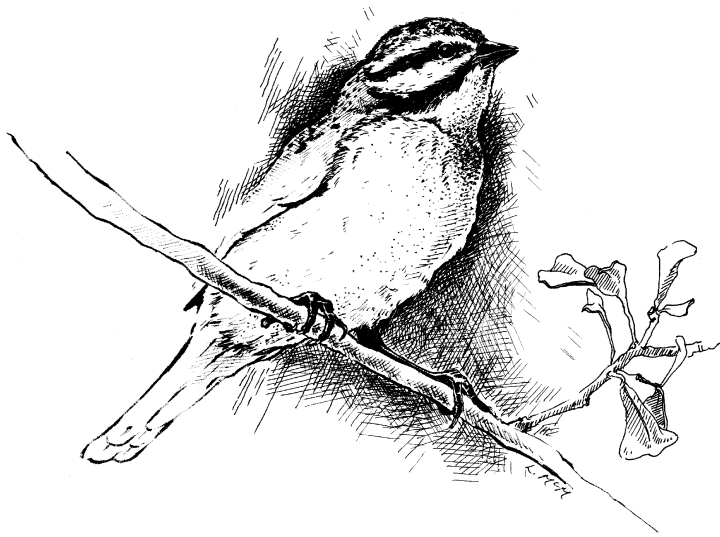




Cape Bunting

Rooivlerkstreekpoppie

Emberiza capensis

The Cape Bunting is near-endemic to southern Africa and is most abundant in the western, southern and eastern Cape Province and in Lesotho, and less common, but still widespread, in the Free State, KwaZulu-Natal, Transvaal, Swaziland, Zimbabwe and Namibia. There are few records from Botswana, mostly from the extreme east and south-east. Outside of southern Africa, the distribution extends marginally into Angola in the west, where it is common but localized on the Serra da Chela southwest of Lubango (Pinto 1970). It also occurs in western Zambia where it is localized, and in western Malawi. The distribution reported here is substantially the same as that of Skead (1960), except that better coverage of the southwestern arid zone suggests that the species is most common along the southern fold mountains, the western escarpment, the interior plateau of the Karoo and over most of Lesotho.

It is usually solitary or in pairs, very seldom in family parties, and it does not form flocks. The atlas data can be regarded as reliable and comprehensive, although confusion between the Cape Bunting and the Rock Bunting *E. tahapisi* occurs in the eastern parts of its range. The Rock Bunting differs in having a black-and-white speckled throat and rich cinnamon underparts. Confusion with female and nonbreeding male Paradise Whydahs *Vidua paradisaea* also occurs.

Habitat: The Cape Bunting is present in a wide altitudinal range and variety of habitats, from coastal strandveld to sparse shrublands and grasslands on high mountains. It occurs in dwarf shrublands on plains and on rocky ridges in the Karoo, in renosterveld and in sparse dry shrubland on sandy soils near the sea (Skead 1960; Tarboton *et al.* 1987b; Hockey *et al.* 1989) but is also common in plains habitats in the Karoo. Although considered to be absent from towns (Hockey *et al.* 1989), the Cape Bunting occurs around farmhouses and in gardens

(Skead 1960) and it is common in gardens in Karoo villages (pers. obs). It is scarce in extensive croplands and pastures (Hockey *et al.* 1989).

Movements: There is an increase in reporting rates during the winter in the winter-rainfall area, suggesting that there may be an influx, or local altitudinal movement in this region at this time.

Breeding: The data indicate an earlier breeding season, with an October peak, in the southwest (Zone 4) than in the east (Zone 7). Egg-laying data from the southwestern Cape Province (Winterbottom 1968a) span August–January, with a September–October peak. A small sample of egg-laying data from the Transvaal (Tarboton *et al.* 1987b) span October–November. Egg-laying in Zimbabwe (Irwin 1981) spans November–June, with a December–April peak. These data suggest that the species breeds increasingly later with decreasing latitude.

Interspecific relationships: The Cape Bunting may often occur together with the similar Rock Bunting (Skead 1960).

Historical distribution and conservation: The extensive ploughing and destruction of shrubland in the southwestern Cape Province may have affected the abundance and local distribution of the Cape Bunting in this region (Skead 1960), but there is no evidence that the overall distribution of the species has changed recently. The Cape Bunting is not considered to be threatened.

W.R.J. Dean

Recorded in 1345 grid cells, 29.6%

Total number of records: 14 764

Mean reporting rate for range: 17.1%

Reporting rates for vegetation types

