



African Pied Wagtail

Bontkwikkie

Motacilla aguimp

The African Pied Wagtail is distributed along the southern and eastern coasts from near Port Elizabeth (3325DC) eastwards. It extends inland up the major rivers, especially in KwaZulu-Natal. It is also found along large rivers in Swaziland and the Transvaal, especially in the lowveld region and along the Limpopo River. In western South Africa it is largely associated with the Orange and Vaal river drainages, extending into the arid west to the Atlantic Ocean coast. It is a rare vagrant to the southwestern Cape Province (Hockey *et al.* 1989). In Zimbabwe it is widespread, especially along the Zambezi Valley, on the Mashonaland plateau and in the southern lowveld. In Botswana there are scattered records in the north and east, especially along the Limpopo, and it is remarkably uncommon in the Okavango Delta. It occurs along the Kunene River in northwestern Namibia and also in the Caprivi Strip in the northeast, with scattered records elsewhere. The birds associated with the Orange and Vaal river drainages in South Africa belong to the nominate race *M. a. aguimp*, with *M. a. vidua* being found elsewhere (Keith *et al.* 1992). North of southern Africa the species occurs widely in sub-Saharan Africa (Keith *et al.* 1992). Estimates of density include 1 pair/500 m along the Zambezi River between Kariba (1628DB) and Chirundu (1628BB) (Rockingham-Gill 1984) and at least 93 birds along 160 km (1/1.7 km) of the lower Orange River (Allan & Jenkins 1993). Its distinctive plumage, confiding nature, predilection for open areas around waterbodies and loud calls, make this a conspicuous and easily identified bird. It is usually found in pairs. The distribution map is thus an accurate depiction of its current distribution.

Habitat: It occurs along the margins, rocky patches and sandbanks of large rivers, pans, dams and estuaries, at sewage works and dam spillways, and along rocky coastlines. In Zimbabwe it is commensal with humans (Winterbottom 1964b; Skead 1967b; Cyrus & Robson 1980; Irwin 1981; Earlé & Grobler 1987; Quickelberge 1989).

Movements: Keith *et al.* (1992) stated it to be migratory in South Africa, a breeding migrant to the eastern Cape Province and mainly a nonbreeding visitor to the Transvaal, probably based on statements in McLachlan & Liversidge (1957). Maclean (1993b) said that it is mostly resident but repeated the earlier statements from McLachlan & Liversidge (1957) concerning the eastern Cape Province and Transvaal. By contrast, recent sources state it to be resident in Botswana, with some local movements, the Transvaal where it breeds, and Transkei (Tarboton *et al.* 1987b; Quickelberge 1989; Penry

1994). The models show little evidence of large-scale seasonal movements anywhere in the range, although reporting rates are generally slightly higher during winter.

Breeding: In the east (Zones 5–8), breeding is concentrated in the early summer and peaks progressively later from north to south. There are few data for the west (Zones 1–4) with no clear pattern of seasonality. Breeding has previously been recorded in KwaZulu-Natal September–January (Dean 1971); in the Transvaal, four previous records were for July and October (Tarboton *et al.* 1987b); Irwin (1981) reported breeding during all months in Zimbabwe, except January and May, with a peak September–October.

Winterbottom (1964b) also reported a September–October peak in southern Africa.

Interspecific relationships: Irwin (1981) stated: 'Where it occurs alongside the Longtailed *M. clara* . . . and Cape *M. capensis* Wagtails . . . territories may adjoin and they are presumed to be in active competition, and usually remain clearly segregated ecologically.' This species starts to replace the Cape Wagtail, as the wagtail which is commensal with humans, from Zimbabwe northwards (Winterbottom 1964b; Irwin 1981). In the Okavango Delta it is mainly replaced by the distinct subspecies *simplicissima* of the Cape Wagtail (M. Herremans pers. comm.), which is a swamp-dwelling specialist (Hustler 1993).

Historical distribution and conservation: The current distribution does not appear different from the historical. The African Pied Wagtail may benefit from the construction of dams; it uses man-made habitats such as gardens and parks but it may be negatively impacted by the drying up of rivers through extensive water extraction for irrigated agriculture.

S.E. Piper and D.G. Allan

Recorded in 1032 grid cells, 22.7%
Total number of records: 15 274
Mean reporting rate for range: 19.9%

Reporting rates for vegetation types



