

# Longtoed Plover

Witvlerkkiewiet

*Vanellus crassirostris*

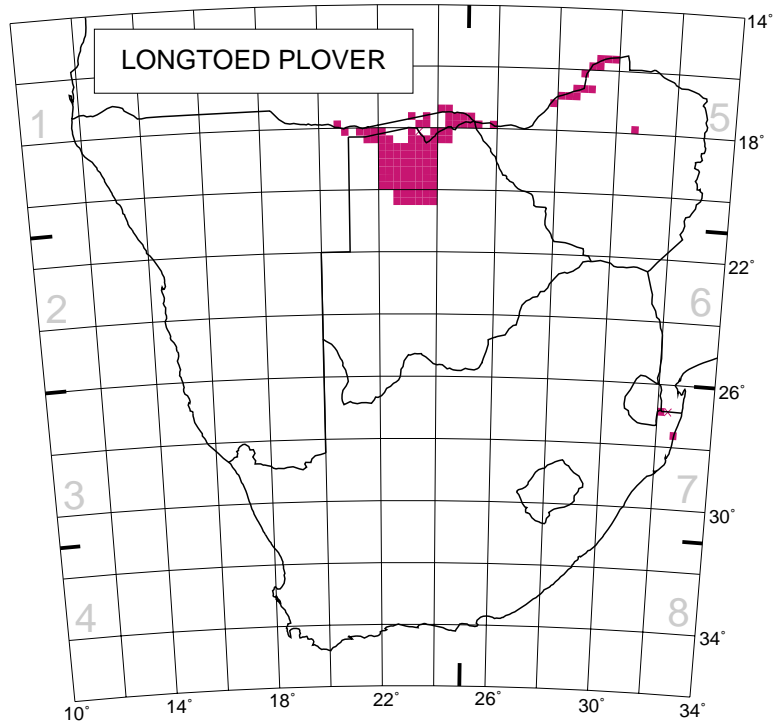
The Longtoed Plover is largely extralimital to the atlas region; the core of its distribution lies from the swamps of the Sudd in southern Sudan to the Kafue Flats in Zambia (Hockey & Douie 1995). It occurs in swamps and rivers with floating aquatic vegetation in northern Botswana, the Caprivi Strip and along the Zambezi River. Abundance varies seasonally, but it generally occurs at low density. During surveys along 1522 km of rivers in northern Botswana in 1993–95, an average of 1 bird/146 km was observed; the highest density was along the Chobe River (1 bird/5.4 km over two dry-season surveys totalling 277 km), with none in 100 km surveyed along the Linyanti River (M.H. unpubl. data).

It is unmistakable, although its white wing pattern may be confused with that of the White-crowned Plover *V. albiceps*.

Egg-laying has been recorded in January and April–October in Botswana and Namibia, which represents the period of peak flooding in that region (Saunders 1970; N.J. Skinner *in litt.*).

It is extremely territorial, and attacks most intruders. Walters (1979) recorded 242 encounters with heterospecifics, of which 92% were with three species: African Jacana *Actophilornis africanus* (72%), Blacksmith Plover *V. armatus* and Squacco Heron *Ardeola ralloides*, species with which it shares a feeding niche.

It shows considerable seasonal dynamics, concentrating along permanent rivers in the dry season and expanding to more ephemeral waters in the wet season; average abundance in northern Botswana along permanent rivers was 1 bird/12.4 km in the dry season and 1 bird/56 km in the wet season (M.H. unpubl. data). It is also mobile within the floodplain system of the Okavango and it recolonized the Boteti River (2023B) in 1995 within two weeks of flooding after it had been dry for several months (M.H. pers. obs). There are vagrant records from the Save River in Zimbabwe (Irwin 1981) and Pilanesberg (2527AC) in the Transvaal (Tarboton *et al.* 1987b). It expanded its range onto Lake Kariba following the development of weed mats, although it has subsequently declined as a



Recorded in 114 grid cells, 2.5%  
 Total number of records: 455  
 Mean reporting rate for range: 16.0%

result of biological control of Kariba Weed *Salvinia molesta* (Ginn *et al.* 1989). During the 1992 drought birds were observed at the Manyame Lakes (1730DC,DD) on the Zimbabwean plateau (Tree 1992f; Marshall 1993). It occurs intermittently in northern KwaZulu-Natal where it was recorded from six grid cells in 1970–79, but only from three during the atlas period, and there is a breeding record from October (Cyrus & Robson 1980).

The conservation status of the Longtoed Plover requires monitoring because human and livestock pressures impact on its riverine habitat.

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