

Sand Plover

Grootstrandkiewiet

Charadrius leschenaultii

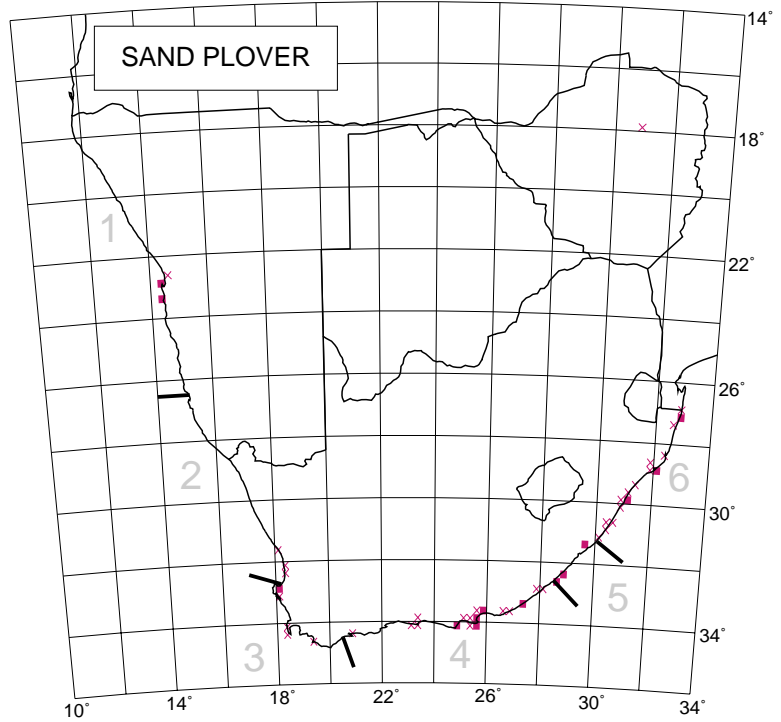
Breeding in the desert regions of southern Eurasia, from Turkey to Mongolia (Hayman *et al.* 1986), the Sand Plover is a nonbreeding migrant which occurs very sparsely in southern Africa. The main nonbreeding grounds are northwards from Mozambique on the east coast of Africa, along the shores of the Indian Ocean to northern Australia (Hayman *et al.* 1986).

In the atlas region it is found mainly along the KwaZulu-Natal coast southwards to the eastern Cape Province. There are occasional sightings as far west as the western Cape Province; it occurs annually in small numbers at Langebaan Lagoon (3318AA) and the Berg River estuary (3218BC). The only records for Namibia are from Walvis Bay (2214CD) where it is rare. The only inland record during the atlas period was in Zimbabwe at Lake Chivero (1730DD) in October 1992, with a subsequent record at Aisleby (2028BA) in November 1993 (Tree 1993a, 1994b). Surprisingly, the much rarer Mongolian Plover *C. mongolus* is recorded more frequently inland.

The world population of the Sand Plover is *c.* 200 000 birds (Rose & Scott 1994) and the numbers migrating to southern Africa are negligible. Counts during the 1970s showed the total population of the coastline of South Africa and Namibia to be about 30 birds (Summers *et al.* 1987a), but it would appear that numbers visiting the eastern coastline vary substantially. Peak numbers are unlikely to exceed 200 birds, however. Certain estuaries and bays are favoured over others, and at these sites it may be found annually. This is conspicuous on the map; 14 coastal grid cells show reporting rates exceeding 2%, while at the remainder of sites it is occasional or vagrant.

It is not a bird of open coastline, preferring a substrate which is a mixture of mud and sand. It is thus a habitat specialist, likely to occur only in a limited number of estuaries and tidal coastal lagoons.

Migrants start to arrive from September; most birds depart during April and early May. Records outside this period are most likely of overwintering birds.



Recorded in 45 grid cells, 1.0%
 Total number of records: 313
 Mean reporting rate for range: 2.2%

A.J. Tree

