



Tropical Boubou

Tropiese Waterfiskaal

Laniarius aethiopicus

The Tropical Boubou occurs throughout tropical Africa with the exception of the arid regions and the Zaire Basin (Harris & Arnott 1988). Within the atlas region, it was encountered throughout Zimbabwe, along the Limpopo River and some of its tributaries in the extreme north of the Transvaal, the extreme north and east of Botswana and the Caprivi Strip. The two subspecies in the region (Clancey 1980b) have continuous ranges.

This species has skulking habits but its calls are loud and distinctive. It may be confused with the Swamp Boubou *L. bicolor* and the Southern Boubou *L. ferrugineus* where it occurs in proximity to those species, as it is similar to them both visually and vocally. It is usually encountered in pairs, but sometimes also in small parties, presumably of nonbreeding birds. Breeding territories are about 2 ha (Harris & Arnott 1988).

Habitat: Its range falls between 200 m and 2000 m and has average annual rainfall of 250–1000 mm. It occurs in dense thickets in woodland. The vegetation analysis shows that in Zimbabwe it was encountered most frequently in Miombo and the Eastern Zimbabwe Highlands, and far less frequently in other woodlands. In eastern Botswana and the Transvaal it is found in riparian woodland (Tarboton *et al.* 1987b; Hunter 1988). In northern Botswana it occurs in thorn thickets fringing reedbeds and riparian woodland, while the Swamp Boubou occurs within these two habitats (Harris & Arnott 1988).

Movements: It is believed to be resident (Harris & Arnott 1988) and the models show no evidence of seasonal movements.

Breeding: The model for Zone 5 indicates that breeding occurs throughout the year with a peak September–December. Egg-laying has previously been reported in all months except June, with a peak September–November (Irwin 1981).

Interspecific relationships: South of the Limpopo River, Tropical and Southern Boubous occupy distinct habitats. The Southern Boubou favours thickets associated with koppies while the Tropical Boubou occurs in riparian woodland (D.G. Allan pers. comm.). Suspected hybridization with the Southern Boubou, however, has been reported in the extreme northeastern Transvaal (T. Harris pers. comm.). They occur in similar habitats in eastern Botswana, but their ranges do not overlap in that country (Hunter 1988). Some evidence of hybridization between Tropical and Swamp Boubous, based on plumage intergradation, has been reported from Angola (Quickelberge 1966; Harris & Arnott 1988).

Historical distribution and conservation: There is no evidence that the limits of its distribution have changed in historical times. The Tropical Boubou is a Red Data species in South Africa where it is classified as ‘rare’ (Brooke 1984b). It is believed to be declining as a result of the clearing of riverine thickets in the Limpopo Valley. However, it extends only marginally into South Africa and elsewhere in tropical Africa it is common and not threatened.

V. Parker

Recorded in 559 grid cells, 12.3%
Total number of records: 7880
Mean reporting rate for range: 54.1

Reporting rates for vegetation types



