

### European Sedge Warbler

Europese Vleisanger

*Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*

The European Sedge Warbler is a Palearctic migrant ranging throughout the savannas of sub-Saharan Africa (Cuny-Lindahl 1981; Pearson & Lack 1992). In southern Africa it is widespread and locally common near water, and consequently occurs more in the mesic north and east. It avoids the arid parts of the Kalahari, Karoo and Namib, but is locally common in central and northern Namibia (Van den Brink 1989); vagrants have occurred as far south as the southwestern Cape Province (Hockey *et al.* 1989). It is solitary and territorial, but less skulking than the other *Acrocephalus* warblers.

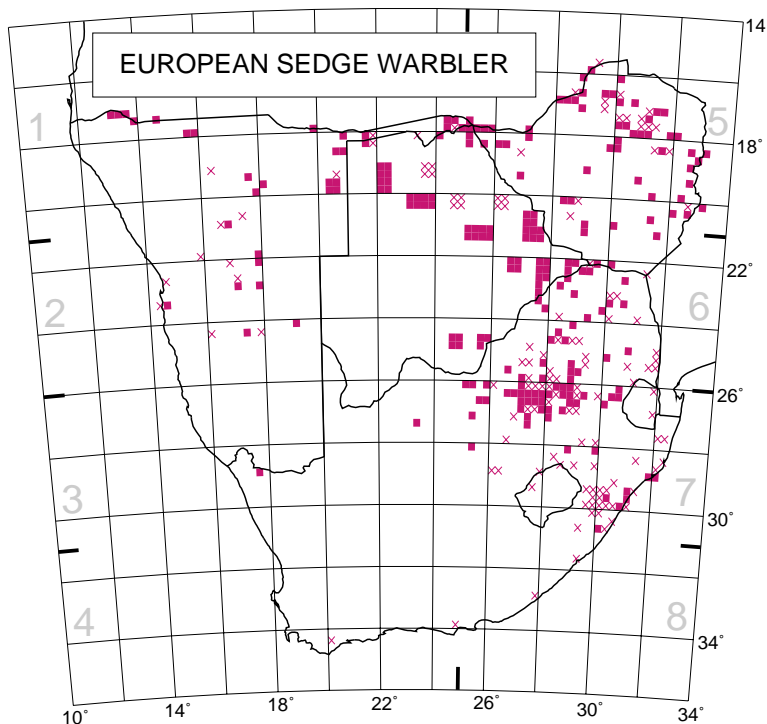
It is almost exclusively found near water (rivers, dams, vleis and sewage ponds), where it prefers short, annual swamp vegetation such as sedges, inundated grasses and tall weeds over or near the edge of the water. It can be particularly common at sewage works (Ginn *et al.* 1989).

Although it appears simultaneously over the whole latitudinal range in the region, arrival is slow from late October to January, mainly in the second half of November and December (Taylor 1979; Tarboton *et al.* 1987b; Herremans 1994d). Birds continue to arrive and redistribute as more habitat becomes available as the rainy season progresses (unpubl. data). Records before the end of October should be viewed with caution. Departure is synchronized over the region and rather rapid in March–April. Site fidelity to nonbreeding sites is well documented in the mesic areas (Tree 1965; Taylor 1979; Irwin 1981; Hanmer 1989a; Raijmakers & Raijmakers 1995). There appear to be no reliable records during the austral winter.

It is broadly sympatric with the African Marsh *A. baeticatus*, European Reed *A. scirpaceus*, Cape Reed *A. gracilirostris* and Great Reed *A. arundinaceus* Warblers, but prefers less tall swamp and more seasonal herbaceous vegetation than any of these species. European Sedge and Great Reed Warblers have similar distributions, but the former apparently hardly reaches as far south as the Orange River tributaries.

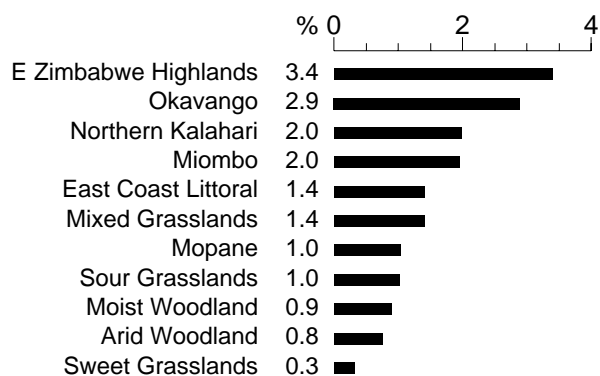
Because it readily accepts lush herbaceous vegetation fringing man-made wetlands, available habitat has most likely increased in recent times. It is sensitive to droughts in the Sahel (Peach *et al.* 1991), but there is no evidence that the European Sedge Warbler is under any threat in southern Africa.

M. Herremans



Recorded in 351 grid cells, 7.7%  
 Total number of records: 1193  
 Mean reporting rate for range: 2.8%

#### Reporting rates for vegetation types



Also marginally in Valley Bushveld, Namibian Escarpment, Central Kalahari and Namib.

