

Striped Crake

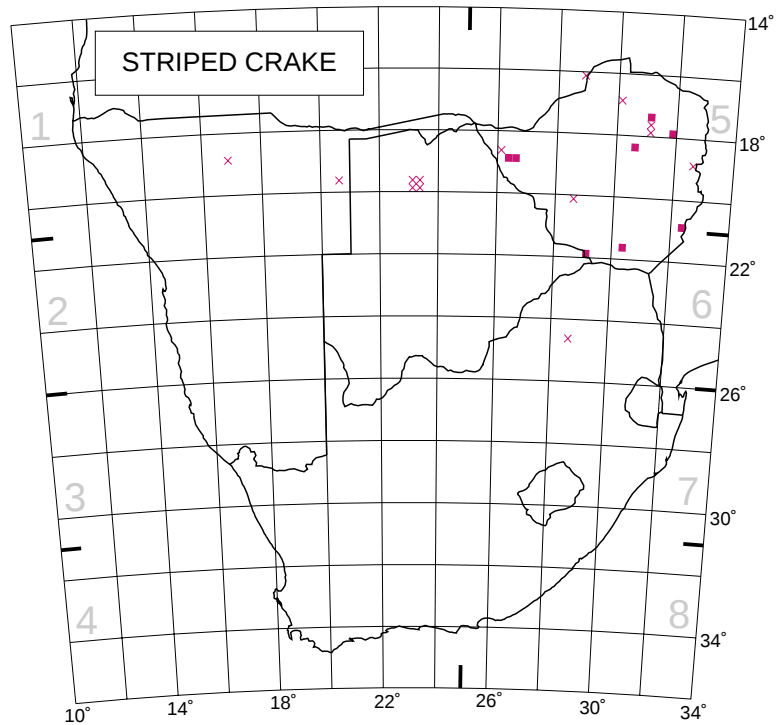
Gestreepte Riethaan

Aenigmatolimnas marginalis

Highly secretive and poorly known, it is uncommon throughout its range, which is essentially Afrotropical with isolated records of vagrants from North Africa and from Aldabra in the Indian Ocean (Urban *et al.* 1986). It is unusual among rallids in its sequentially polyandrous mating system and in showing strong sexual dimorphism in plumage. Some early publications contain errors arising from incorrectly specified sexual and age-related plumage differences (Wintle & Taylor 1993).

It avoids dense, tall vegetation in permanent marshes, preferring areas with shallow pools, muddy patches and fine grasses, and much of its preferred habitat is ephemeral (Taylor *et al.* 1994). It breeds in seasonally inundated grasslands which dry out and are often burned during the dry season. Typical breeding habitats include temporary pans, short-grassed dambos, old rice fields and the edges of marshes, ponds and ditches (Hopkinson & Masterson 1975; Urban *et al.* 1986; Taylor *et al.* 1994).

In southern Africa, where it is assumed to be a wet-season visitor which retreats towards equatorial regions after breeding, most recent records were from Zimbabwe where it occurs on the central plateau, breeding irregularly in vleis near Harare (1731CC) December–March (Hopkinson & Masterson 1975; Irwin 1981; Urban *et al.* 1986). Apart from atlas data (1816DD, 1920DA and 1923C), the only records from Namibia and Botswana are of its breeding in the 19th century at Ondonga (1816DA) February–March (Andersson & Gurney 1872) and of its being collected in northern Botswana (Clancey 1964b). Most of the recorded occurrences farther south (reviewed by Taylor *et al.* 1994) were attributed to vagrancy, but several birds calling in suitable habitat on the Nyl floodplain (2428DA) in January–February 1988 could have bred, and its breeding range may extend to South Africa in years of good rainfall (Taylor *et al.* 1994).



Recorded in 22 grid cells, 0.5%
Total number of records: 29
Mean reporting rate for range: 1.3%

Numbers may have been affected throughout its range by habitat loss as a result of overgrazing, the damming of rivers and the drainage of wetlands (Kotze *et al.* 1995).

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