



Rüppell's Parrot

Bloupenspapegaaï

Poicephalus rueppellii

Rüppell's Parrot is a near-endemic, restricted-range species, confined to the central and northwestern highlands of Namibia; extralimitally, the distribution extends only into southwestern Angola (Pinto 1970; Fry *et al.* 1988). It is closely related and similar to the more widespread Meyer's Parrot *P. meyeri*, but is a distinctively darker shade of grey. It is locally common within its 140 000 km² Namibian range (Robertson 1993), particularly in the north along the main dry river courses and the catchments of the ephemeral west-flowing rivers. In these areas, densities of 10 birds/km² have been recorded and the mean group size was 1.9 birds (Robertson *et al.* 1995; A. Robertson pers. comm.).

Rüppell's Parrot is one of the first species for which an estimate of population size has been made based on atlas reporting rates; a regression relationship between the reporting rates and transect counts in a sample of grid cells was statistically highly significant, and was used to show that the estimated Namibian population totals less than 10 000 birds (Robertson *et al.* 1995).

Habitat: Reporting rates were four times higher in the Namibian Escarpment vegetation type than in any other biome. In Namibia the species occurs in dry montane *Commiphora*-*Acacia* woodland, while in Angola it occurs in *Acacia*-Baobab-dominated habitat (Pinto 1970; Rowan 1983). It is partial to *Acacia erioloba* pods, *Combretum imberbe* shoots, as well as Baobab *Adansonia digitata* pods and shoots farther north (Rowan 1983), and in these habitats it is locally common and conspicuous.

Movements: It is sedentary or partially nomadic (Fry *et al.* 1988). There is a slight tendency for higher reporting rates in winter, but this is probably due to young birds emerging and adults congregating to visit drinking areas.

Breeding: It is a late-summer and autumn breeder with confirmed egg-laying dates in February, and suspected breeding thereafter (Rowan 1983; Brown & Clinning in press). Atlas breeding reports came from January, February and June.

Interspecific relationships: The distribution maps show areas where Meyer's and Rüppell's Parrots co-occur; this may have led to some misidentifications. Interbreeding may occur.

Historical distribution and conservation: With a total Namibian population below 10 000 birds (Robertson *et al.* 1995), numbers of Rüppell's Parrots have been reduced somewhat by trapping. It is prized as a cage bird among parrot fanciers and, although it is difficult to breed in captivity, large numbers are caught and smuggled out of Namibia. While its occurrence in rugged highland regions of the Namibian escarpment, and in the Etosha and Waterberg Plateau (2017A) Parks may help to safeguard it; populations in some commercial farmland areas are under pressure from illegal trapping. Its conservation status is in need of revision and research is a priority.

R.E. Simmons

Recorded in 180 grid cells, 4.0%
Total number of records: 791
Mean reporting rate for range: 12.7%

Reporting rates for vegetation types



