



Shelley's Francolin

Laeveldpatrys

Francolinus shelleyi

Shelley's Francolin has a patchy distribution in eastern Africa, southwards from Kenya. In southern Africa it occurs in Zimbabwe, South Africa and Swaziland. In Zimbabwe it occurs on the central plateau, the eastern highlands and the Zambezi Valley, occurring as far west as the Botswana border, and it avoids the Limpopo Valley. In South Africa it also largely avoids the dry Limpopo Valley and is found in the central Transvaal and lowveld woodlands. It is widespread in Swaziland, and in KwaZulu-Natal north of about 30°S. The isolation of South African populations from those in Zimbabwe confirms the distribution recorded previously by Urban *et al.* (1986).

It is found in pairs or small coveys and is localized in its occurrence, and is outnumbered by other francolin species in the Transvaal (Tarboton *et al.* 1987b). It is unobtrusive, often occurring in relatively inaccessible habitats, and its presence is easily overlooked unless its call is known.

Habitat: It occurs in well-grassed woodland, often in stony terrain or among rocky outcrops, and also in some areas in open montane and other grasslands (Urban *et al.* 1986).

Movements: There is no evidence for seasonal movements (e.g. Tarboton *et al.* 1987b), and the models do not suggest any seasonal variation in reporting rates.

Breeding: Egg-laying in the Transvaal is mainly in mid-summer (Tarboton *et al.* 1987b), while in Zimbabwe it is virtually throughout the year, with a suggestion of peaks in spring and autumn (Irwin 1981). Brooke (1971f) and Hartley & Mundy (1992) reported two peaks, September–October and March–April, for Zimbabwe. The atlas data support a clear difference in breeding seasonality between the Zimbabwean birds (Zone 5) and populations further south in Zones 6 and 7.

Interspecific relationships: Keith *et al.* (1992) grouped Shelley's Francolin with two other genetically similar species (*F. levallantoides* and *F. africanus*). In southern Africa, Shelley's Francolin is largely parapatric with these two species and with the Redwing Francolin *F. levallantii*.

Historical distribution and conservation: Meyer (1971b) indicated a local range contraction in Zimbabwe: 'Widely distributed and common in Mashonaland and in the midlands, but increasingly uncommon westwards and comparatively scarce in Matabeleland, although records show that this was not always so in the Bulawayo area.' There are no records of any change in distribution for the rest of southern Africa. Although Shelley's Francolin is in no apparent danger, Meyer (1971b) indicated a reduction in numbers following general veld deterioration, resulting from continuous grazing by domestic livestock and over-frequent fires.

R.M. Little

Recorded in 406 grid cells, 8.9%
Total number of records: 3595
Mean reporting rate for range: 8.7%

Reporting rates for vegetation types



