

Blacktailed Godwit

Swartstertgriet

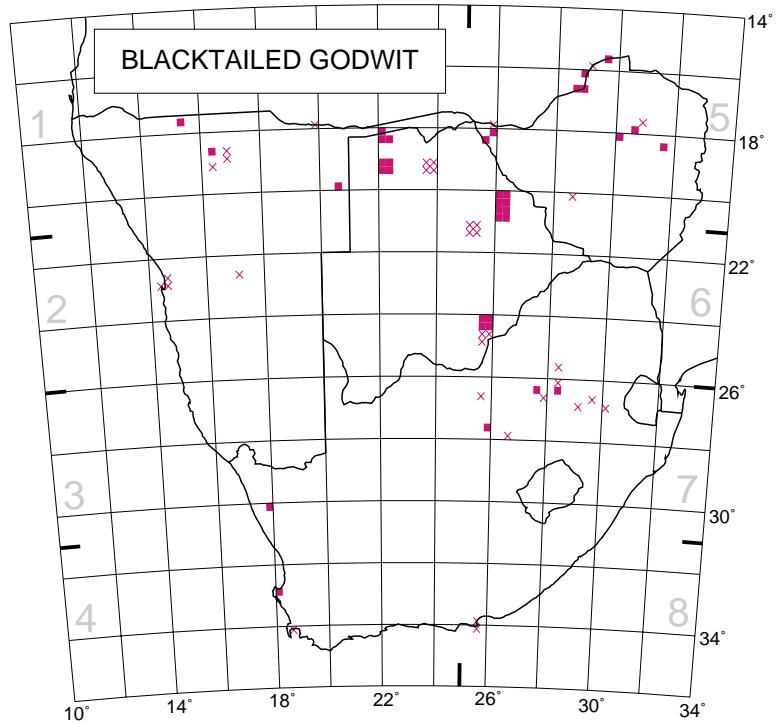
Limosa limosa

The breeding range of the Blacktailed Godwit lies well to the south of the tundra breeding range of the Bartailed Godwit *L. lapponica* in the temperate zone of the Palearctic, with c. 85% of the European population concentrated in the Netherlands. Within Africa, the nonbreeding range is mainly the Sahelian zone from Senegal to the Sudan (Hayman *et al.* 1986; Piersma 1986; Urban *et al.* 1986). Birds viewed critically in southern Africa are mostly immatures (pers. obs); adults presumably remain further north in Africa. Most observations are from northern Botswana, Zimbabwe, northern Namibia and the Transvaal; vagrants occur as far south as the western Cape Province (Hockey & Douie 1995).

In southern Africa, the Blacktailed Godwit is usually seen on wetlands in the interior. The birds found in coastal areas are usually in pans created for salt extraction. This is unlike Blacktailed Godwits spending the nonbreeding season in western Europe or Australia, where the preferred habitat is coastal wetlands. In West Africa it occurs mainly inland and to a lesser extent at coastal sites (e.g. Tye & Tye 1987). The habitat used in southern Africa is normally large pans, dams and river floodplains where the water is shallow and the substrate sufficiently muddy to allow deep probing for food.

Most records occur late August–May with some birds regularly spending the austral winter in southern Africa in Zones 1, 5 and 7.

Until the early 1970s the Blacktailed Godwit was a rare straggler to southern Africa (Clark *et al.* 1974), but it has subsequently occurred with increasing frequency and in increasing numbers (e.g. Tree 1992d,e), possibly paralleling increases in Europe. Although now recorded annually, numbers fluctuate and it would appear that the largest numbers occur during widespread African drought years. 1992 was an



Recorded in 70 grid cells, 1.5%
 Total number of records: 144
 Mean reporting rate for range: 1.3%

example of such a year; c. 500 godwits were seen in Zambia (D. Aspinwall *in litt.*), while in Zimbabwe numbers peaked at 25 in February at Lake Manyame (1730DC) (Tree 1992e).

A.J. Tree

