

### Boulder Chat

Swartberglyster

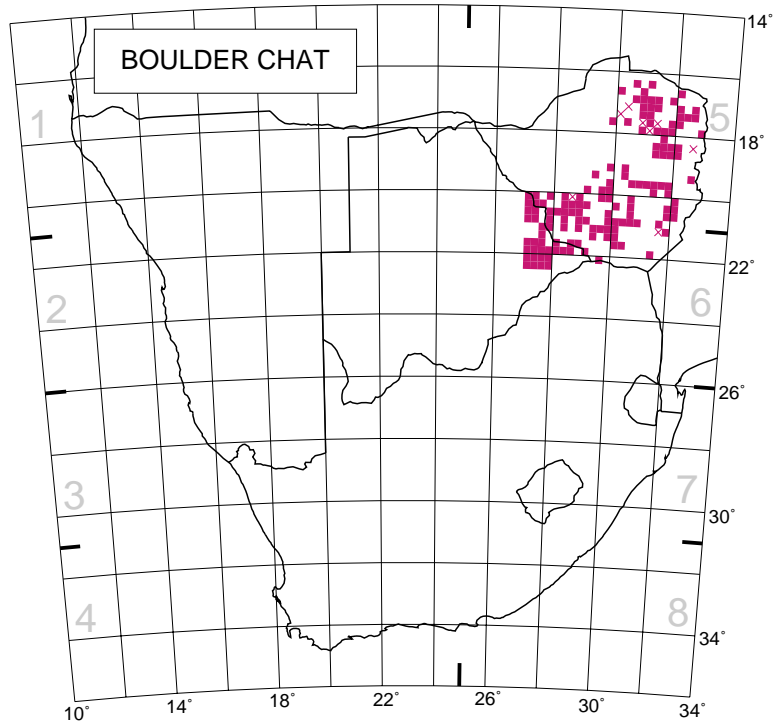
*Pinarornis plumosus*

The Boulder Chat is, by the nature of its preferred habitat, a localized species with a restricted and fragmented distribution. It is probably most easily seen in the Matobo National Park (2028C,D) where the exposed granite system is extensive. Within southern Africa, atlas data show it to be found in the extreme east of Botswana, and in Zimbabwe except for the northwestern quarter. In Zimbabwe the population appears to be split in two with the dividing zone formed by the Save River flowing southeastwards and the Mupfure and Umniati rivers flowing northwestwards; this division was also shown well in Irwin (1981). Another population occurs north of the Zambezi Valley in Zambia, extending up the eastern side of the Luangwa Valley to Malawi (Keith *et al.* 1992). The species is nevertheless monotypic.

It is confined to those areas of the granite shield in which the rock has been weathered into large rounded boulders or where weathered sections of the domes have broken off and tumbled to form a coarse scree around their bases; it also occurs on isolated granite outcrops (Irwin 1981). It is absent from Karoo sandstones (Irwin 1981) and probably also from the Karoo basalts. Areas of granite, when undisturbed, are frequently well vegetated with a variety of tree species underlain with various shrubs and creepers forming part of the miombo woodland system. This vegetation is of prime importance for this species. However, over-vegetating of these koppies often leads to their desertion by the Boulder Chat, as has happened in areas where the exotic bush *Lantana camara* has spread rapidly (pers. obs).

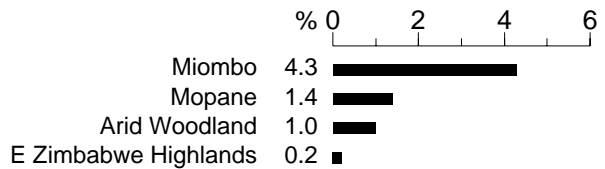
Egg laying takes place September–January with a pronounced peak October–November (Irwin 1981; Skinner 1995a); family parties persist through to the beginning of the next breeding season.

Although habitat modification may affect it, there is no overall threat to the Boulder Chat at present.



Recorded in 146 grid cells, 3.2%  
 Total number of records: 552  
 Mean reporting rate for range: 11.3%

Reporting rates for vegetation types



A.J. Tree

