

Corncrake

Kwartelkoning

Crex crex

The Corncrake breeds in the temperate western Palearctic from northwestern Europe to central Siberia and winters mainly in the eastern half of Africa (Urban *et al.* 1986). A crake of meadows and other grasslands, it includes in its non-breeding habitats dry to moist, dense grass 0.3–2 m tall, fallow fields, neglected cultivation, rank grass and herbage, hay and lucerne fields, and occasionally moist sedgebeds and reedbeds. It occurs up to 3000 m (Cramp *et al.* 1980; Cyrus & Robson 1980; Taylor, P.B. 1984, 1994; Urban *et al.* 1986).

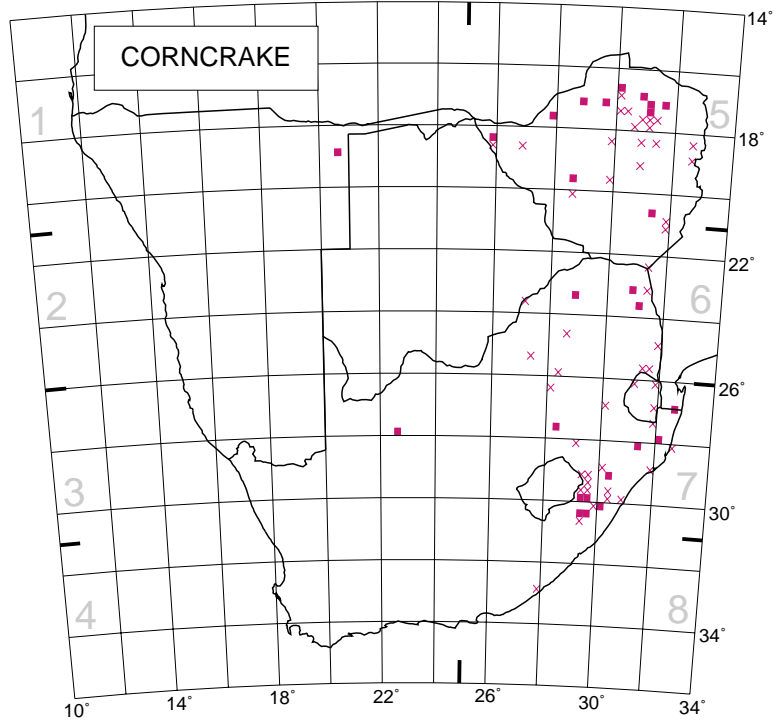
Its secretive habits and its silence in Africa (Taylor, P.B. 1984) result in its nonbreeding range and status being imperfectly known, but its centre of abundance includes eastern Zaire, Zambia, Malawi, Zimbabwe and eastern South Africa (Stowe & Becker 1992). Although widespread in these areas it is often thinly distributed; e.g. individuals occupied areas of 4–9 ha in Zambian grassland (Taylor, P.B. 1984).

Corncrakes arrive in southern Africa November–December and depart March–April, most being recorded December–March (Stowe & Becker 1992).

In southern Africa, it is scarce to rare everywhere except Zimbabwe and KwaZulu-Natal, and vagrant to the western Cape Province (Stowe & Becker 1992; Bonde 1993). This is confirmed by atlas data which show it to be largely confined to Zimbabwe, KwaZulu-Natal and, less commonly, the Transvaal and Swaziland, in the vegetation types of the higher-rainfall regions. Atlas records from grid cells 1820DC and 2722DC constitute small range extensions. KwaZulu-Natal breeding records (Stark & Sclater 1906) are erroneous and two ‘Corncrake’ eggs (Durban Museum collection) are of the African Rail *Rallus caerulescens*.

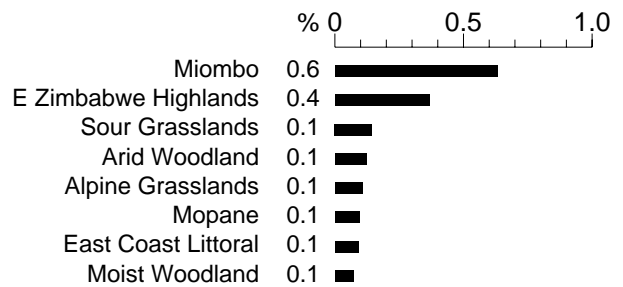
The Corncrake is a globally threatened species (Collar *et al.* 1994) which is declining throughout Europe as a result of habitat loss and changing agricultural practices (Bibby 1992; Stowe & Becker 1992). It is probably not threatened on its African non-breeding grounds where habitat has possibly even increased in recent years (Stowe & Becker 1992).

P.B. Taylor



Recorded in 77 grid cells, 1.7%
 Total number of records: 129
 Mean reporting rate for range: 0.9%

Reporting rates for vegetation types



Also marginally in Mixed Grasslands and Valley Bushveld.

