



Black Korhaan and Whitewinged Black Korhaan

Swartkorhaan en Witvlerk-swartkorhaan

Eupodotis afra and *E. afraoides*

This species complex occurs widely in the drier western and central areas of southern Africa, except for the arid Namib and parts of the Karoo. It is found in most of South Africa, except for the extreme east, the Limpopo River valley and parts of the Karoo; it occurs marginally in the extreme west of Lesotho (Bonde 1993), in most of Namibia, except for the extreme south, west and north, and it occurs in most of Botswana, except for the extreme north and northeast.

The complex comprising the three northern subspecies has recently been formally 're-recognized' as a separate species, the 'Whitewinged Black Korhaan' *E. afraoides*, from the southernmost race, the 'Black Korhaan' *E. afra* (Clancey 1986a, 1989d; Clancey *et al.* 1991; Crowe *et al.* 1994). The ranges of the two forms are largely separate, with the essentially isolated, L-shaped distribution along the west and south coasts representing the range of *afra*. The two forms meet, and hybridize, only in the Fish River valley just south of Cradock (3225BA) (Crowe *et al.* 1994).

Otherwise the two forms are separated in this area by the mountains of the great escarpment. To the west there is an extensive area between the ranges of the two forms where neither occurs, despite the presence of apparently suitable habitat. Both forms are endemic to southern Africa and *afra* is endemic to South Africa.

Both are common and familiar birds throughout their ranges and are usually solitary (Kemp & Tarboton 1976). Males are distinctive and conspicuous owing to their use of prominent perches, their loud calls and arresting aerial displays. The females of *afraoides*, however, are regularly confused with the Redcrested Korhaan *E. ruficrista*, with which they overlap widely, and even the Blackbellied Korhaan *E. melanogaster*, with which *afraoides* is parapatric in northern Botswana and Namibia. Atlas data were vetted carefully to eliminate dubious records.

Habitat: *E. afra* inhabits the shrublands of the fynbos and Karoo biomes in areas where both grass and tree cover are virtually absent and rainfall occurs in the winter or at any

time of the year (Crowe *et al.* 1994). *E. afroides* inhabits summer-rainfall Karooveld, grasslands or open bushveld areas, always where grasses are predominant. The vegetation analysis shows that *afra*, largely restricted to the Fynbos and Succulent Karoo vegetation types, tends to occur at much lower reporting rates than *afraoides*.

Movements: Neither species is thought to show seasonal movements (e.g. Urban *et al.* 1986; Earlé & Grobler 1987; Hockey *et al.* 1989). Seasonal variations in reporting rates are likely to represent enhanced conspicuousness of males in the breeding season. The species are, however, fairly mobile. Local abundance may change quickly with changing conditions, e.g. grazing, drought or rainfall, and they rapidly move into areas when new habitat becomes available. Examples are the colonization of the Savuti Marsh (1824C) as it dried out (M. Herremans pers. comm.), and nomadic movement to the edge of the Namib in response to good rains (C.J. Brown pers. comm.).

Breeding: The breeding data from Zones 4 and 8 encompass most of the range of *afra* and little of that of *afraoides*, and suggest that breeding in the former spans mainly October–March, with a November peak. The data from Zones 1–3 and 5–7, which almost entirely exclude the range of *afra*, suggest that *afraoides* breeds mainly September–January in the eastern half of its range, and later, October–May, in the west. Egg-laying has been recorded in *afra* August–October, with a September peak (Winterbottom 1968a), and Hockey *et al.* (1989) stated that breeding occurs August–January. Breeding of *afraoides* in Namibia apparently occurs July–March (Winterbottom 1971d) and egg-laying in the Karoo and Transvaal spans September–April, mainly December–April (Winterbottom 1968a; Tarboton *et al.* 1987b). It therefore appears that *afra* tends to breed slightly earlier than *afraoides*, but that there is wide overlap.

Recorded in 2146 grid cells, 47.3%
Total number of records: 21 068
Mean reporting rate for range: 27.7%

Interspecific relationships: The taxonomic and ecological relationships between *afra* and *afraoides*, although examined by Crowe *et al.* (1994), require further investigation.

Historical distribution and conservation: *E. afra* may have decreased in the densely settled southwestern Cape Province owing to habitat destruction (Hockey *et al.* 1989). It has been suggested that the range of *afraoides* may have extended southwards into the eastern Cape Province in recent times owing to overgrazing by domestic stock (Crowe *et al.* 1994). In Botswana numbers are depressed outside protected areas, probably as a result of habitat loss from bush encroachment in response to overgrazing (M. Herremans unpubl. data). Elsewhere the abundance and distribution of the two species appear unchanged, and neither form is currently threatened (e.g. Clancey 1973). The recent taxonomic developments, however, necessitate an assessment of the status of *afra* in the light of its restricted range and possible decrease in numbers in the southwestern Cape Province.

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