

Lesser Crested Tern

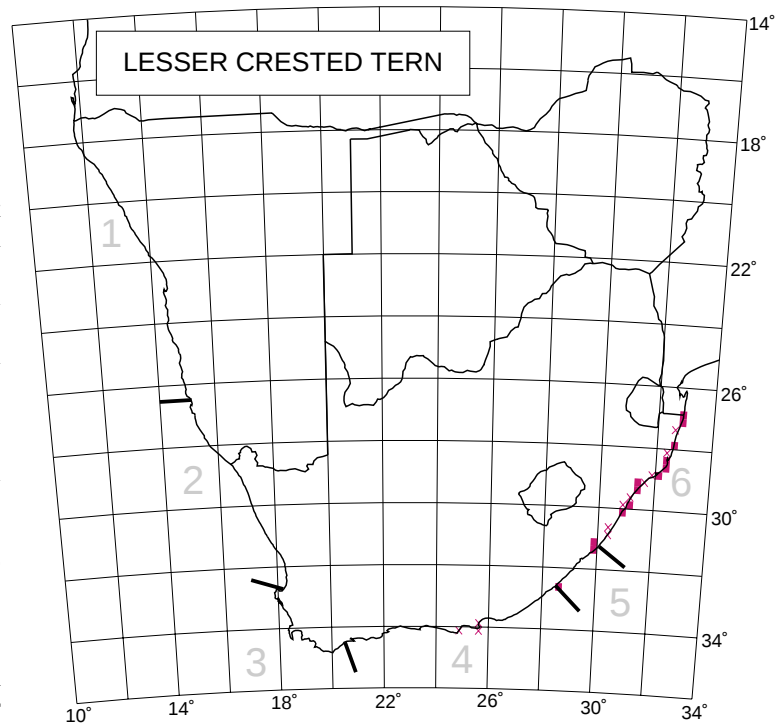
Kuifkopseeswael

Sterna bengalensis

The Lesser Crested Tern breeds in north Africa, the northern Indian Ocean and tropical Australasia; nonbreeding birds disperse throughout this region and along the east coast of Africa (Harrison 1983b). Subspecies *S. b. arabica* from the coast of the northern Indian Ocean occurs in southern Africa. It is a fairly common nonbreeding visitor to the coasts of KwaZulu-Natal and Mozambique. Most occur during summer, December–May, but some remain throughout the year. It is uncommon in the eastern Cape Province, and a vagrant westwards to Cape Town (3318CD); there were no records during the atlas period from the southwestern Cape Province, but it was observed in March–April 1976 at Hermanus (3419AD) and in December 1995 at the Strandfontein Sewage Works (3418BA) (Hockey *et al.* 1989; Graham 1996).

It feeds inshore and roosts on the coast with other terns and gulls. Most roosts are at river mouths and coastal wetlands. During summer surveys of waterbirds along the KwaZulu-Natal coast in 1980 and 1981, 200 birds were counted (Ryan *et al.* 1986). More than 90% of these birds were at roosts at coastal wetlands, with the largest flock of 120 birds at Kosi Bay (2632DD). This is a minimum population estimate because the counts were conducted at various times during the day when many terns are likely to have been foraging at sea.

P.G. Ryan



Recorded in 23 grid cells, 0.5%
Total number of records: 162
Mean reporting rate for range: 2.4%

