

Yellow Wagtail

Geelkwikkie
Motacilla flava

This Palearctic migrant has a wide nonbreeding distribution throughout most of sub-Saharan Africa (Curry-Lindahl 1981; Keith *et al.* 1992; Pearson & Lack 1992). Its nonbreeding range extends only marginally into southern Africa, but it is recorded from widely scattered places in the region. Subspecies, of which five have been recorded, occur in mixed flocks: *M. f. flava*, *thunbergi* and *lutea* are the most common, *beema* is scarce and *feldegg* a vagrant (Clancey 1980b; Irwin 1981; Brewster 1991; Maclean 1993b).

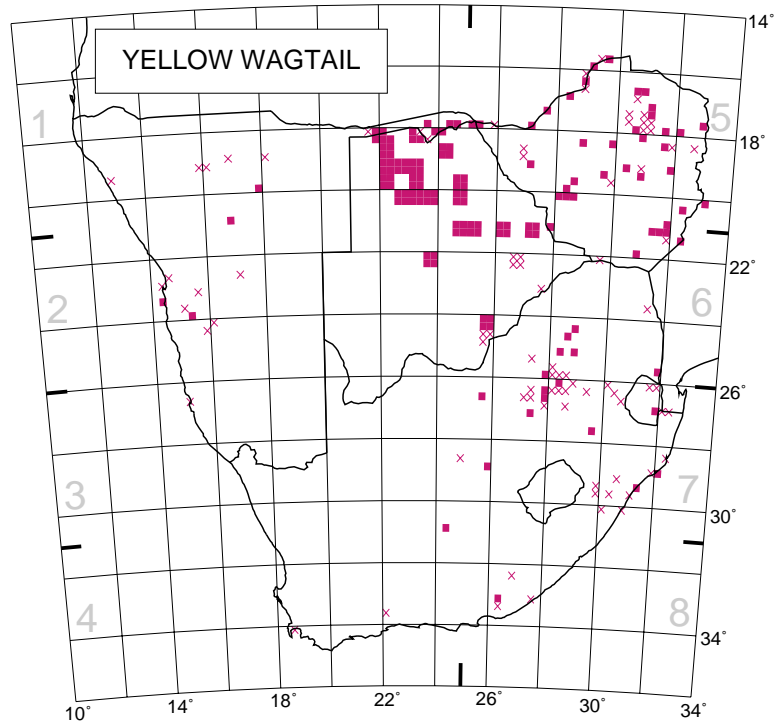
The Yellow Wagtail is locally common only in the wetlands of northern Botswana (see e.g. Brewster 1991; Van den Brink *et al.* 1994), with relatively high reporting rates in the Okavango basin, and in Zimbabwe. There are many scattered records from southeastern Botswana, the southern Transvaal, Swaziland, KwaZulu-Natal, the eastern and northern Cape Province, and northern and mid-western Namibia, indicating that it can occur near almost any river or dam in the region.

It prefers flat, open country and damp, short grass on floodplains and pastures, particularly when overgrazed or trampled, and the exposed muddy edges of dams, rivers, vleis and sewage works. It usually occurs in groups, sometimes of up to 100 birds (Ginn *et al.* 1989; Brewster 1991).

It arrives October–November in the north and November–December further south, and departs in a more synchronized fashion March–April. Some individuals remain through the austral winter (e.g. Tarboton *et al.* 1987b).

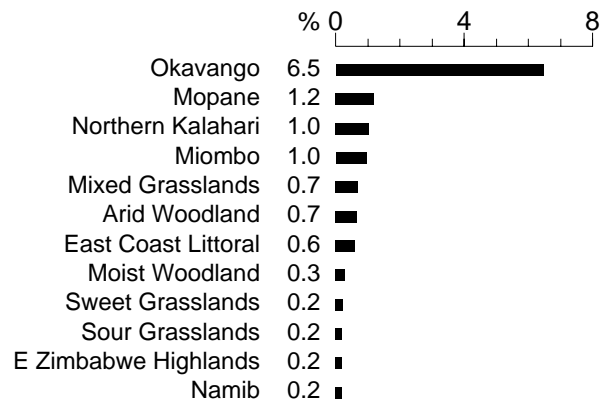
It may form mixed foraging or roosting groups with Cape Wagtails *M. capensis* and occasionally with African Pied Wagtails *M. aguimp*, but because of differences in habitat preference, it rarely occurs together with Grey *M. cinerea* (Herremans 1992b) or Longtailed *M. clara* Wagtails. In view of the preference of the Yellow Wagtail for overgrazed areas near water, the available habitat might have expanded in recent times through the building of dams.

M. Herremans



Recorded in 228 grid cells, 5.0%
Total number of records: 605
Mean reporting rate for range: 2.4%

Reporting rates for vegetation types



Also marginally in Namibian Escarpment, Valley Bushveld, Grassy Karoo, Succulent Karoo, Central Kalahari, Fynbos and Nama Karoo.

