

Basra Reed Warbler

Basrarietsanger

Acrocephalus griseldis

Breeds only in the basin of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers in southern Iraq, and migrates mainly to East Africa and as far south as the Zambezi River (Clancey 1980b). It is a vagrant to southern Africa: one was caught at Empangeni sewage works (2831DD), 18 February 1984 (Cyrus 1986a; Sinclair *et al.* 1986); one caught at Richards Bay (2832CC), 14 January 1988 (Hockey *et al.* 1990); one seen and mist-netted on the Levuvhu River (2231AC), 11–13 February 1993 (Hockey *et al.* 1995); one caught near Gaborone (2425D) on 27 January 1997 (Tyler *et al.* in press). It has been trapped on the northern bank of the Zambezi River in Mozambique (Clancey 1980b), and a number of unsubstantiated records exist from near Beira in 1972 (Sinclair *et al.* 1986). Further records from southern Mozambique (Logan 1996) suggest it was possibly under-recorded there in the past.

C. Cohen

European Reed Warbler

Hermanse Rietsanger

Acrocephalus scirpaceus

The main nonbreeding grounds of this Palearctic migrant are in the savannas of sub-Saharan Africa north of the atlas region (Pearson & Lack 1992). It was previously considered a rare vagrant to southern Africa, with three valid records until 1980: one each in Namibia, Botswana and the Transvaal in 1974 and 1975 (Schmitt 1975b; Becker 1977; Dowsett-Lemaire & Dowsett 1987b; Komen & Myer 1988; Herremans 1992e). It was more widely recorded subsequently, with scattered records involving more than 50 birds in total from northern Namibia and northern and eastern Botswana, but only two from South Africa (Komen & Myer 1988; Komen 1988b; Komen *et al.* 1988; Van den Brink & Loske 1990; Herremans 1992e; Van den Brink *et al.* 1994, 1995; Raijmakers 1995; Hockey *et al.* 1996). Birds were grounded during nocturnal passage near Gaborone (2425D) on southwards migration, suggesting that it should be looked for in the Orange and Vaal river drainages (Herremans 1992e, 1993b). There is a controversial early specimen from KwaZulu-Natal (Clancey 1961; Dowsett-Lemaire & Dowsett 1987b; Komen & Myer 1988; Clancey 1989e; Komen 1989). In spite of extensive ringing studies in Zimbabwe, there are no confirmed records there (Irwin 1981; A.J. Tree *in litt.*). The data suggest that it is probably widespread, though localized, in central southern Africa – northeastern Namibia, Botswana, and possibly western Zimbabwe.

It is difficult to distinguish the European Reed Warbler from the African *A. baeticatus* and European *A. palustris* Marsh Warblers on sight alone. Its call is virtually identical to that of the African Marsh Warbler but differs from that of the European Marsh Warbler. Indeed, it may be conspecific with the African Marsh Warbler (Dowsett & Dowsett-Lemaire 1993). The European Reed Warbler may be distinguished by plumage condition from the African Marsh Warbler during December–February when the former is likely to be in heavy moult, unlike the latter (Herremans 1992e). In most instances, however, the European Reed Warbler can only safely be separated from the

African and European Marsh Warblers in the hand (e.g. Komen 1988a), and it is probably widely misidentified for these two species.

The majority of records are December–January, but this is probably more an artefact of concentrated ringing efforts (for swallows) in reedbeds during that period. The earliest birds (race *fuscus*) were on passage during late November in southeastern Botswana (Herremans 1992e), almost a month earlier than European Marsh Warblers and earlier than previously thought (Dowsett-Lemaire & Dowsett 1987b). Taylor (1979) also indicated that the European Reed Warbler is present before the European Marsh Warbler in Zambia. Departure is probably in March or early April (Taylor 1979; Dowsett-Lemaire & Dowsett 1987b). It is most typically recorded from reeds or other tall marshy habitat where it occurs alongside the African Marsh Warbler, but it may also occur in moist bush away from water and alongside the European Marsh Warbler (Taylor 1979; Herremans 1992e).

M. Herremans

Cinnamon Reed Warbler

Kaneelrietsanger

Acrocephalus cinnamomeus

The status of this little-known warbler remains uncertain; it has been recorded and collected from several localities in southern Mozambique from Bela Vista (2632BC) northwards (Lawson 1963; Pinto 1963; Clancey 1975a), and there is a specimen from Umvoti Vlei (2930BA), KwaZulu-Natal (Clancey 1975a). It is usually considered to be conspecific with the African Marsh Warbler *A. baeticatus* (e.g. Dowsett-Lemaire & Dowsett 1987a; Dowsett & Dowsett-Lemaire 1993). Clancey (1994d) reaffirmed his belief (see Clancey 1980b) in the specific distinctness of the Cinnamon Reed and African Marsh Warblers and made the claim that, in KwaZulu-Natal, the former extends from the coast inland through the interior to the Transvaal plateau. He argued that the African Marsh Warbler does not inhabit these regions and is restricted to the west and south, overlapping marginally with the Cinnamon Reed Warbler in their zone of contact. Clearly, further research is needed.

C.N. Spottiswoode and D.G. Allan

Redcapped Crombec

Rooikroonstompstert

Sylvietta ruficapilla

The Redcapped Crombec ranges eastwards from Angola through Zambia and southern Zaire to northern Mozambique, Malawi and central East Africa. It is known within southern Africa from one specimen obtained in miombo woodland at Nampini Ranch, west of Victoria Falls (1725DD) in Zimbabwe (Irwin 1981). Being a small upper-canopy feeder, it can be overlooked or initially mistaken for other crombecs, but it may be mutually exclusive with the Redfaced Crombec *S. whytii* (Benson & Benson 1977). In Zambia it replaces the Redfaced Crombec in miombo woodland, although it is found less often in adjacent forest. The specimen obtained in Zimbabwe is of the subspecies *S. r. chubbi* which is found in southwestern Zambia, at Kalomo (1726AB) and west of Livingstone (1725DD);