



Southern Boubou Suidelike Waterfiskaal

Laniarius ferrugineus

The Southern Boubou is endemic to southern Africa and is confined to the moister eastern and southern parts. Outside of the atlas region it is found only in southern Mozambique. It occurs in the Transvaal, Swaziland, far eastern Free State, KwaZulu-Natal and the eastern and southern Cape Province, extending along the relatively moist mountainous areas near the west coast as far as Vanrhynsdorp (3118DA). It marginally enters southeastern Botswana. The six subspecies described for the region (Clancey 1980b) have continuous ranges.

It is usually encountered in pairs which occupy territories of about 3 ha (Harris & Arnott 1988). By virtue of its skulking habits, it is more often heard than seen, but its calls are distinctive, far-carrying and well known. It is easily confused with the similar Tropical Boubou *L. aethiopicus* along the northern boundary of its range (Irwin 1987; Hunter 1988), but the data for that area were vetted rigorously.

Habitat: It is invariably associated with dense, tangled undergrowth and occurs in thickets along watercourses and in a wide range of woodland types, as well as in gardens. It occurs within forests and exotic timber plantations wherever dense undergrowth is present. The vegetation analysis shows that it is associated with all woodland and forest types which occur south of the Limpopo River. Where it is associated with grassland types, it occurs in thickets and along watercourses.

Movements: It is believed to be resident throughout its range and males appear to remain within the same territory for life; one individual has been recorded in the same territory for 11 years (Harris & Arnott 1988). Fluctuations in reporting rates probably correspond with seasonal variations in calling rates; the period when it is most vocal is just prior to breeding.

Nine ringed birds (four adults and five juveniles) have been recovered; in all cases they were recovered within 15 km of the ringing site (SAFRING).

Breeding: The models indicate that the breeding season is slightly earlier and shorter in the winter-rainfall area in the southwestern Cape Province (Zone 4) than elsewhere. In the east, the models indicate a peak October–February, whereas previous records have suggested that breeding tails off from November in KwaZulu-Natal (Maclean 1993b) and Decem-

ber in the Transvaal (Tarboton *et al.* 1987b); late records in the atlas were probably mainly of dependent fledglings.

Interspecific relationships: The boundary between the ranges of the Southern Boubou and Tropical Boubou coincides largely with the Limpopo Valley. South of the Limpopo River, they occupy distinct habitats. The Southern Boubou favours thickets associated with koppies while the Tropical Boubou occurs in riparian woodland (D.G. Allan pers. comm.). However, in the east towards the Mozambique border, the distinction between the habitats is not as clear because the surrounding woodland tends to merge with the riparian woodland. Here the two species occur in close proximity and hybridization is suspected (T. Harris pers. comm.). In eastern Botswana, both species inhabit riverine woodlands, but do not overlap, with the Southern Boubou occurring south of the confluence of the Notwane and Marico rivers (2326DD) and the Tropical Boubou from there to the north (Hunter 1988; Brewster 1994d).

Historical distribution and conservation: There is no evidence that its distribution has changed significantly in recent times, but the Southern Boubou has probably benefited from the spread of alien scrub and tree thickets in some areas.

V. Parker

Recorded in 814 grid cells, 17.9%
Total number of records: 31 075
Mean reporting rate for range: 36.2%

Reporting rates for vegetation types



