

### Copperytailed Coucal

Grootvleioerie

*Centropus cupreicaudus*

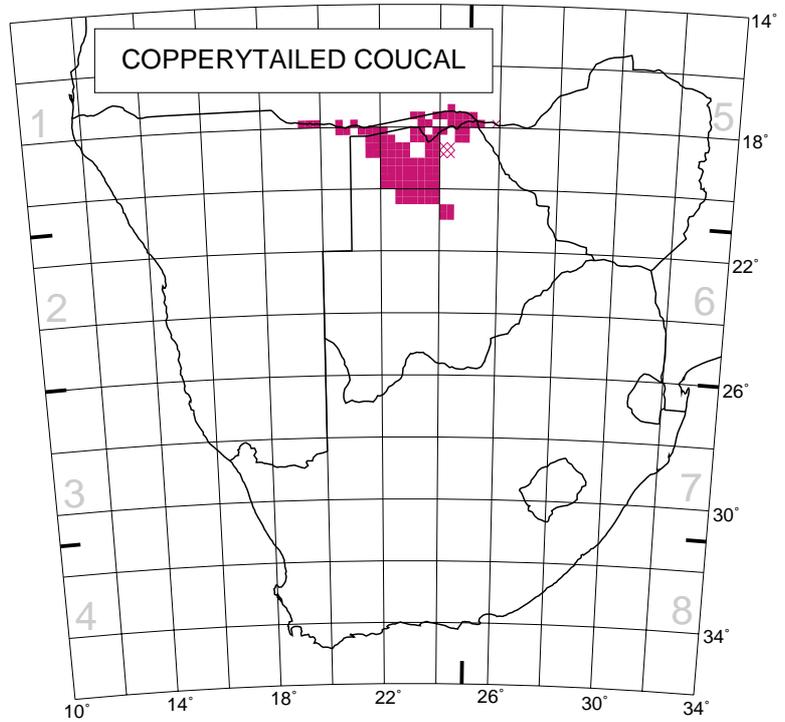
This Afrotropical coucal has a restricted range in southern Africa, from southern Zaire and southwestern Tanzania through Zambia into Angola, the Caprivi and Botswana (Fry *et al.* 1988). In southern Africa it occurs along the Okavango River in Namibia, the Okavango Delta and its drainage, along the upper Boteti River to about Rakops (2024C), the Kwando, Linyanti and Chobe rivers in the eastern Caprivi, and the Zambezi River above the Victoria Falls (1725DD) (Irwin 1981; Rowan 1983).

The Copperytailed Coucal inhabits permanent wetlands and fringing riparian thickets; it frequents reedbeds, seasonally inundated grasslands and papyrus (Rowan 1983; Penry 1994). It is frequently seen foraging on open floodplains along the water edge and it is by far the commonest coucal within its wetland range.

It is resident (Rowan 1983) and the seasonality analysis confirms this. The increase in reporting rate in spring is most likely to reflect more frequent vocalizations. When the Thamalakane and Boteti rivers dried up during 1995, the species first persisted in a few patches of remaining reeds, but after these were burned or grazed down, it disappeared, though some may have persisted in riparian thickets. Within a month after the return of the water, many birds had returned, indicating that the species has the potential to adjust its range to expanding or contracting floods (M.H. pers. obs).

It has been recorded breeding in Botswana in November, January and March (Fry *et al.* 1988; Skinner 1996a; M.H. pers. obs), while in adjacent Zambia it breeds September–February (Benson *et al.* 1971).

