

Rock Pratincole

Withalssprinkaanvoël

Glareola nuchalis

Rock Pratincoles occurring peripherally in southern Africa are the southernmost representatives of a population extending northwards to equatorial regions. Most are found along the Zambezi River with some records further west at the Kasane Rapids on the Chobe River (1725C) (Randall 1993) and on the Okavango River. Occasional birds 'overshoot' on migration (e.g. Irwin 1981); hence the records from the Kalahari in southern Botswana (Herremans *et al.* 1993a).

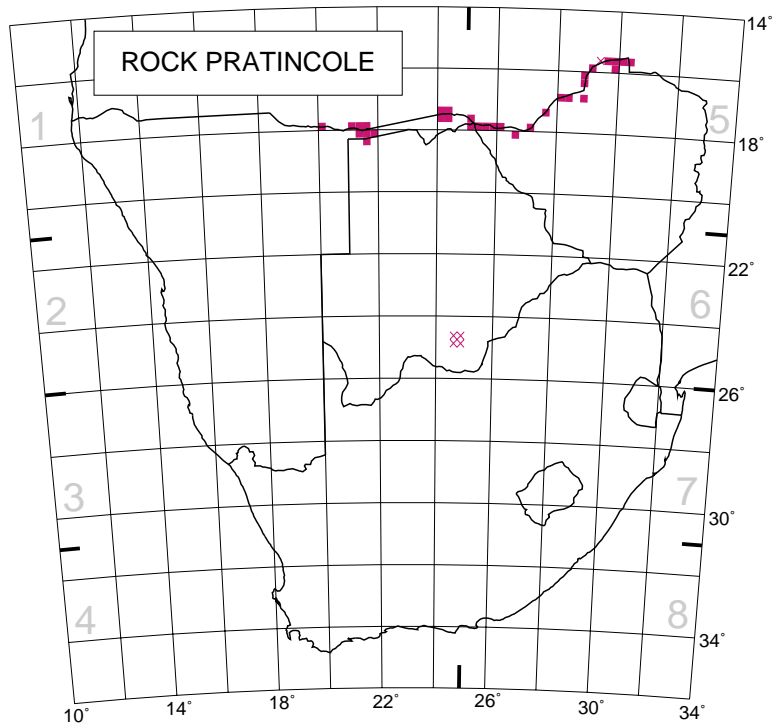
The Zimbabwe population has been assessed at 1600–1800 birds, prior to breeding. They occur on three major sections of the Zambezi River: Botswana border to Victoria Falls about 740 birds; Victoria Falls to Lake Kariba about 700 birds (Pollard 1982; Williams *et al.* 1989); Lake Kariba to the Mozambique border about 320 (Williams *et al.* 1989). In a subsequent survey, the last section yielded 245 adults and three immatures (Wood & Tree 1992). Numbers almost certainly fluctuate depending on water-levels. Limiting factors are not known, as many apparently suitable rocks were either vacant or held few pairs while other outcrops held many pairs.

They favour tropical rivers with substantial rocky outcrops and fast-flowing water. Surprisingly, most nests are found within a metre or two of the water-level (pers. obs). Along the middle Zambezi, this scarce habitat is found mainly in the deep, steep-sided gorges, but upstream of Victoria Falls, on the Zambezi, Chobe and Okavango rivers where the country is flatter and more open, the lower rock outcrops of rapids are utilized. Foraging normally takes place near the breeding areas, but post-breeding flocks range more widely, with birds even feeding around street lights (Benson *et al.* 1971).

It is an intra-African migrant: on the Zambezi arriving from late July, usually August, and departing during the peak rainy period, some lingering into April. The departure time may depend on the intensity and timing of flooding. Breeding occurs August–December; mainly September–November (Irwin 1981; Brown & Clinning in press).

