

Striped Flufftail

Gestreepte Vleikuiken

Sarothrura affinis

An uncommon to rare species with a discontinuous and relict distribution in montane regions from southern Sudan to the Cape Province. The race *S. a. antonii* occurs south to Zimbabwe, where it is known from only three localities (Irwin 1981; atlas data). The nominate race is endemic to South Africa and Swaziland where recent records confirm that it is more widespread than atlas data indicate (Taylor 1994).

It inhabits dry upland grassland or montane fynbos, sometimes with bracken, brambles or *Protea*, or near forest edges. It requires dense cover with clear ground below for foraging and is sometimes found in crops such as lucerne and millet (Keith *et al.* 1970; Urban *et al.* 1986; Taylor 1994). In South Africa it occurs mainly in high-altitude grasslands, and in Fynbos in the southern and southwestern Cape Province (Taylor 1994). Although often associated with drainage lines or small marshy areas, there is no convincing evidence that it regularly occupies wetland habitats (Taylor 1994). It is most uncommon in farming areas, especially where grazing pressure is high and burning is frequent. Its altitudinal range in South Africa is 90–2100 m (Taylor 1994).

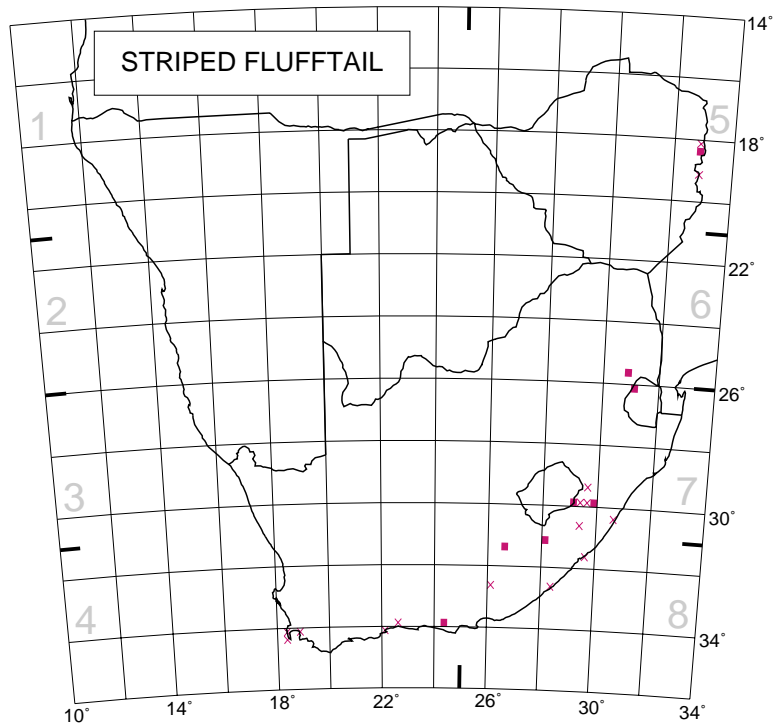
It is resident in areas where cover and food remain suitable throughout the year (Taylor 1994). In the upland grasslands of KwaZulu-Natal, it has seasonal movements, departing April–June with a decrease in the availability of invertebrates, and arriving October–January with increases in cover and invertebrates. Return time to burned vegetation depends on regrowth, which sometimes occurs too late to allow re-occupation in the same season. Movements are probably altitudinal, possibly over short distances (Taylor 1994).

In Zimbabwe breeding has been recorded in January (Masterson & Child 1959). Five South African breeding records are in September, near the end of winter rains, from Somerset West (3418BB) (Kakebeeke 1993), and December–March, during summer rains, from KwaZulu-Natal and Transvaal (Taylor 1994).

The only other rallid known to co-occur with the Striped Flufftail in fire-climax grasslands is the Corncrake *Crex crex*.

It is probably less widespread in the Cape Province and the Transvaal than prior to 1970 (Taylor 1994). In KwaZulu-Natal, it is more fragmented and restricted than before, especially in low-altitude areas (Taylor 1994). Although 'rare' (Brooke 1984b), it may be locally numerous in suitable habitat. However, as its distribution is fragmented and grassland habitats continue to disappear under agriculture and afforestation, the future of the endemic race is not secure (Taylor 1994). Priority should be given to assessing the extent of its seasonal movements in upland areas and to creating and protecting suitable habitat patches (Taylor 1994).

P.B. Taylor



Recorded in 22 grid cells, 0.5%
 Total number of records: 77
 Mean reporting rate for range: 1.4%

Reporting rates for vegetation types

