



Speckled Mousebird

Gevlekte Muisvoël

Colius striatus

The most widely distributed of the mousebirds in Africa, this common species has a mainly eastern and southern range in southern Africa. Reporting rates show that the Speckled Mousebird generally avoids the southwestern arid zone, and the distribution appears to be limited by the 20°F (−6.7°C) July mean minimum isotherm (Rowan 1967).

There are three races whose ranges appear continuous; birds north of the gap in southern Zimbabwe belong to a separate race *C. s. rhodesiae* (Clancey 1980b).

It is usually seen in flocks of 5–20 birds (Maclean 1993b). Although this is a distinctive species, confusion between it and the Whitebacked Mousebird *C. colius* is possible in regions of overlap, such as the southern Succulent Karoo. The atlas data are reliable and comprehensive. **Habitat:** It was most frequently recorded from the Valley Bushveld, East Coast Littoral, Afromontane Forest, Eastern Zimbabwe Highlands and Moist Woodland, following the distribution of forest, subtropical thicket and mesic woodland vegetation types. Typical habitat is ecotones on the edges of forest and closed woodlands, wooded drainage lines and gardens. The high reporting rates from the Sour and Mixed Grasslands are surprising, since these vegetation types generally lack plants bearing juicy fruits (Acocks 1953). The high incidence in these areas is probably due to birds moving into suburban and farmhouse gardens to feed on alien fruits.

Movements: The models show no evidence of seasonal movements, and reporting rates remained fairly constant throughout the year.

Breeding: Although it has been recorded breeding throughout the year, there is a marked spring/summer (September–January) peak in breeding activity, which confirms earlier data (Dean 1971; Irwin 1981; Tarboton *et al.* 1987b). There is no evidence of geographical variation in breeding season.

Interspecific relationships: It overlaps with the Red-faced Mousebird *Urocolius indicus* over most of its range,

and with the Whitebacked Mousebird in the western Transvaal, southeastern Botswana, parts of the southern Karoo and southwestern Cape Province. It associates with Whitebacked and Redfaced Mousebirds, occasionally forming mixed flocks when feeding in the same fruiting tree, or foraging in the same wooded drainage line.

Historical distribution and conservation:

The present distribution has not changed substantially from that shown by Rowan (1967), except that there are many more locality records, particularly in the northern Transvaal, northern KwaZulu-Natal and eastern Cape Province. In Zimbabwe it is extending its range along the central watershed (A.J. Tree pers. comm.). It also seems to have extended its range into the eastern Karoo and Namaqualand, where there are scattered but regular records. The present distribution has evidently been considerably influenced by the cultivation of fruit trees.

Rowan (1967) noted that there was an isolated population on the Vaal River from Bloemhof (2725DA) to Warrenton (2824BB), possibly extending west to Griekwastad (2823CD), from which there are old specimens. However, during the atlas period there were no records on the Vaal River west of Bloemhof, suggesting that this population is extinct.

The Speckled Mousebird is not considered threatened in southern Africa. It is widely distributed in forest or moist woodland vegetation types in Africa south of the Sahara (Schifter 1985) and is common wherever it occurs.

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Recorded in 1156 grid cells, 25.5%
Total number of records: 47 988
Mean reporting rate for range: 46.7%

Reporting rates for vegetation types



