



## Senegal Coucal

### Senegalvleiloerie

*Centropus senegalensis*

The Senegal Coucal is widely distributed across Africa throughout the northern savanna belt, while a separate population occurs in southern Africa from Tanzania to Namibia (Fry *et al.* 1988). The distribution in the atlas region covers most of Zimbabwe, except some eastern districts. In Botswana it occurs in the Okavango, part of the northern Chobe District, and just into the Tuli Block (2228) along the Limpopo River in the east. In Namibia it is found in the Caprivi and along the Okavango River, with isolated scattered records further south. Despite occurrence along the Limpopo River on the Zimbabwean side and in far eastern Botswana, the species was not recorded in South Africa during the atlas period (the observation in 2230AD was made in Zimbabwe), and earlier claims from this country have all been considered doubtful (Tarboton *et al.* 1987b).

It is similar in appearance and calls to Burchell's Coucal *C. burchellii*; it is best distinguished by the absence of barring on the rump and upper tail-coverts, but it may occasionally have been misidentified.

**Habitat:** It prefers rank growth, particularly rank grass and thickets in tree savanna, but also reedbeds and dense riparian vegetation, but it is not confined to watercourses (Irwin 1981). It is frequently found in dry bush and has adapted to sugar-cane plantations and to gardens near human habitation (Rowan 1983). It was recorded most frequently in the Miombo and Okavango vegetation types.

**Movements:** There is wide scatter in the reporting rates and the suggestion of seasonal fluctuation probably relates to seasonal variations in conspicuousness, related in turn to the frequency of calling, and not to movements. However, there is evidence for occasional local wanderings of limited extent, most likely in search of better habitat (Rowan 1983).

**Breeding:** Egglaying has been recorded October–March in Zimbabwe and Botswana (Irwin 1981; Rowan 1983; Skinner 1996a). The atlas data confirm this pattern in the wet season, but extend the period slightly, including an August record from Zimbabwe, while records in April and May could be biased towards records of dependent fledglings.

**Interspecific relationships:** There is a considerable area of overlap between Senegal and Burchell's Coucals in southeastern Zimbabwe where they occur in the same habitat (Irwin 1981), and with the Whitebrowed Coucal *C. superciliosus*, recently resurrected as a species distinct from Burchell's Coucal (Clancey 1989d), over most of the northern part of its range. For the most part, however, the ranges of Senegal and Burchell's Coucal are complementary, the latter replacing the former in the eastern highlands of Zimbabwe and along most of the Limpopo River, except for a small area in the Tuli Block. All three species are probably in direct competition and the Senegal Coucal tends to occur in drier habitat, and further away from water (Ripley & Heinrich 1966; Irwin 1981; Rowan 1983) than either of the others. The Senegal Coucal is said to be less common where in competition with the Whitebrowed Coucal (Fry *et al.* 1988), but no such effect is obvious from the maps or vegetation analyses.

**Historical distribution and conservation:** Its range is not known to have changed. It occupies sugar-cane fields in Zimbabwe and has most likely expanded its range in this habitat (Rowan 1983). The Senegal Coucal is under no particular threat.

*M. Herremans and C.J. Vernon*

Recorded in 447 grid cells, 9.9%

Total number of records: 4356

Mean reporting rate for range: 33.6%

### Reporting rates for vegetation types



