

Moustached Warbler

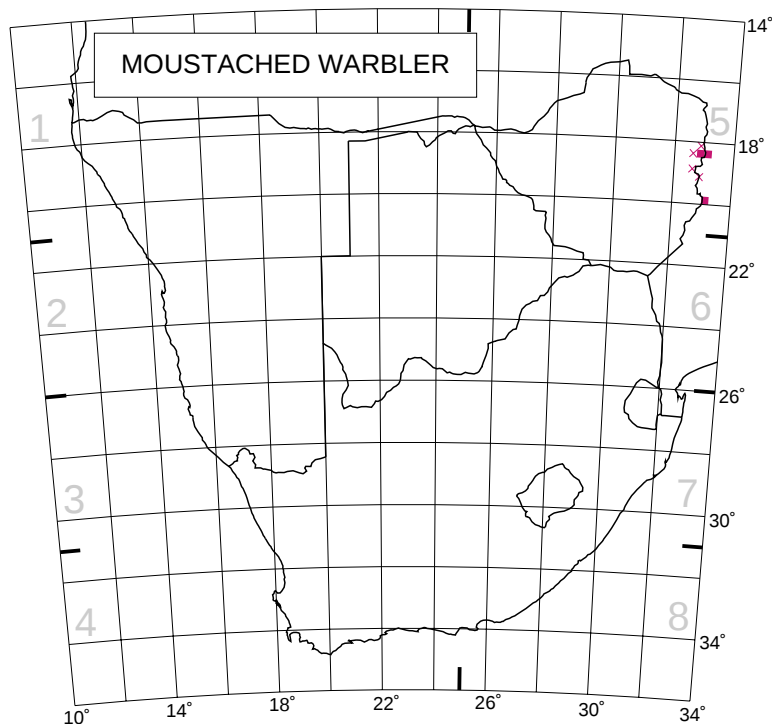
Breëstertgrasvoël

Melocichla mentalis

The Moustached Warbler is widespread to the north of the atlas region and occurs across the continent from northern Mozambique to Angola, and from East to West Africa. It penetrates southern Africa only marginally. It is known from Gorongosa Mountain in central Mozambique, from the Revue River near Vila Manica, and from the border with Zimbabwe on the Honde and Pungwe rivers (Clancey 1971c), and in the Zambezi Valley between Mopeia and Luabo–Marromeu below 20 m (Hanmer 1976); it probably occurs throughout the Zambezi floodplain. In Zimbabwe it is found between 750 m, e.g. the Honde Valley (1832DB), and 2200 m, e.g. Nyanga Downs (1832BB), where it evidently breeds. Further south it is known only from the Chipinga Uplands at Mount Selinda (2032BC) (Irwin 1981). During the atlas period it was reported from restricted areas in the Pungwe and Honde valleys, on the Nyanga Downs, near Mutare and on the Vumba Mountains (1932BB). There were no atlas records from the Mount Selinda area, and little is known of its present occurrence in Mozambique.

It is an uncommon to fairly common localized resident in areas with rank grass, bracken-briar or other herbaceous cover on marshy ground near streams. It is solitary, skulking and poorly known (Maclean 1993b). It is shy, hiding in dense cover, and so little in evidence during the day. In late evening or early morning it sings from the top of a tall herb (Mackworth-Praed & Grant 1962), at which time it is more visible. It has been suggested that this species and the Grassbird *Sphenoeacus afer* are segregated altitudinally in areas where they both occur (Irwin 1981).

Records span October–March, mainly January–February, but it was also recorded in June. In Malawi, where it occurs below 1850 m, there is a downward movement July–August (Benson & Benson 1977), but at Mopeia, Mozambique (12 m), it was present all year (Hanmer 1976). It is known to breed in Zimbabwe and Mozambique in January (Hanmer



Recorded in 7 grid cells, 0.2%
Total number of records: 18
Mean reporting rate for range: 3.0%

1976; Irwin 1981), Malawi in November–December, and Zambia in October–January (Benson & Benson 1977), although Mackworth-Praed & Grant (1963) gave November–February for Malawi and Zambia.

While very localized in southern Africa (Maclean 1993b), the Moustached Warbler is common elsewhere in Africa and it is not threatened. In southern Africa its habitat is not under any particular threat at present.

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