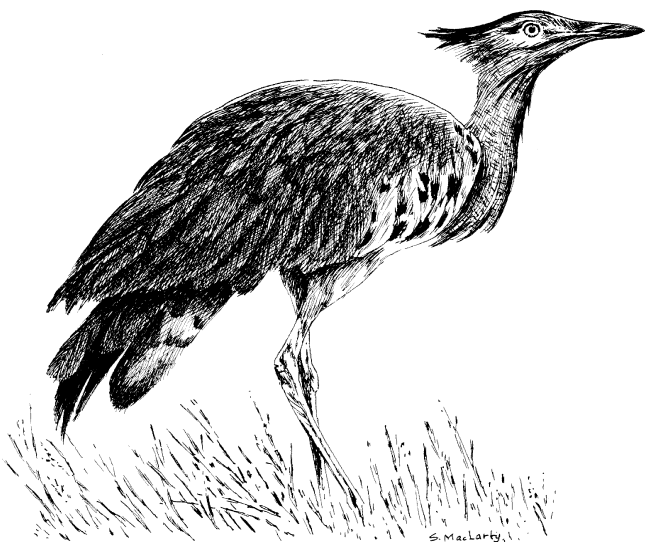




Kori Bustard

Gompou

Ardeotis kori

The distribution of the Kori Bustard lies mainly within the 100–600-mm-rainfall isohyets in southern Africa. It is largely absent from the extremely arid Namib Desert but is widespread in the semi-arid regions in the western half of southern Africa and penetrates to the east along the central plateau of Zimbabwe and the dry Limpopo Valley into Mozambique. The southern African subspecies *A. k. kori* is largely endemic to the region, extending into southern Angola and Zambia. It is widely separated by the miombo woodland belt of Central Africa from the subspecies *struthiunculus* occurring in East Africa.

The Zimbabwean population has been variously estimated at 10 700 (Rockingham-Gill 1983), 2000 (Mundy 1989) and 5000 birds (Dale 1990). It is usually found alone or in small groups of 2–3 birds, but occasionally in flocks as large as 18 individuals (Tarboton *et al.* 1987b; Dale 1990). In the Savuti Depression in Chobe National Park, 46 birds were counted from one vantage point in July 1994 (M. Herremans pers. comm.). This is a conspicuous species owing to its size, but some observers recorded Stanley's *Neotis denhami* and Ludwig's *N. ludwigii* Bustards as Kori Bustards.

Habitat: It is a bird of dry savannas. It is not found in regions of exclusively closed-canopy woodland which explains its absence or only localized distribution in the miombo woodlands of Zimbabwe. In the open Karoo and dry grassland biomes, it is associated with tree-lined watercourses where it takes cover during the heat of the day and when disturbed (pers. obs). The isolated concentration of records in the southern Cape Province is due to the extensive areas of woodland in this region compared with the Karoo regions immediately to the north.

Movements: Its movements are poorly understood. It was reported to have an eastward movement in winter, at least in the 'southeastern' parts of its range (Clancey 1967c; Snow 1978). This is likely to have been based on confusion with Stanley's Bustard, however. The models do not show any evidence for regular migration. As an inhabitant of semi-arid regions it does appear to show local movements and nomadism associated with the tracking of unpredictable rainfall events (e.g. Tarboton *et al.* 1987b).

Breeding: Breeding was recorded in most months of the year, except for late winter (July–September). Egg-laying data from Zimbabwe span October–December (Irwin 1981). In Botswana two clutches of eggs were found in December (Allan 1989a; Skinner 1994) and 'large' chicks were recorded in November (Skinner 1989a) and February (M. Herremans pers. comm.). In the Transvaal chicks have been recorded October–March (Tarboton *et al.* 1987b).

Historical distribution and conservation: It has decreased in several regions, including Zimbabwe, perhaps especially in Mashonaland (Tree *et al.* 1979; Irwin 1981; Mundy 1989; Dale 1990); Swaziland, where it became extinct prior to 1960 (Parker 1994); the Transvaal, where it now has a distribution that is 'a fragment of its former range', having retracted from the central woodlands (Tarboton *et al.* 1987b); and the eastern Cape Province (Skead 1967b). Clancey (1964b, 1967c) reported it occurring in KwaZulu-Natal, but only one record, in February 1976 near Pietermaritzburg (2930CB), exists for this province since 1970 (Cyrus & Robson 1980; SABAP data). It is unlikely that it ever occurred regularly in KwaZulu-Natal. The South African Red Data book (Brooke 1984b) lists it as a 'vulnerable' species and notes that it is now present in much reduced numbers in that country.

The largest populations are in Botswana and Namibia, but despite low human population density in Botswana, Kori Bustards are under severe pressure there; road counts found 1 bird/106 km inside protected areas, but only 1 bird/4356 km outside fully protected areas (Herremans 1993d). Botswanan strongholds include the Nossob Valley (Kalahari Gemsbok National Park), Deception Valley (Central Kalahari Game Reserve), Nxai Pan National Park and Savuti Depression (Chobe National Park).

The threats faced by the Kori Bustard are multiple and include habitat destruction through crop farming, high human densities, bush encroachment brought about by overstocking, hunting, collisions with overhead transmission lines, poisoning and stray dogs (Irwin 1981; Rockingham-Gill 1983; Brooke 1984b; Tarboton *et al.* 1987b; National Parks Board 1988; Mundy 1989; Dale 1990; Hartley 1991a,b; Johnsgard 1991).

D.G. Allan

Recorded in 1382 grid cells, 30.5%
Total number of records: 7522
Mean reporting rate for range: 22.2%

Reporting rates for vegetation types

