

# Chestnut Weaver

Bruinwewer

*Ploceus rubiginosus*

Discrete populations occur in the arid zones of southwestern, northeastern and eastern Africa (Hall & Moreau 1970). In southern Africa, it occurs from central Namibia to southwestern Angola (where rare: Clancey 1980b), with scattered records in northeastern Namibia (Bushmanland and the Caprivi) and the Okavango basin in Botswana. Clancey (1989) proposed the existence in Namibia of two subspecies, but Komen (1990c) disproved the evidence; the records on the map are scattered, and particularly for a nomadic species do not support evidence for a clear break between northern and southern populations.

Males in breeding plumage are unmistakable, but females and nonbreeding birds are more difficult to identify; it is furthermore shy (Maclean 1993b) and was no doubt widely overlooked during the atlas, particularly in winter.

It prefers open semi-arid savanna; its breeding range is centred on the broken veld of the Namibian escarpment.

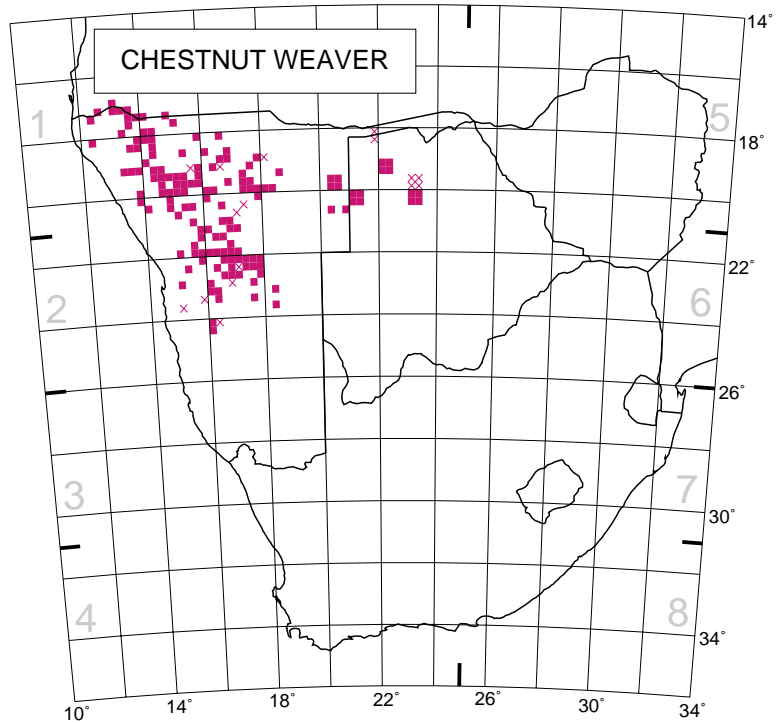
Nesting is colonial, mostly in *Acacia* trees; many colonies are along roads. Breeding is during the rains, and spans midsummer to late autumn, with a peak January–March (Komen & Buys 1990; Brown & Clinning in press). Breeding may be opportunistic according to rainfall, but is not restricted to wet years only; the control of initiation of breeding apparently also involves the availability of new grass inflorescences required for nest-building (Komen & Buys 1990).

It is subject to seasonally erratic fluctuations in numbers and poorly understood dispersal and nomadism during the nonbreeding season, but the species remains present throughout the year in Namibia (Braine & Braine 1971; Berry *et al.* 1987; Komen & Buys 1990). Maclean (1993b) considered it a regional migrant, and indeed, in the Okavango basin it is primarily a dry-season visitor, at least in some years (Brewster 1989b; Herremans 1994g). The seasonality shown by the models indicates higher reporting during breeding, but as with most weavers, this could very well be an artefact from seasonal variation in plumages and conspicuous breeding activity.

It is locally common and in the arid parts of its range generally outnumbers the only two other congeneric species, Masked *P. velatus* and Lesser Masked *P. intermedius* Weavers. In the nonbreeding season it flocks and roosts with other granivorous species (Herremans 1994g).

Its presence in Botswana was only first documented in 1988 (Brewster 1989b); it is now appreciated to be a regular and sometimes locally abundant visitor to the Okavango basin (Herremans 1994g). There is no evidence that its status changed in this region, but was probably overlooked previously.

*M. Herremans*



Recorded in 160 grid cells, 3.5%  
 Total number of records: 593  
 Mean reporting rate for range: 9.1%

Reporting rates for vegetation types

