

Herero Chat

Hererospekvreter

Namibornis herero

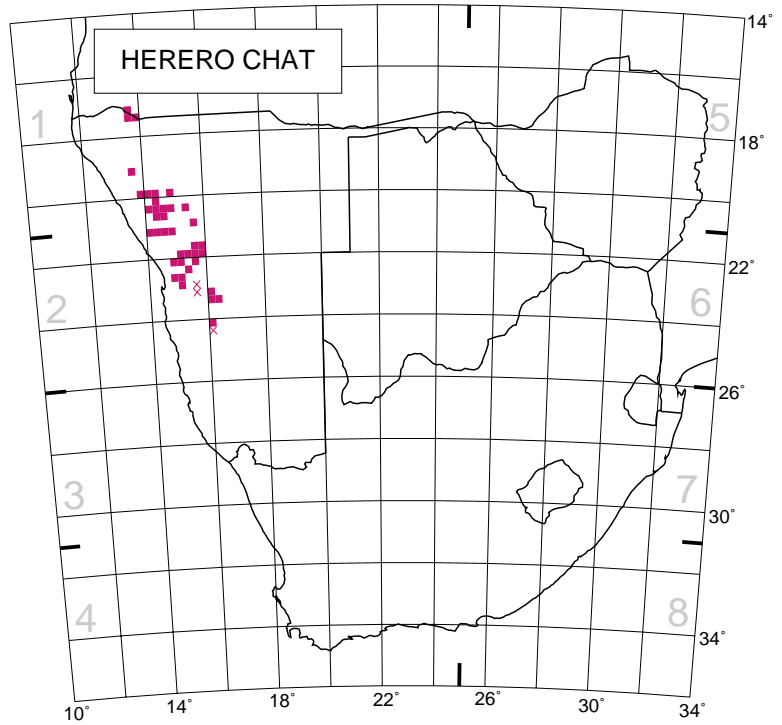
The Herero Chat was discovered and described in 1930, and the first nest was recorded in 1969 (Jensen & Jensen 1969). Its taxonomic position remains puzzling as it is variously described as a chat-like flycatcher, a robin-like chat or flycatcher-like robin (Ginn *et al.* 1989)! Its mystique arises from the extreme isolation and inhospitable montane habitat in which it lives in escarpment areas of Namibia. It also has the smallest total range of any Namibian endemic, covering 32 000 km² (Robertson 1993). It was unrecorded by Pinto (1970) in southern Angola, but it was found near Ruacana on the Kunene River during the atlas period and it occurs in isolated pockets in the Iona National Park in extreme southwestern Angola (Dean *et al.* 1988). It is considered to be monotypic (Clancey 1980b).

It is associated mainly with *Commiphora-Acacia* scrub on sparsely vegetated, south-facing hillsides at 700–1100 m (pers. obs). Northern slopes within the same area support no birds, possibly because of the lower vegetation biomass. It can reach densities of 15 birds/km² in prime habitat on dry slopes in the Warmquelle area (1913BB) (Robertson *et al.* 1995). Its Namibian population is estimated to be *c.* 108 000 birds, with *c.* 2000 birds in the Namib-Naukluft Park (Jarvis & Robertson 1997).

It is known to breed on steep, dry montane slopes; egg-laying has been recorded February–April (Jensen & Jensen 1969; Brown & Clinning in press). Reporting rates were slightly higher in winter, possibly reflecting the appearance of young birds in the population and/or altitudinal movement into lowlands where they are more readily observed. It occurs in groups of 2–4 birds in winter and some altitudinal movements are suspected at these times (P. Bridgeford pers. comm.).

Research on the enigmatic Herero Chat is strongly recommended to determine its conservation and population status, as well as its taxonomic position, movements and social system.

R.E. Simmons



Recorded in 41 grid cells, 0.9%
 Total number of records: 160
 Mean reporting rate for range: 10.5%

Reporting rates for vegetation types