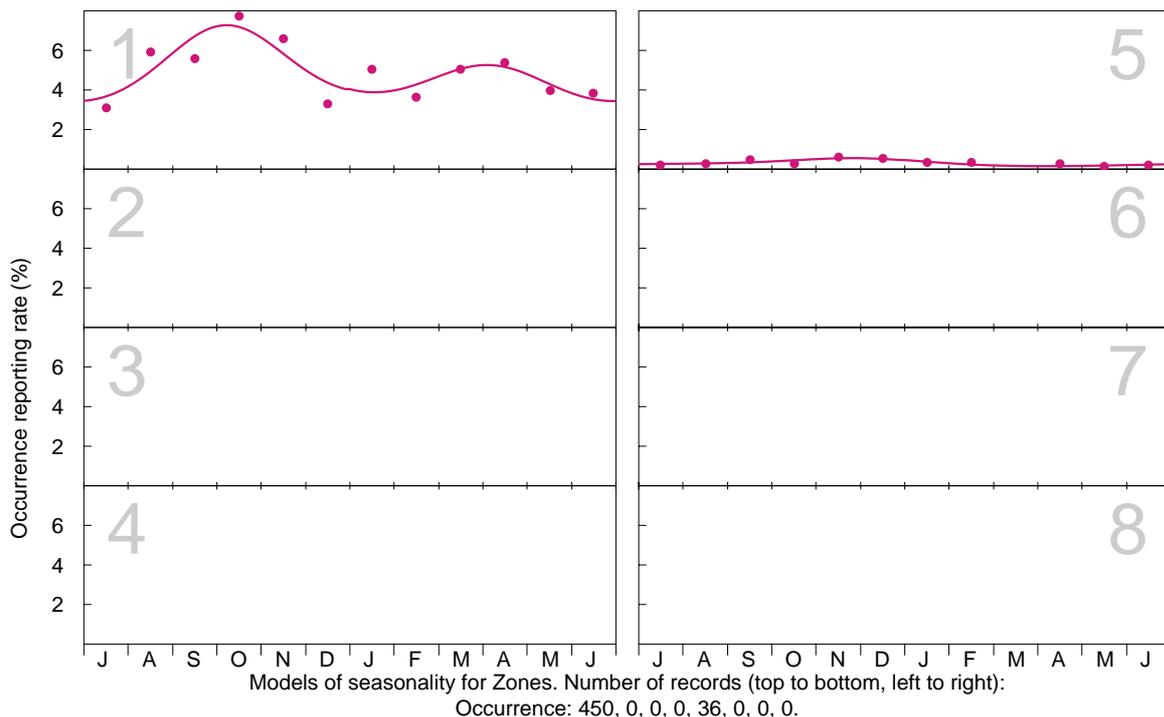
The Copperytailed Coucal occurs with three other species of coucal in the Okavango Delta. It appears to occupy a niche in the rank wetland vegetation alongside the Black

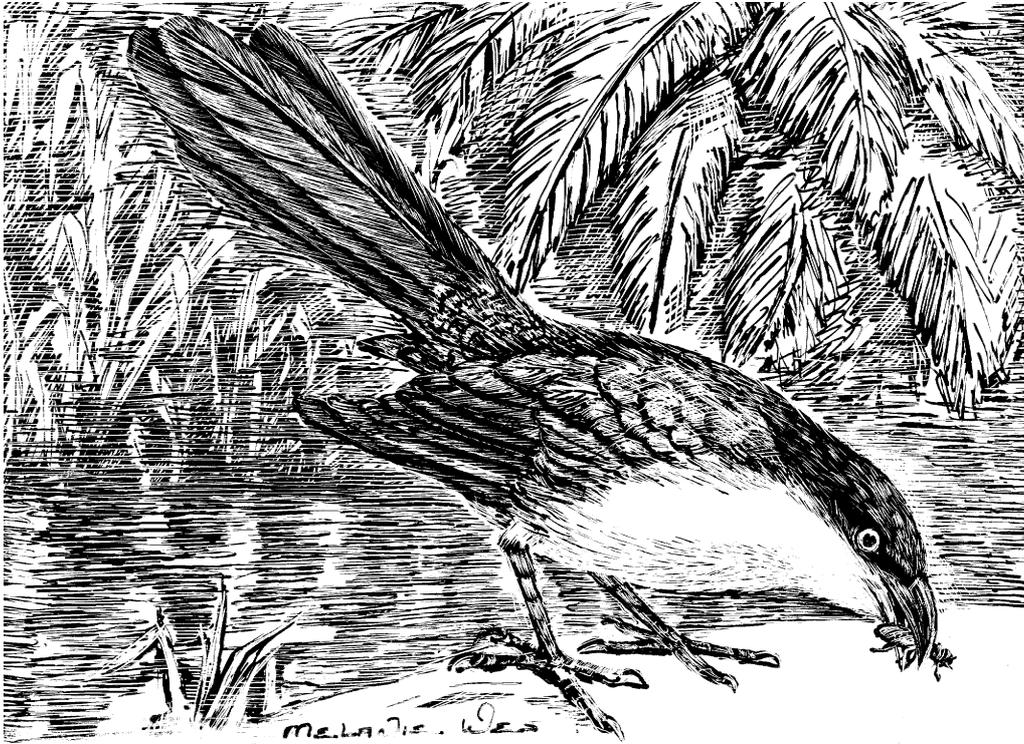


Recorded in 112 grid cells, 2.5%  
 Total number of records: 490  
 Mean reporting rate for range: 26.9%

Coucal *C. bengalensis*, and away from the other two species which prefer woody vegetation. It is larger than the other coucals and so probably not in direct competition with them.

*C.J. Vernon and M. Herremans*





*Copper-tailed Coucal*