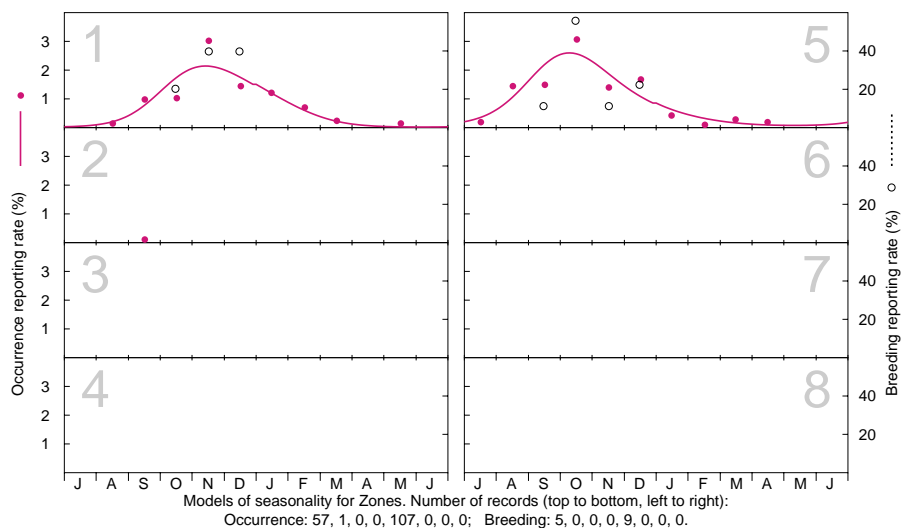
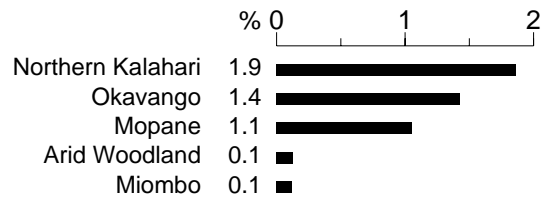
It formerly occurred elsewhere in Zimbabwe, e.g. on the Save River, and on the Rusitu River in Mozambique (Irwin 1981). Silting of the southeastern lowveld rivers has destroyed its rocky habitat. The population on the Zambezi River has been reduced through the building of Kariba Dam and the flooding of the Gwembe Valley. Further dam-building will reduce the population further, because there are no alternative breeding sites; existing sites are unlikely to be able to absorb more pairs of Rock Pratincoles.

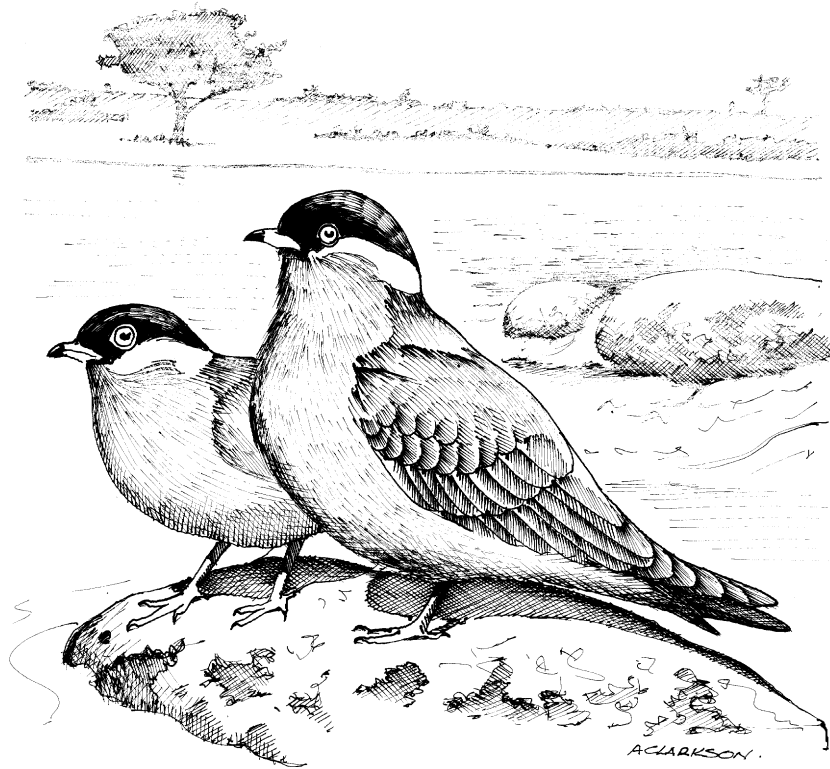
A.J. Tree



Recorded in 38 grid cells, 0.8%
 Total number of records: 165
 Mean reporting rate for range: 11.4%

Reporting rates for vegetation types





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