

## Sand Martin

### Europese Oewerswael

#### *Riparia riparia*

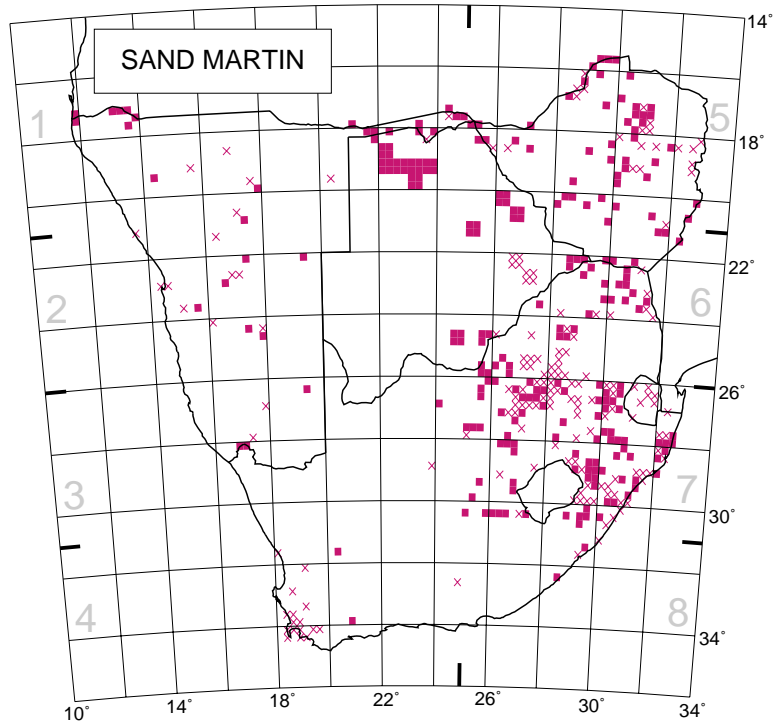
The Sand Martin is a widely but sparsely recorded nonbreeding Palearctic migrant to southern Africa, occurring mainly in the east. It was regularly recorded from the Okavango, which shows substantially higher reporting rates than any other biome.

During the nonbreeding season it occurs widely, but locally, in sub-Saharan Africa and many records are of passage birds (Keith *et al.* 1992). It has a nearly cosmopolitan breeding range throughout Europe, Asia and North America, and the other nonbreeding destinations are South America and the Far East. It occurs in southern Africa in diverse habitats but is attracted to waterbodies and surrounding grassland and irrigated crops (Tree 1986a). It usually roosts in reedbeds, often together with European Swallows *Hirundo rustica* (e.g. Tree 1986a). It is usually perceived to be scarce to rare in southern Africa but is possibly often overlooked. For example, at a mixed roost of European Swallows and Sand Martins in Zimbabwe, about 8% of the birds mist-netted were martins (Tree 1986a). It is likely to be overlooked in flocks of Brown-throated Martins *R. paludicola* in some regions, but there is some evidence that the two species avoid one another in Zimbabwe (Irwin 1981).

Arrival is mainly in October and departure in March–April. Occasional birds may overwinter (e.g. Hockey *et al.* 1989; Herremans 1994d). Records from the southernmost parts of its range were concentrated March–April and September–October and may represent vagrants during departure and arrival. Recoveries of Sand Martins ringed in Europe are from the Sahel region of West Africa (Keith *et al.* 1992). It is therefore thought that the Siberian populations migrate the furthest south in Africa (Turner & Rose 1989). The timing of arrival and departure in southern Africa is compatible with the timing of breeding in central Siberia (Rogacheva 1992), assuming that the birds take about one month for northwards and for southwards migration.

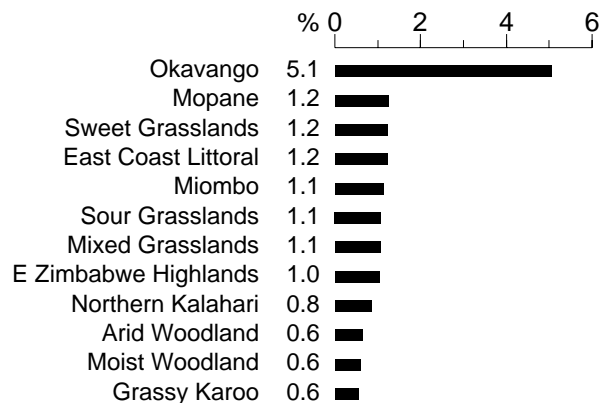
Breeding populations in several European countries are decreasing (Turner & Rose 1989). The species is thought to be increasing in abundance and extending its range in Zimbabwe (Irwin 1981) owing to man-made impoundments. The first record in the southwestern Cape Province was at Bot River Lagoon (3419AC) in February 1979 (Jensen *et al.* 1979), and it has become regular since. Its habit of roosting communally in reedbeds may render it vulnerable to mass mortality during seed-eater control with avicides.

R.A. Earlé



Recorded in 411 grid cells, 9.1%  
Total number of records: 1004  
Mean reporting rate for range: 2.0%

#### Reporting rates for vegetation types



Also marginally in Namibian Escarpment, Alpine Grasslands, Namib, Afro-montane Forest, Central Kalahari, Valley Bushveld and Nama Karoo.

