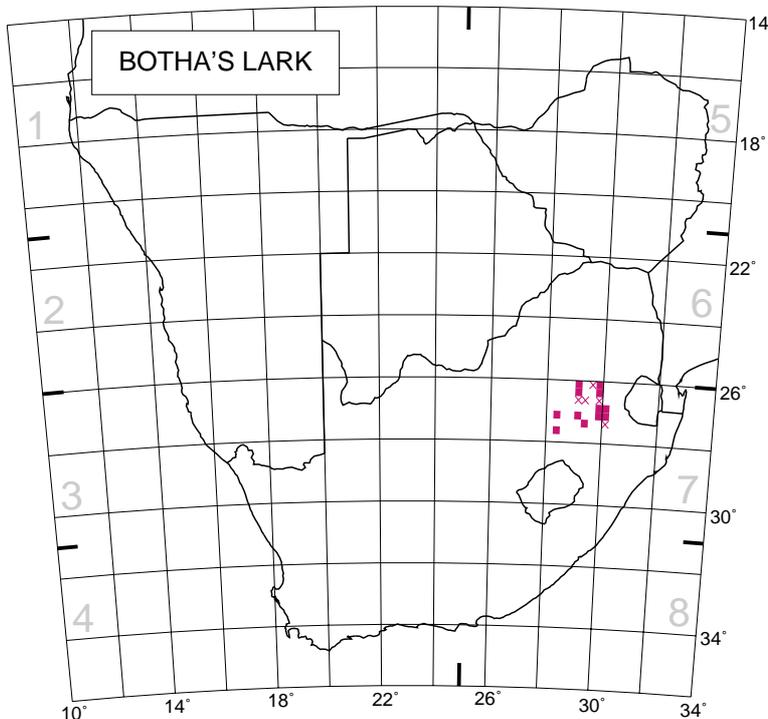


**Botha's Lark**  
 Vaalrivierlewerik  
*Spizocorys fringillaris*

Botha's Lark is a resident species, endemic to South Africa, with a very restricted distribution and recorded during the atlas period only from the southeastern Transvaal and eastern Free State. It is similar to the Pinkbilled Lark *S. conirostris*, but it differs in having a more slender, dark-tipped bill and a whitish belly contrasting with the buff breast and flanks.

Botha's Lark is uncommon and patchy within its range, and occurs in well-grazed upland grasslands, avoiding rocky areas, the taller grass in bottomlands, vleis, croplands and planted pastures (Allan *et al.* 1983). Botha's Lark is sometimes seen in small groups of up to 10 birds, but is usually solitary or found in pairs. A possible population size of 20 000 individuals, with an absolute minimum of 1000, was estimated by Allan *et al.* (1983). Atlas breeding records were reported for November–January. The species breeds November–December in the Transvaal (Allan *et al.* 1983).

Botha's Lark is included as a Red Data species (Brooke 1984b), but categorized as 'indeterminate', largely because of a paucity of information on the species. Habitat destruction through agriculture and overgrazing, and its patchiness of occurrence (implying a fragmented population with little chance of contact between the fragments) are both causes for concern. There is no verifiable evidence of a decrease in the population (Brooke 1984b), but the species is apparently no longer found at the type-locality of Vrededorst (2727AB), or in the vicinity, suggesting that there has been a reduction in its distribution. Botha's Lark is not adequately protected in nature reserves (Siegfried 1992) and grassland in general is inadequately protected as a vegetation type (Siegfried 1989).



Recorded in 17 grid cells, 0.4%  
 Total number of records: 74  
 Mean reporting rate for range: 5.2%

W.R.J. Dean

