

Greater Swamp Warbler

Rooibruinrietsanger

Acrocephalus rufescens

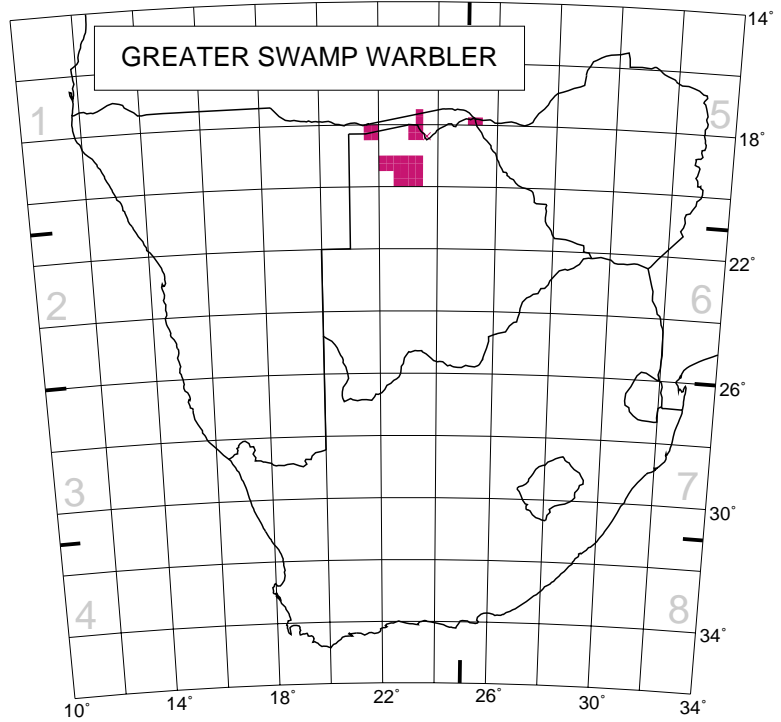
This resident Afrotropical species occurs widely in sub-Saharan Africa (Maclean 1993b), but its range extends only marginally into southern Africa where it is restricted to the permanent swamps in the Okavango Delta and along rivers in the upper tributaries of the Zambezi River (Kwando, Linyanti, Chobe and Zambezi confluence). In Namibia it occurs along the mid-Okavango River (Clancey *et al.* 1991) and in the Caprivi (Komen 1990a). In Zimbabwe it is common on the Zambezi River upstream of the Katombora Rapids (1725CD) where it was discovered only in October 1991 (Pollard 1991; Hustler 1995a).

It is shy and elusive, and usually keeps well within cover of tall and dense papyrus and reed swamp, but during winter it occasionally forages in the open on floating vegetation. The typical song is the best means of identification and it responds well to playback of territorial calls (Komen 1990a; Pollard 1991; Hustler 1995a; Randall 1995). It can easily be confused with Great Reed *A. arundinaceus* and Cape Reed *A. gracilirostris* Warblers.

The reporting rates in the atlas were low, but it is probably widespread and locally common in the permanent swamps of northern Botswana, the Caprivi and the upper Zambezi. Hustler (1995a) made a density estimate of about 1 pair/625 m², and a total of over 100 pairs in western Zimbabwe. It has been reported as common along the Kavango and Kwando rivers in the Caprivi (Hines 1985–87; Brown 1990).

It is probably sedentary. The few breeding records span August–April (Ginn *et al.* 1989; Hustler 1995a; Skinner 1995a; Skinner 1996a; Brown & Clinning in press). Breeding records from Zambia are in the wet season, October–February (Benson *et al.* 1971). Nests are typically placed in the flower heads of papyrus (Hustler 1995a; Skinner 1996b).

It occurs alongside African Marsh *A. baeticatus*, Cape Reed and Great Reed Warblers, but it seems to prefer the



Recorded in 33 grid cells, 0.7%
 Total number of records: 71
 Mean reporting rate for range: 8.4%

largest, tallest and most dense stands of reeds and particularly papyrus (Komen & Myer 1988; Hustler 1995a). Their interactions and mechanisms of segregation await documentation. The range of the Greater Swamp Warbler in the region is small, and the popular rural practice of burning tall swamp vegetation probably has serious local impacts.

M. Herremans

