

Chaffinch

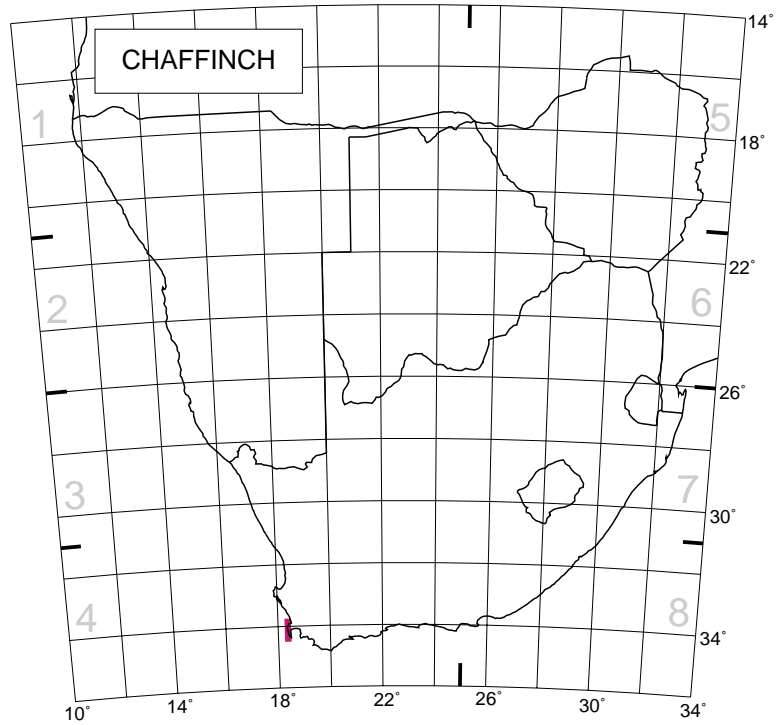
Gryskoppie

Fringilla coelebs

The Chaffinch was introduced to South Africa from Britain, almost certainly in 1897, by C.J. Rhodes to his Grootte Schuur estate on the eastern slopes of Table Mountain (3318CD) (Brooke *et al.* 1986). It still occurs in the area, being found on the eastern slopes of the Cape Peninsula mountain chain between Newlands and Silvermine, also extending over Constantia Nek to Hout Bay on the western slopes and a vagrant has been recorded in the Cape of Good Hope Nature Reserve (3419AD) (Hockey *et al.* 1989). The species is widespread in the western Palearctic and has also been successfully introduced to New Zealand where it is widespread (Long 1981). Attempted introductions to Australia and the United States of America failed (Long 1981). Wattel (1971) considered that the birds introduced by Rhodes were unequivocally assignable to the British subspecies *F. c. gengleri*. The Chaffinch population on the Cape Peninsula is unusual in that it is a rare example of an introduction which, after a century, has neither become extinct nor become widespread and invasive.

Around Cape Town the species is restricted to plantations and gardens with alien trees, particularly pines, and does not occur in the indigenous fynbos vegetation. No breeding by this rather secretive species was recorded in the western Cape Province during the period 1982–86 (Hockey *et al.* 1989), and the only breeding record from the atlas period was a nest found in Tokai (3318CD) in September 1987 (Allan 1988c). Although its local range apparently used to be somewhat greater on the eastern and northern slopes of Table Mountain (Cape Bird Club & Winterbottom 1979), the present distribution and population size appear to be stable and the species does not seem to be heading for early extinction (*contra* Brooke *et al.* 1986). On the Cape Peninsula it may be extending its range slightly to the south (Hockey *et al.* 1989). A solitary record from Kenton-on-Sea (3326DA) (Skead 1961) is almost certainly of an escape, and not a record of vagrancy from the Cape Peninsula population.

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Recorded in 2 grid cells, 0.04%
 Total number of records: 158
 Mean reporting rate for range: 7.14%