

Swamp Boubou

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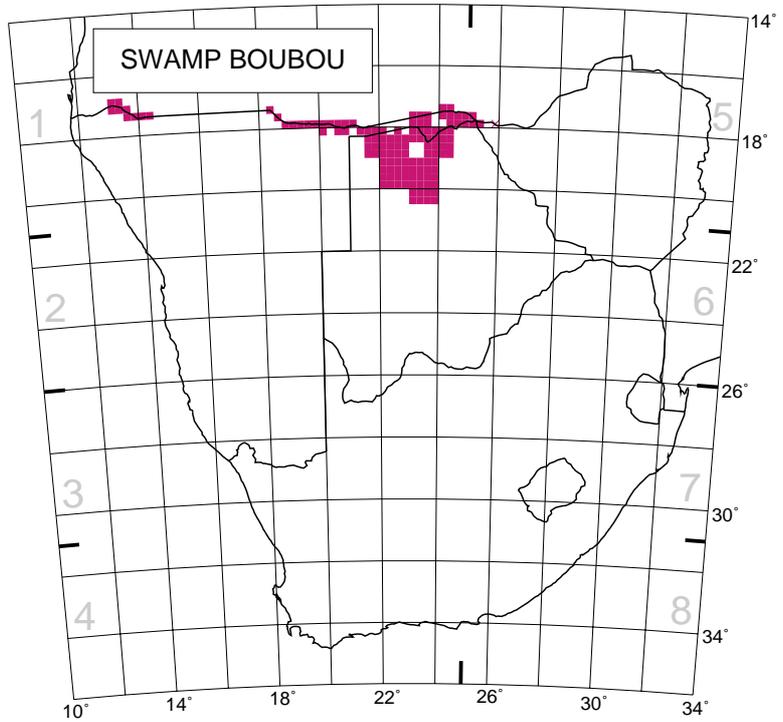
Laniarius bicolor

The Swamp Boubou ranges widely over western tropical Africa (Harris & Arnott 1988; Maclean 1993b), but it occurs only marginally in southern Africa where it is restricted to the large floodplains and rivers in northern Botswana and Namibia (Caprivi Strip, Okavango Delta, Kavango–Kwando–Linyanti–Chobe rivers, Kunene River). It occurs in the extreme west of Zimbabwe, upstream from Victoria Falls (1725DD) (Pollard 1992b; Chittenden & Pollard 1994).

It is a strikingly pied but rather skulking bird and, except for its loud duetting vocalizations, it can easily be overlooked. The typical habitat is riparian woodland and thickets fringing rivers and floodplains, preferably adjacent to mature swamp with tall reeds, dense papyrus and Water Figs *Ficus veruculosa*. In fringing gallery woodland in the Okavango Swamps and along the Linyanti River, average densities of 1–2 birds/10 ha have been recorded (unpubl. data).

No movements have been documented in the region, and the pattern in the model for Zone 1 could be related to seasonal differences in calling frequency. Breeding has been documented throughout the year in Botswana, possibly with a peak in early spring (Skinner 1995a). The scattered breeding might be related to peak floods gradually progressing down through the Okavango over a period of several months in the dry season.

There are four boubou shrikes in the region, but the Swamp Boubou is sympatric only with the Tropical Boubou *L. aethiopicus* in a small area along the Chobe River where the latter is very common (1 bird/ha; unpubl. data), and in the western Caprivi, where the Swamp Boubou is more common (Brown 1990a). However, numbers and proportions of the two species seem to fluctuate in the area of overlap, and breeding may peak at different times of year (Swamp Boubou in winter and Tropical Boubou in summer). The Swamp Boubou and Crimsonbreasted Shrike *L. atrococcineus* occupy different habitat, the latter preferring dry *Acacia* bushveld. They may



Recorded in 126 grid cells, 2.8%
 Total number of records: 807
 Mean reporting rate for range: 41.3%

however come in contact in riverine woodland, particularly in winter when some Crimsonbreasted Shrikes move into this habitat.

The Swamp Boubou is not threatened: it is common within its restricted range in the atlas region and occurs widely beyond. Clearing of riparian woodland and thickets is, however, likely to reduce numbers.

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