



## Fantailed Cisticola

### Landerykloppoppie

#### *Cisticola juncidis*

Globally, this is the most widespread cisticola, occurring in Australia and from Japan through southern Asia to southern Europe and throughout Africa (Cramp *et al.* 1992). It is widespread in southern Africa, although localized in Namibia, Botswana, Zimbabwe, and in the Karoo. It is particularly common in the Free State, Transvaal, KwaZulu-Natal and the eastern Cape Province. It occurs along the Orange River through the otherwise arid Karoo. Only one subspecies occurs in the region (Clancey 1980b).

It is the most abundant and best-known of the small grass cisticolas, which are difficult to identify in the field unless the species-specific calls and display flights are known. These are associated with breeding in summer, but the Fantailed Cisticola can be identified on the basis of plumage alone. The distribution shown here is probably accurate.

**Habitat:** It occurs in natural tall grasslands and weedy areas, and the edges of vleis, dams, pans and salt marshes, but also abundantly in a wide variety of man-made habitats such as lucerne fields, *Eragrostis* grass pastures and cereal croplands (Maclean 1993b), or on the edges of cultivation, fallow lands and any open areas with rank grass. It is often associated with wetlands, particularly in the drier western half of the region. It is capable of colonizing arid habitats in the Karoo, Namibia and Botswana. It was recorded from a wide range of vegetation types but had highest reporting rates in Okavango, Mixed, Sweet and Sour Grasslands, Miombo and Moist Woodlands. It is absent above 2000 m in the Transvaal (Tarboton *et al.* 1987b), but occurs (in cultivated fields) up to 2400 m in Lesotho (Tarboton *et al.* 1993).

**Movements:** All regions show a marked seasonality of reporting rates with a pronounced winter decline; this corresponds to the period when the species does not display. The temporary nature of many occupied habitats, e.g. old agricultural lands and crops, rank grass and seasonal wetlands, which are subject to burning, grazing and clearing, suggests that local movements are frequent. The only recorded indication of regular seasonal movement is in the

high-lying KwaZulu-Natal Drakensberg where at least part of the population appears to leave the area in winter (Little & Bainbridge 1992). Penry (1994) indicated that the range expands into the Kalahari during wet cycles.

**Breeding:** In the four eastern regions, breeding was recorded mainly November–April. Peak breeding is earlier in KwaZulu-Natal (Zone 7) than in the Transvaal (Zone 6) and Zimbabwe (Zone 5), confirming differences between published dates of egg-laying (Dean 1971; Irwin 1981; Tarboton *et al.* 1987b). In the winter-rainfall area of the western Cape Province (Zone 4), breeding occurred earlier, August–February. The few records from the arid Zones 2 and 3 were in late summer, also confirming egg-laying data (Skinner 1995a; Brown & Clinning in press).

**Interspecific relationships:** It is very similar in appearance to the Desert *C. aridula*, Cloud *C. textrix*, Ayres' *C. ayresii* and Palecrowned *C. brunnescens* Cisticolas, and often occurs in close proximity to one or more of these (Dean 1976). The distributions of these species do not provide any evidence for competitive exclusion. Compared to other small cisticolas, it usually occurs in habitats with longer grass and weeds.

It is a host of the brood-parasitic Cuckoo Finch *Anomalospiza imberbis* (Maclean 1993b).

**Historical distribution and conservation:** In the late 1920s Lynes (1930) recorded its southernmost distribution in the Albany district (Grahamstown 3326BC), but it was recorded in the southwestern Cape Province by the late 1930s (Hockey *et al.* 1989). Its ability to occupy man-modified habitats has allowed its expansion into the fynbos biome and presumably also into arid areas of Namibia and the Karoo. The Fantailed Cisticola is widespread, common and adaptable, hence it is currently of no conservation concern.

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Recorded in 1883 grid cells, 41.5%  
Total number of records: 17 851  
Mean reporting rate for range: 14.6%

#### Reporting rates for vegetation types



