



Barratt's Warbler

Ruigtesanger

Bradypterus barratti

Barratt's Warbler is endemic to southern Africa. It is widespread in temperate areas from the eastern Cape Province through Transkei, Lesotho, KwaZulu-Natal, along the escarpment of the eastern Transvaal and in the Eastern Highlands of Zimbabwe. It is common in suitable habitat throughout most of the range, being widely distributed in the Transkei and frequently reported from eastern Zimbabwe. There were no records from Swaziland during the atlas despite previous claims (Clancey 1964b; Maclean 1993b) and recent South African records on the borders of Swaziland (Cyrus & Robson 1980; Lawson & Edmonds 1983; Tarboton *et al.* 1987b); this does not necessarily imply that the species was overlooked because the habitat changes abruptly across the border (Parker 1994). There were no records of winter occurrence on the northern KwaZulu-Natal coast, previously shown by Cyrus & Robson (1980).

There are four subspecies recognized (Clancey 1980b), of which *B. b. priesti* in the Zimbabwean highlands and the nominate race along the Transvaal escarpment appear to have disjunct ranges; the highland and lowland races further south appear from the present map to have a continuous range.

It is secretive, occurring on or near the ground in dense vegetation, and is nearly always detected by its frequent vocalizations, particularly during summer. The distribution shown by the atlas is probably reasonably accurate. In appearance it is similar to the Knysna Warbler *B. sylvaticus*, from which it is distinguished primarily by voice (Berruti *et al.* 1993), but these two species occur together over a relatively small area along the coast from the Transkei to the eastern Cape Province.

Habitat: It occurs in dense tangled vegetation, such as bracken, bramble, grasses and herbs on the edges of forest or in kloofs, scrub in valley bottoms or in isolated patches, such as fire-protected pockets on hillsides, and in *Phyllipia* heath in eastern Zimbabwe. It also occupies small patches of forest or scrub adjacent to or enclosed by other habitat. It occurs in similar habitat in winter.

Movements: It was more frequently reported in summer in Zimbabwe (Zone 5) and in KwaZulu-Natal (Zone 7). Higher

reporting rates in winter in Zone 8 suggest altitudinal movements. In Zimbabwe, Irwin (1981) noted that it breeds above 1500 m, except in the Chipinga Uplands (2030B), then moves to lower altitudes in April, being recorded from the Honde valley below 900 m in June–July and at the junction of the Haroni and Rusitu rivers (2033AA) at 350 m from June. Most Zimbabwean birds are presumed to winter in Mozambique (Irwin 1981). The winter movement of some birds to lower altitudes is well known in KwaZulu-Natal (Clancey 1964b; Cyrus & Robson 1980), near East London (C.J. Vernon pers. comm.) and presumed in the Transkei (Quickelberge 1989). **Breeding:** Atlas records from KwaZulu-Natal (Zone 7) were from November–December, as were two Transvaal records with eggs (Tarboton *et al.* 1987b); it breeds October–December in Zimbabwe (Irwin 1981).

Interspecific relationships: In the area where Barratt's and Knysna Warblers occur sympatrically, Barratt's Warbler is present as a winter migrant whereas the Knysna Warbler is probably a breeding resident (Berruti *et al.* 1993). Barratt's Warbler is closely related to the Cameroon Scrub *B. lopesi* and Evergreen Forest *B. mariae* Warblers; all three were regarded as a single species by Sibley & Monroe (1990).

Historical distribution and conservation: The historical and present distributions are not known to differ. Barratt's Warbler is not threatened by forest clearing because it is widely distributed and able to use small patches of secondary vegetation.

A. Berruti

Recorded in 145 grid cells, 3.2%
Total number of records: 821
Mean reporting rate for range: 4.5%

Reporting rates for vegetation types



