



Whitebellied Korhaan

Witpenskorhaan

Eupodotis cafra

The Whitebellied Korhaan is found in eastern South Africa and western Swaziland. There are sporadic records from a single grid cell (2525A) in southeastern Botswana (Smithers 1964; Bushell & Bushell 1989) and it may wander into Lesotho occasionally (Bonde 1993). The local race *E. c. barrowii* is endemic to southern Africa. It is isolated from other races found further north in West, East and Central Africa, and it may comprise a separate species (e.g. Mackworth-Praed & Grant 1962).

The distribution map shows that the core of its distribution lies in the southern and central Transvaal, northeastern Free State and western KwaZulu-Natal. There is a concentration of records from the Pietersburg Plateau (2329C,D) and the population in the eastern Cape Province is isolated from the remainder of the range. Reporting rates were higher in the adjacent parts of the southeastern Transvaal, northeastern Free State and western KwaZulu-Natal than in most of the remainder of its range. The Swaziland population has been estimated at about 100 birds (Parker 1994).

It is usually found in pairs or family groups of three birds, occasionally singly or in groups of four (Tarboton *et al.* 1987b). It is fairly inconspicuous owing to the relatively tall vegetation it inhabits, but has distinctive, far-carrying and frequent vocalizations.

Habitat: It occurs in tall, fairly dense grassland in either open or lightly wooded regions.

Movements: It is thought to be largely resident (e.g. Tarboton *et al.* 1987b) but Clancey (1967b) suggested that some populations move to lower altitudes in the winter and

that it is a nonbreeding visitor to the lowlands of KwaZulu-Natal. The models show a pattern of higher reporting rates in the early summer in the southern Transvaal, Free State and KwaZulu-Natal (Zone 7), and relatively even reporting rates throughout the year in the central Transvaal (Zone 6). The reasons for these patterns are unclear. They are unlikely to relate to large-scale movements and may reflect seasonal changes in conspicuousness, owing to seasonal variation in calling rates or vegetation height, for example.

Breeding: Egg-laying in the Transvaal spans October–January (Tarboton *et al.* 1987b) and a pair with a large chick was recorded in the Free State in January (Earlé & Grobler 1987).

Interspecific relationships: It often overlaps with the similar-sized Blue Korhaan *E. caerulea* and both are largely sedentary, territorial, group-living bustards, but the Whitebellied Korhaan is outnumbered in the area of overlap by about 4:1, and prefers areas of taller grassland (Kemp & Tarboton 1976; Tarboton *et al.* 1987b).

Historical distribution and conservation: There is direct evidence that it has decreased in the eastern Cape Province where it has apparently disappeared from the type locality at King William's Town (3227CD) (Skead 1967b), nor was it recorded from this grid cell during the atlas period, although there are records from surrounding grid cells, including adjacent ones to the west and south. It is likely that it has suffered loss of habitat through crop farming, overgrazing, burning, and high human densities virtually throughout its range. The relatively low reporting rates in southcentral Transvaal probably reflect human-induced population decreases in this intensively developed region. The isolated and fragmented nature of its distribution in the eastern Cape Province may also reflect a widespread population decrease there. Clancey (1972a) mentioned grass-burning as a threat to chicks, but this is unlikely as breeding occurs largely during the wet season (Urban *et al.* 1986). The conservation status of the Whitebellied Korhaan in southern Africa requires urgent investigation in the light of its relatively restricted distribution and the heavy human pressures on the regions it inhabits.

Elsewhere in Africa this species has been eliminated from some areas through 'uncontrolled human development' (Johnsgard 1991). Its capture in large numbers for hunting by falconry is cause for concern (Osborne *et al.* 1984).

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Recorded in 197 grid cells, 4.3%
Total number of records: 1171
Mean reporting rate for range: 4.9%

Reporting rates for vegetation types



