

Feral Pigeon

Tuinduif

Columba livia

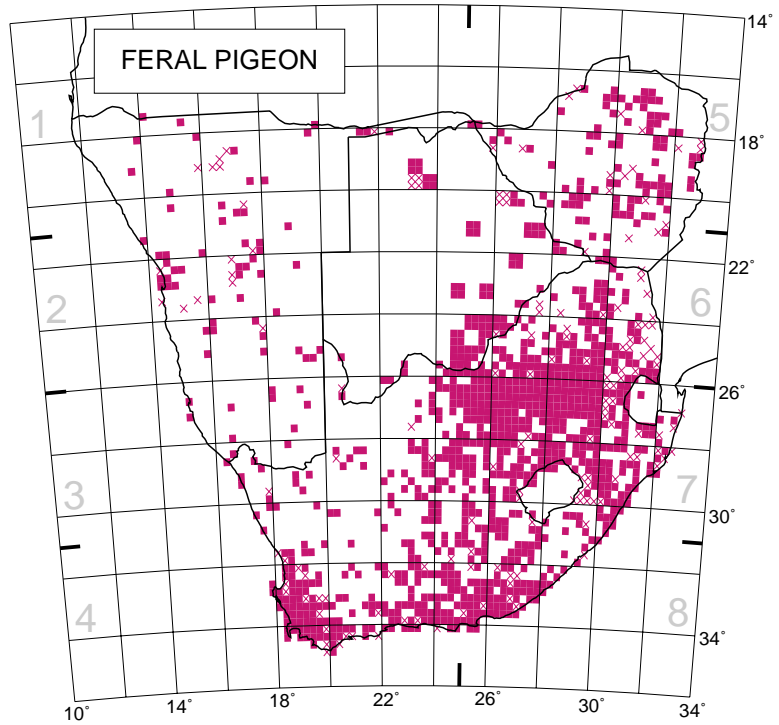
Feral Pigeons are derived from escaped domestic stock first brought from the Netherlands to South Africa in 1652 (Brooke *et al.* 1986). When escaped birds first became feral is unknown. The atlas data are suspect to some extent since some observers probably failed to separate domestic birds in rural areas from feral ones which are usually in towns. Behavioural differences were set out in Brooke (1981a). Nonetheless, the South African atlas data are conformable with the much fewer records mapped by Brooke (1981a).

Feral Pigeons are basically birds of central urban and industrial areas, including harbours. They forage on open ground, including scavenging over paved areas. After flying from urban areas to forage in rural areas in the company of Rock Pigeons *C. guinea*, they forage much closer to buildings than do Rock Pigeons (Little 1994). There is no evidence for seasonal movement.

Breeding normally takes place on ledges of large urban structures, but in a few places Feral Pigeons have returned to nesting on cliffs, the ancestral site. This is known from Baboon Point cliffs (3218AD) (Brooke 1981c), Yzerfontein sea cliffs (3318AC) (Underhill 1993; Van der Merwe 1994) and north of Port St Johns (3129DA) (Brooke 1981a). Breeding may take place at any time of the year, though at lowest intensity April–July. Competition between Feral and Rock Pigeons seems to be limited in southern Africa (Rowan 1983; Urban *et al.* 1986), but competition for nesting sites is occasionally reported (Herremans 1994a). In Grahamstown (3326BC), the Rock Pigeon has been more successful and has established itself at the expense of the Feral Pigeon (A.J. Tree pers. comm.). Hybridization between the species may also occur, but is difficult to prove in the field (Rowan 1983; Herremans 1994a).

While there is no interest in the conservation of the Feral Pigeon, it is noticeable that in urban flocks there are many deformed and sickly birds. This is probably due to urban scavenging not always producing a nutritionally balanced diet, or to the effects of pollution.

R.K. Brooke



Recorded in 1186 grid cells, 26.1%
 Total number of records: 18 449
 Mean reporting rate for range: 17.6%

