

Marsh Tchagra

Vleitjagra

Tchagra minuta

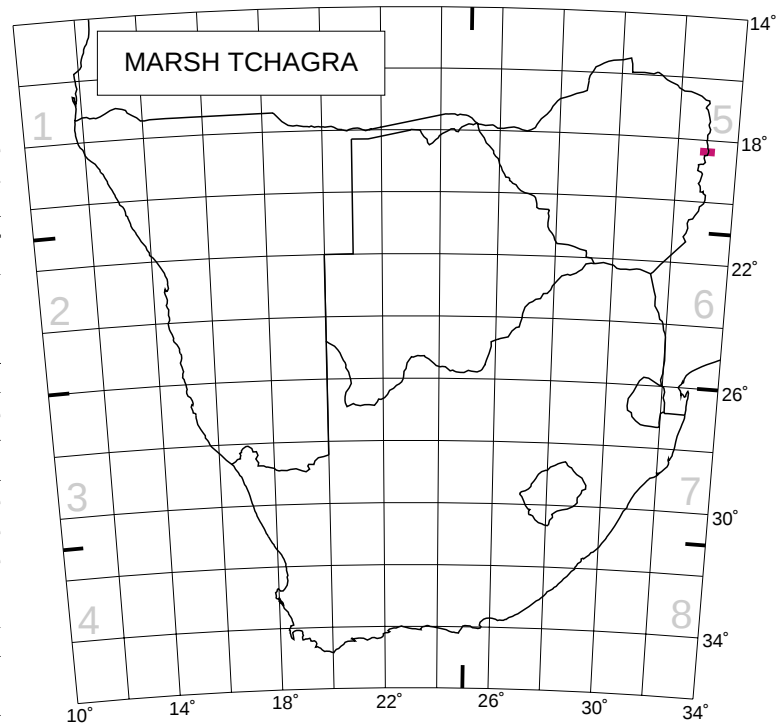
The Marsh Tchagra has a restricted range in the atlas region, having been recorded only in eastern Zimbabwe, although it occurs further east in southern Mozambique. It is widespread further north in Africa, occurring north to Ethiopia and across to the west coast from northern Angola to Sierra Leone (Harris & Arnott 1988).

Early records from Zimbabwe were from south of Mutare (1832DC), viz. from Vumba (1932BB), Mount Selinda (2032BC), and the Chimanimani district (1932C) at approximately 1450 m (Irwin 1981), but it has never been recorded from the Rusitu Valley (2032BB). The only records for the atlas period were from the Pungwe Valley (1832DB), mostly from a single marshy stretch on Eastern Highlands Tea Estate. Subsequently it has been recorded at Vumba in 1995 and 1996 (pers. obs). It has always been highly localized in Zimbabwe (Irwin 1981); even in southern Mozambique it has not been recorded often (Clancey 1971c).

The few atlas records are restricted to December–January, while there are coastal records from the vicinity of Beira (1934DD) for May and July (Clancey 1971c). This may signify seasonal movement but the paucity of records rules out any firm conclusions. Its preferred habitat is often burnt in the dry season so there may be considerable need for local movement. On the other hand, the tea estate locality is favoured by birders during the Christmas holidays, which may account for records being concentrated at that time. The Bulawayo Natural History Museum has a specimen collected in the Honde Valley (1832DB) in July.

Records indicate that eggs are laid November–March (Irwin 1981).

The wet valley bottoms with tall rank grass, reeds, scattered bushes and tangles of Buffalo Bean favoured by these birds are also prime targets for agriculture. The marsh on the Eastern Highlands has largely been degraded in this way and the Marsh Tchagra has become more difficult to find in the lower Honde and Pungwe valleys.



Recorded in 2 grid cells, 0.04%

Total number of records: 5

Mean reporting rate for range: 4.39%

A.N.B. Masterson

