

### Rackettailed Roller

Knopstertroupant

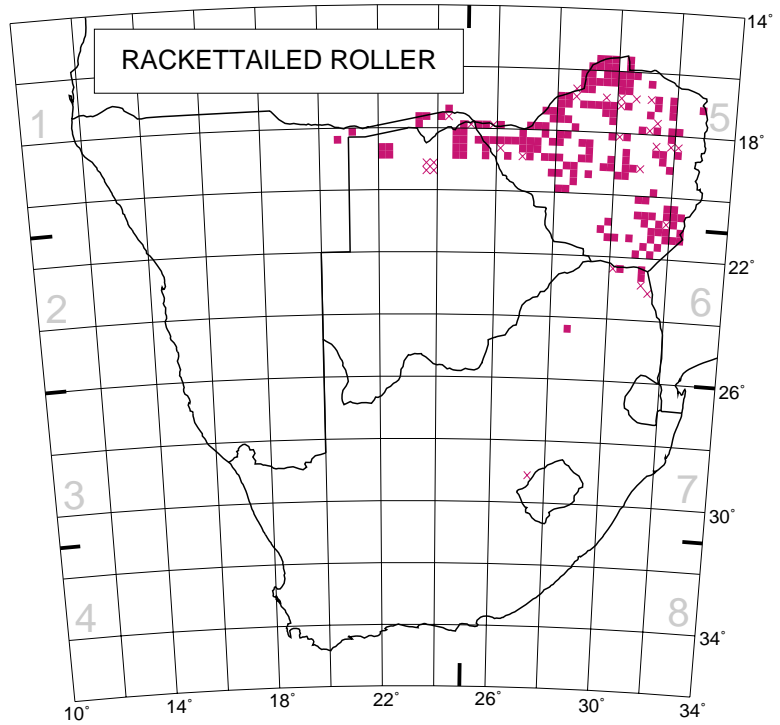
*Coracias spatulata*

The Rackettailed Roller is endemic to woodlands of the southern tropics from central Angola, southern Zaire and central Tanzania, southwards to Zimbabwe, Mozambique (Fry *et al.* 1988), and marginally into northeastern Namibia, northern Botswana and the Transvaal. Its preferred habitat in southern Africa is dense undisturbed primary miombo woodland: the highest reporting rates occurred along the Zambezi escarpment and in the woodlands of northwestern and the southeast lowveld of Zimbabwe where it is widespread although nowhere common. It is also found sparsely in Mopane woodland, but these may be nomadic nonbreeding birds. In South Africa, apart from vagrants, it is restricted to the northern Kruger National Park where it is probably a breeding resident (Tarboton *et al.* 1987b). In the westernmost part of its range it occurs very sparsely in mature *Baikiaea* woodland on Kalahari sands, where it also breeds (Randall 1996b).

Atlas breeding records spanned August–November; known egg-laying period in Zimbabwe is September–December with a pronounced peak in October (Irwin 1981).

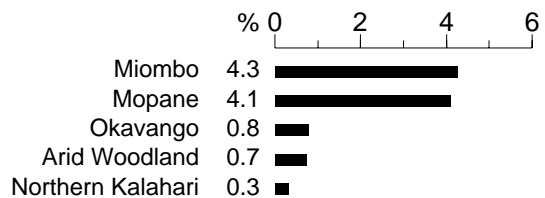
The thinning out and widespread destruction of Miombo woodland have given rise to considerable reduction in numbers and to a contraction of the range. Similar habitat degradation has taken place in Malawi (Benson & Benson 1977), and probably throughout its range. The Lilacbreasted Roller *C. caudata*, which prefers the woodland/clearing ecotone, has benefited from the opening up of Miombo woodland and occurs widely on the commercial farmland of the central plateau.

Owing to the sparse nature of its distribution, it is virtually impossible to protect it from continuing decline and it is likely to become increasingly dependent on formally protected areas for its survival. Small populations may also persist in ranching country where habitat destruction is minimal. The Rackettailed Roller is a habitat specialist, dependent on near-pristine, well-developed woodland, and as such is a species of conservation concern in southern Africa.



Recorded in 205 grid cells, 4.5%  
 Total number of records: 735  
 Mean reporting rate for range: 9.9%

#### Reporting rates for vegetation types



A.J. Tree

