



Crowned Eagle

Kroonarend

Stephanoaetus coronatus

The Crowned Eagle is an Afrotropical species which is restricted to the eastern parts of southern Africa, in South Africa, Swaziland and Zimbabwe. The most westerly record is from northern Botswana (Aspinwall 1989b). It may be locally frequent or common in patches of prime habitat. It usually occurs singly or in pairs.

In prime habitat in the escarpment area of the Transvaal, the distances between breeding pairs are as short as 2–5 km (Tarboton *et al.* 1987b). Elsewhere in the Transvaal nests are 5–12 km apart (Tarboton & Allan 1984). In the eastern Cape Province the mean inter-nest distance is 6 km (range 2–12 km) (Vernon 1984), whereas in the southern Cape Province it is 19.5 km (range 6–32.5 km) (Boshoff 1988).

Adult Crowned Eagles are inconspicuous except when undertaking their display flights, which are accompanied by a distinctive and far-carrying call. Immatures can be confused with those of the Martial Eagle *Polemaetus bellincosus*.

Habitat: This is essentially a forest eagle but it also occurs in dense woodland and forested gorges and ravines in open savannas and thornveld, and in tall riparian woodland and gallery forest. It is also found in habitat mosaics comprising indigenous forest, exotic plantations, pastures and grasslands. It has adapted to altered environments and nests in alien trees (mainly pines and eucalypts), sometimes in close proximity to human habitation. The highest reporting

rates were in East Coast Littoral, Afromontane Forest and Eastern Zimbabwe Highlands. In the woodland and grassland vegetation types it is restricted to patches of suitable habitat.

Movements: The models show it to be sedentary, with little seasonal variation. They show a slight increase in reporting rate in the early part of the breeding season; at this time the eagles are territorial and undertake extensive nuptial displays, possibly resulting in increased conspicuousness. Breeding adults are sedentary and juveniles and immatures normally disperse from their natal areas.

Breeding: Breeding occurs throughout the range and the models show that the season is mainly August–March, thereby occupying about two-thirds of the 12-month cycle, although breeding activity was recorded at all times of the year. The main egg-laying period is August–October, with a peak in September (Irwin 1981; Brown *et al.* 1982; Tarboton & Allan 1984; Tarboton *et al.* 1987b).

Historical distribution and conservation: While there has been no major range change in the southern and southeastern parts of the Cape Province, it may have disappeared from the fringes of the Nama Karoo as a result of man's destruction of ravine forests (Boshoff *et al.* 1983). Commercial plantations have extended its distribution into former grassland areas (Tarboton & Allan 1984). Although numbers may have decreased locally, the current distribution is considered to reflect the historical one closely.

The conservation status of the Crowned Eagle is probably satisfactory but it needs close monitoring. Where territories and home ranges in forest and woodland areas abut small-stock farms in the eastern and southeastern Cape Province, it is accused of stock theft and is persecuted by shooting and trapping (Boshoff & Vernon 1980a; Jarvis *et al.* 1980; pers. obs). In the southern and eastern Cape Province prime habitat has been lost by the clearing of forests for commercial plantations, and the clearance of trees in forested ravines (Boshoff *et al.* 1983; Boshoff 1988). It is more likely to take domestic stock, and therefore be persecuted, when breeding in plantations away from indigenous forest (Boshoff 1988). Juvenile and immature birds are apparently more prone than adult birds to direct persecution by small-stock farmers (Tarboton & Allan 1984; pers. obs).

A.F. Boshoff

Recorded in 362 grid cells, 8.0%
Total number of records: 4345
Mean reporting rate for range: 12.0%

Reporting rates for vegetation types



