

Status of the Chestnut-banded Plover *Charadrius pallidus* in Zimbabwe

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The Chestnut-banded Plover *Charadrius pallidus* has two subspecies, *pallidus* which has a population of 11,000–16,000 and occurs in southern Africa and *venustus* which numbers about 6,500 and has a limited range in Kenya and Tanzania. It has recently been classified as Near Threatened on account of the small size of its populations (Delany *et al.* 2009).

In southern Africa, *pallidus* occurs mainly on saline pans in Namibia and Botswana. There are only a few records from Zambia to the north and Mozambique to the east (Simmons *et al.* 2007). The last review of the status of this species in Zimbabwe considered it a rare vagrant with some records

requiring confirmation (Irwin 1981). This note discusses its status in Zimbabwe from the literature and personal communications.

There are records of Chestnut-banded Plovers in Zimbabwe in 15 of the 44 years between 1958 and 2002; but two thirds of the records were subsequent to 1990 (Table 1). Aisleby Farm and David Whitehead Ponds have been the most regularly used sites and the largest group ever seen in Zimbabwe was 20 birds at Aisleby in Nov 1999. The majority of records are from saline waterbodies such as Aisleby (present in seven calendar years), David Whitehead Ponds (four

Table 1. Records of Chestnut-banded Plovers in Zimbabwe, 1958–2002. Records without counts assumed to be single birds.

Year	Date	No. of birds	Location	Habitat	Source
unknown	unknown	1 imm	Aisleby	saline waterbody	Irwin 1981
1958	17 Sep	1	Sabi River, Chibuwe	sandbank	Brooke 1959
1967	Sep	1	Tuli	sandbank	Fraser 1969
1975	26 Jul	1	Aisleby	saline waterbody	Perry 1975
1978	Mar	1	Tuli	sandbank	Fraser 1982
1979	14 Oct	1	Victoria Falls	sandbank	Pollard 1969
1985	14 Dec	1	Aisleby	saline waterbody	Feather 1986
1989	1 Oct	1*	Tuli Circle	sandbank	Hustler <i>et al.</i> 1991
1990	21 Jul	1*	Sanyati Mission		Tree 1990, Hustler <i>et al.</i> 1991
1990	28 Nov	1*	Victoria Falls	sandbank	Hustler <i>et al.</i> 1991
1992	13 Mar	1*	Manyane Lakes	saline waterbody	Hustler & Irwin 1995
1992	13 May	1	East Manyane Lakes	saline waterbody	Tree 1992a
1992	11 Jun 18 Jun 19 Jun to end Aug	1 juv 2 ads, 2 juvs 1–3	East Manyane Lakes	saline waterbody	Tree 1992b
1992	28 Jul	2	David Whitehead Ponds	saline waterbody	Tree 1996
1992	Early Sep to 3 Oct	3	East Manyane Lakes	saline waterbody	Tree 1993a
1993	27 Mar	1 male	David Whitehead Ponds	saline waterbody	Tree 1993b
1993	31 Jul	1 female*	David Whitehead Ponds	saline waterbody	Tree 1994a, Hustler & Irwin 1995
1994	5 May	1	David Whitehead Ponds	saline waterbody	Tree 1994b
1994	9 Aug	1 male	David Whitehead Ponds	saline waterbody	Tree 1995a
1994	30 Oct	1	Aisleby		M. Smith, T. English <i>et al.</i> , Tree 1995a
1994	20 Dec	1	Aisleby	saline waterbody	Tree 1995b
1995	5 Feb	1	E & Whitehead ponds, Chegutu		J. Williams, Tree 1995c
1995	28 Jul	2*	David Whitehead Ponds	saline waterbody	Tree 1996, Riddell 2003
1998	4 Nov	1**	Sengwa Coal Mine	island in lake	Plowes 1999
1999	May–Jul	1	Rixon Dam, Insiza River		P. Feather, Tree 2000
1999	16–18 Aug	1	Somavundhla Pan, Hwange NP		C. van Zyl, F. Carbone, D. Christianson
1999	29–30 Oct	5	Aisleby		Smith 2000a
1999	Nov	c.20	Aisleby	muddy creek saline waterbody	M. Smith
2002	24 Nov	2	Aisleby upper dam	saline waterbody	Smith 2003

* Record accepted by the Rarities Committee of BirdLife Zimbabwe.

** This bird was apparently incubating a nest on a small island in a lake.

Table 2. Monthly distribution of records of Chestnut-banded Plovers in Zimbabwe.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
No. records	0	1	2	0	3	2	6	3	3	5	5	1	31
No. birds	0	1	2	0	3	5	8	4	5	8	26	1	63

years) and Manyane Lakes (present during May–Oct 1992) (Table 1). The other records comprise four from other waterbodies, both natural & artificial, and four from sandbanks in riverine habitats (Sabi, Tuli and Victoria Falls) in which it is normally a vagrant.

Twenty-two of the 31 records were for Jul–Nov (Table 2). It is not known where any of these birds moved on to after they were recorded in Zimbabwe; probably they moved to temporary waterbodies within Zimbabwe or elsewhere. Breeding in Botswana takes place during Feb–Jul, towards the end of rainy season and into the start of the dry season when ephemeral pans are drying out. A very large proportion of the population then moves to the central Namibian coast which is likely where the Zimbabwe birds go as well (Tree 1997). It is possible that some Chestnut-banded Plovers move eastwards during the latter half of the dry season in Botswana to more mesic localities in Zimbabwe. This might have been facilitated by the construction of saline waterbodies in Zimbabwe, leading small numbers to move onto the Zimbabwe plateau in the dry season.

Two juveniles have been reported in Zimbabwe (one at Manyane Lakes and one at Aisleby Farm). As juveniles are indistinguishable from adults after a few months (Piersma 1996), these birds must have either been hatched locally or moved to where they were seen very soon after fledging. The nearest known location where breeding is regular is the Makgadikgadi Pans in Botswana (c.600 km from Manyane Lakes).

There is a report of a bird apparently incubating a nest on an island in a lake at Sengwa Coal Mine on 4 Nov 1998 (Plowes 1999). That is outside the main Feb–Jul breeding season in Botswana, but different southern African populations breed at different times and opportunistic breeding can occur at inland sites throughout the year (Hockey *et al.* 2005).

Taken together, the observation of juveniles and the possible nest, suggests that breeding may occur sporadically in Zimbabwe.

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