. 40 pairs.

Described as a shy, silent species (Brown *et al.* 1982) it can be confused in the field with the Sooty Falcon *F. concolor* and Dickinson's Kestrel *F. dickinsoni* (Brown *et al.* 1982). It is largely restricted to the *Hyphaene* palm savanna of the Cuvelai drainage system (Brown 1993) and along watercourses and in artificially cleared areas of adjacent woodland (Brown *et al.* 1997). It occurs less commonly in riparian habitats along the Kunene River, downstream from Ruacana Falls (1714AC) (Brown *et al.* 1997).

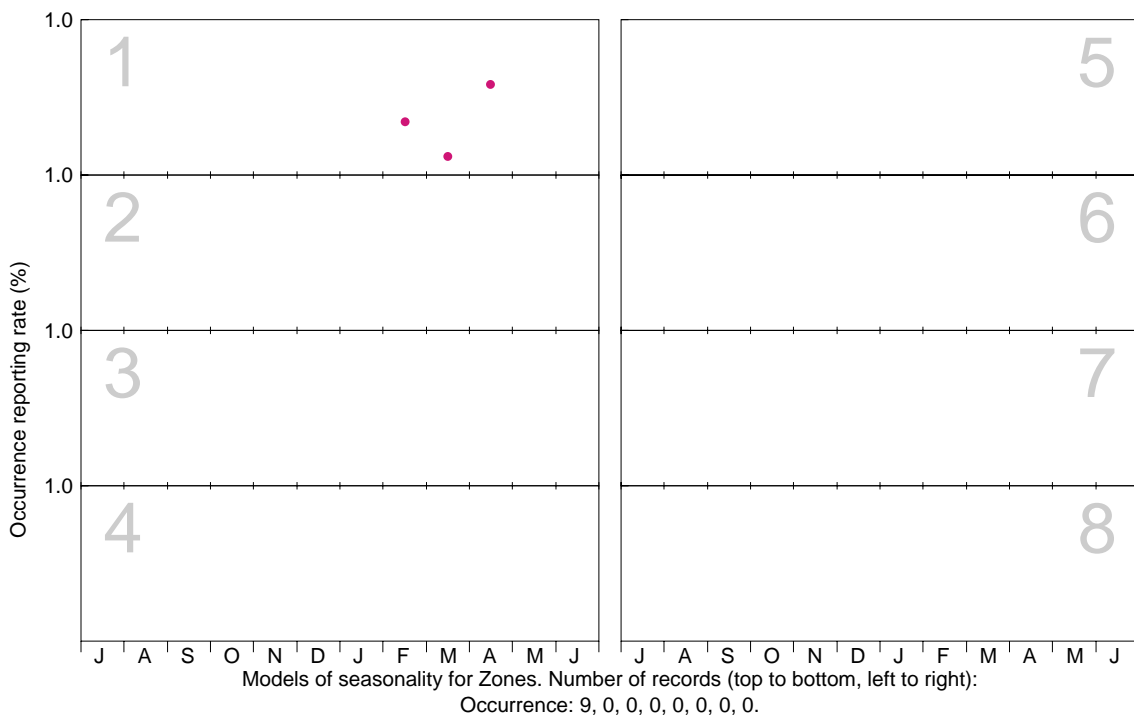
The species is resident in northcentral Namibia and there is no evidence to suggest that seasonal movements take place within the atlas region. Breeding has been recorded only once in southern Africa, with eggs laid around mid-September (Brown *et al.* 1997). Although this breeding attempt took place in a tree-cavity, it usually breeds in Hamerkop *Scopus umbretta* nests, and this has been suggested as a factor restricting its distribution and abundance (Brown 1970). However, in Namibia, probably most nest sites are in holes high up in palm trees, as there are few Hamerkop nests in the Cuvelai system (C.J.B. pers. obs). Perhaps the relationship between Grey Kestrels and Hamerkops is not as close as Brown (1970) suggested.



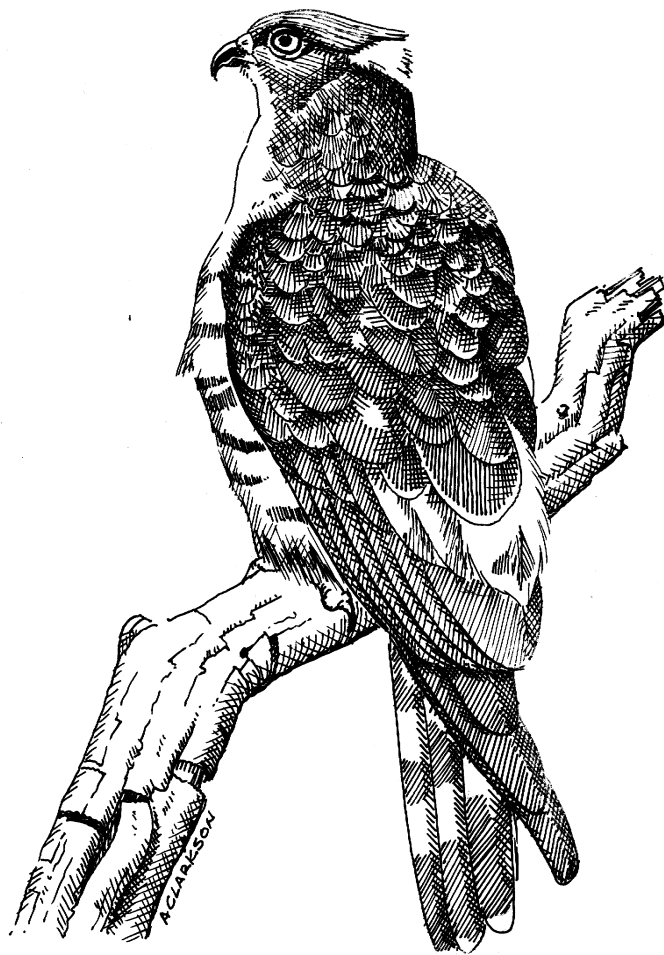
Recorded in 6 grid cells, 0.1%
 Total number of records: 9
 Mean reporting rate for range: 13.2%

The Grey Kestrel is uncommon throughout its range. The Namibian population coincides with an area of relatively high human population disturbance. While it may apparently benefit from the clearing of natural vegetation for agriculture (e.g. Thiollay 1977), the response of the southern African population to future anthropogenic influences should be monitored.

A.R. Jenkins and C.J. Brown



Cuckoo Hawk



Steppe Buzzard

