

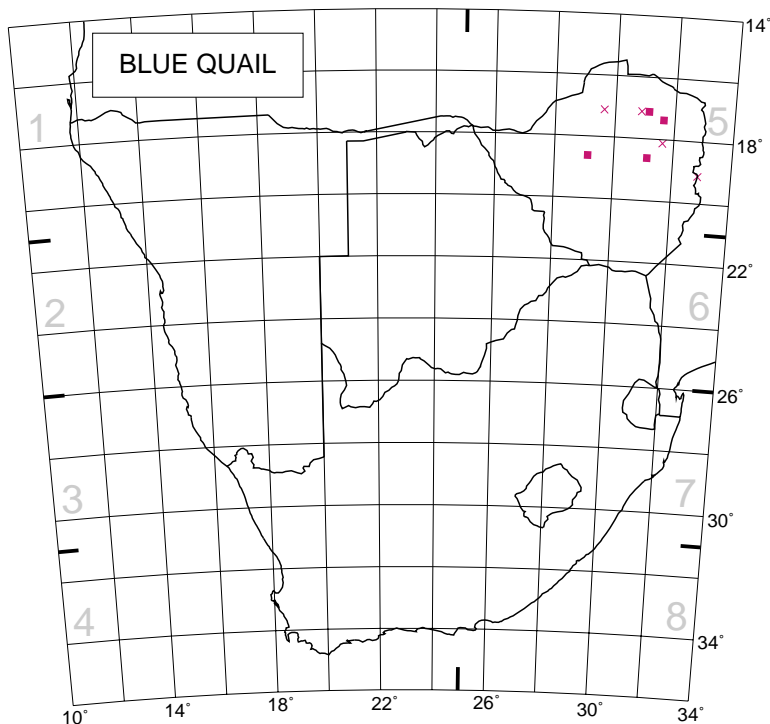
Blue Quail

Bloukwartel

Coturnix adansonii

The Blue Quail has a wide range in Africa extending across West to East Africa and southwards to southern Africa. During the atlas period, it was recorded only in northeastern Zimbabwe. The last published mention for KwaZulu-Natal appears to be a bird found dead in Durban (2931CC) in 1973 (Cyrus & Robson 1980). It must always have been only vagrant in the Transvaal where the last record is of a specimen collected in 1910 (Tarboton *et al.* 1987b). A similar vagrant record exists for Botswana where an adult male was shot near the Khwai River in the Okavango in 1981 (Borello & Borello 1997). In Zimbabwe, where it is essentially a summer visitor, it is described as frequenting seasonally moist grassland and vleis (Irwin 1981), but a few birds linger well into the dry season after exceptionally good rains. There is a single breeding record from coastal KwaZulu-Natal in March 1925 (Brooke 1984b) and it has been recorded breeding in Zimbabwe January–April (Irwin 1981).

The Blue Quail is now a rare bird in southern Africa and there appears to have been a dramatic contraction of its range since it was described as a sparse summer resident in KwaZulu-Natal, with a few birds overwintering (Clancey 1964b). The droughts of the 1980s must have had a negative effect on its occurrence at the southern extremities of its range but, in common with its congener, the Harlequin Quail *C. delegorguei*, and many other birds frequenting moist habitats, it may move southwards in numbers only in response to a strong southward movement and establishment of the Inter-tropical Convergence Zone during the period November–January. In Zimbabwe in 1981, following the exceptional rains of the 1980–81 summer, relatively large numbers returned the following November when, for example, up to 20 birds were found in a wheatfield near Chegutu (1830AA) (Tree 1982b).



Recorded in 8 grid cells, 0.2%
Total number of records: 9
Mean reporting rate for range: 1.8%

The future of the Blue Quail in southern Africa appears to be dependent on good pluvial periods rather than conservation measures, although the draining of many wetlands must have had a negative effect on its conservation status. It was classified 'indeterminate' in the South African Red Data book (Brooke 1984b).

A.J. Tree

