



## Greater Striped Swallow

### Grootstreepswael

#### *Hirundo cucullata*

This swallow is a common intra-African migrant over the larger part of South Africa, with the core of its breeding range in the Transvaal highveld and adjacent southeastern Botswana, Free State, the KwaZulu-Natal interior, the eastern Karoo, eastern and southwestern Cape Province. On the edge of this area, such as in the lowveld and the northern Transvaal bushveld, the far northern Cape Province and along the west coast, it is scarce and patchily distributed. It also breeds in Lesotho, western Swaziland, the central parts of Namibia and in central Zimbabwe, while most records from northern Botswana are of birds on passage. As a breeding species, it is virtually endemic to southern Africa, with a relatively small breeding population in Angola.

It is a conspicuous and tame species and is often found close to human habitation. It is only likely to be confused with the Lesser Striped Swallow *H. abyssinica* in the extensive areas of distributional overlap. These two species are readily misidentified and this may have caused the extent of distributional overlap to appear greater than is in fact the case.

**Habitat:** It occurs in a wide variety of fairly open habitats, ranging from semi-arid Karoo, fynbos, grassland and lightly wooded savanna to cultivated areas. It is common in suburban habitat and around farmyards.

**Movements:** It is a typical breeding migrant to southern Africa with few winter records. The first birds arrive in mid-July in the Transvaal (Zone 6), in early August in the southwestern Cape Province (Zone 4) and central Namibia, and in late August in the eastern Cape Province (Zone 8). Arrival in Swaziland, KwaZulu-Natal and Botswana is even later, in September–October (Cyrus & Robson 1980; Herremans 1994d; Parker 1994).

The models do not show passage movement through Zimbabwe (Zone 5) and it is possible that the birds follow a more westerly route, through Botswana and Namibia, to their wintering grounds in Angola, southern Zaire and Zambia. The late arrival at breeding sites in the eastern Cape Province, Swaziland and KwaZulu-Natal would be consistent with a westerly migration route. Irwin (1981), however, suggested that South African birds may occur on passage in Zimbabwe. The birds recorded in Zambia have been claimed to be largely on passage, being present mainly

April–May and September–November (Aspinwall 1972) which corresponds well with the departure and arrival dates in southern Africa. One bird ringed at Somerset West (3418BB) was recovered at Kasanza, Zaire, 3156 km to the north (Earlé 1987c).

**Breeding:** Breeding was recorded mainly September–May. Egg-laying spans August–March in Zimbabwe, October–April in the Transvaal and September–April in the western Cape Province (Winterbottom 1968a; Irwin 1981; Tarboton *et al.* 1987b). A peak in breeding during the early summer months, October–December, was evident in most Zones.

**Interspecific relationships:** It often occurs alongside the similar Lesser Striped Swallow but that species prefers more densely wooded regions, usually at lower altitude. It may compete for nest sites with that species, and possibly the Redbreasted Swallow *H. semirufa* (Turner & Rose 1989). In addition, nests of Greater Striped Swallows are usurped by the White-rumped Swift *Apus caffer* (Fry *et al.* 1988).

**Historical distribution and conservation:** This swallow has benefited from its ability to nest on man-made structures and has probably increased in abundance as a result, especially in open habitats previously poor in suitable nest sites (Turner & Rose 1989). A local decrease in the Cape Town area (3318CD, 3418AB) has been alleged, owing to urbanization having led to a lack of moist clay for nest building and a possible reduction in food supply (Schmidt 1990).

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Recorded in 1900 grid cells, 41.9%  
Total number of records: 32 566  
Mean reporting rate for range: 27.5%

#### Reporting rates for vegetation types



