

Sooty Falcon

Roetvalk

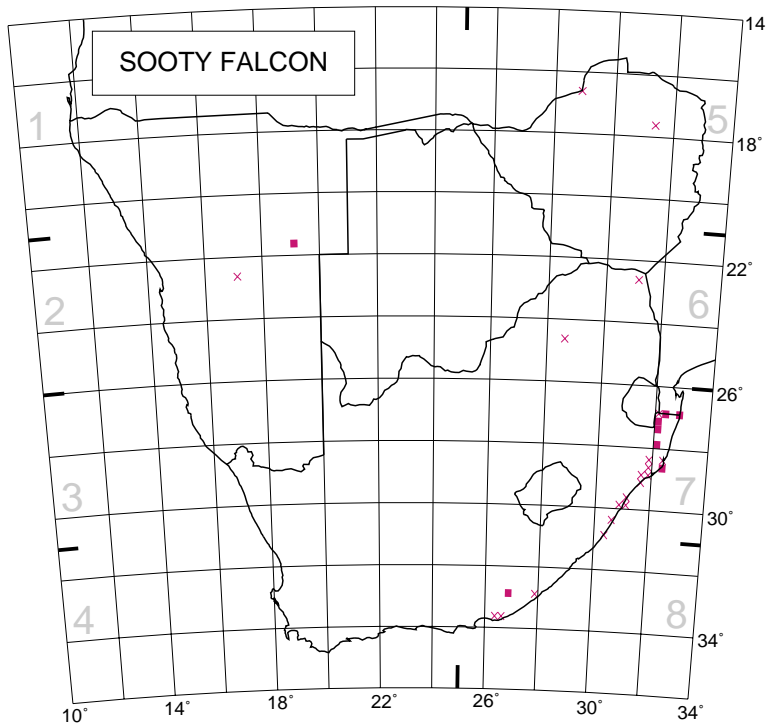
Falco concolor

The Sooty Falcon is a migrant from breeding grounds in the eastern Sahara and Arabian Peninsula to Madagascar and southern Africa. Its presence in southern Africa was recognized as recently as the 1960s (Clancey 1969a), before which it was thought that all Sooty Falcons migrated to Madagascar. In southern Africa it favours tropical and subtropical habitats, in stark contrast to the open desert areas in which it breeds.

The majority of atlas and other sightings in the region are from coastal KwaZulu-Natal, but increasing numbers of records are reported from elsewhere in southern Africa. In addition to the present map, the species has also been recorded near Njuga Hills (2024B) in Botswana in December 1988 (Herremans *et al.* 1993a). It is likely to be comparatively abundant in Mozambique and is probably more regular and widespread in southern Africa than the few atlas and other records suggest. It is seldom conspicuous, spending much of the day roosting within the foliage of large trees. Most sightings are in the late afternoon and early evening when it hunts insects, bats and small birds. Its fast flight in poor light conditions makes it difficult to identify and, while adults are distinctive in colour, young birds are more likely to be incorrectly identified as European Hobby Falcons *F. subbuteo*.

Breeding is timed so that young are present during the southward migration of passerines from Europe and Asia (Cade 1982). It reaches southern Africa in mid-November to early December, staying until about mid-April. It aggregates to breed in loose colonies, and wintering birds are often encountered in small groups. Its fairly common occurrence along the east coast may be a recent development, since it is hard to imagine that it could have been overlooked throughout the 19th and first half of the 20th century.

J.M. Mendelsohn



Recorded in 28 grid cells, 0.6%
 Total number of records: 60
 Mean reporting rate for range: 0.8%

