



Cape Penduline Tit

Kaapse Kapokvoël

Anthoscopus minutus

The Cape Penduline Tit is a rather common, yet easily overlooked endemic of the arid western parts of southern Africa; outside the atlas region it extends into the arid woodland and dry scrub areas of southwestern Angola (Ginn *et al.* 1989). It ranges through Botswana, Namibia, central and western South Africa, extending into the western Free State, western and northern Transvaal, and southwestern Zimbabwe. It is absent from the woodland savanna areas of the eastern Transvaal and KwaZulu-Natal, and from the moist woodland belt in the Caprivi Strip in Namibia and northern Botswana. It is also absent from the Namib Desert, the moister Cape fold mountains east of Cape Town, from part of the wheat-growing areas of the Overberg and the Swartland in the southwestern Cape Province, and from the moist forested region along the south coast.

Although the distribution appears to be fragmented and patchy, the species is often overlooked. Uneven coverage in western Namibia, central and southern Botswana, and the Karoo, may have contributed to the impression of patchiness. Consequently, the distribution may be more continuous than shown, and it is difficult to assess whether any distributional breaks exist between the three subspecies accepted in the region (Clancey 1980b).

The Cape Penduline Tit may be confused with the Grey Penduline Tit *A. caroli* and the Yellowbellied Eremomela *Eremomela icteropygialis*, but this is not believed to have affected the data seriously.

Habitat: It is found in several types of arid and semi-arid habitats throughout the region. The vegetation analysis indicates that it is primarily a bird of the Karoo, Namibian

Escarpment and Kalahari. In the Fynbos it is confined to lowland renosterveld and coastal strandveld (Hockey *et al.* 1989); it is not found in mountain fynbos. In the eastern Cape Province it remains mostly within *Acacia karroo* thickets (Skead 1959). In the drier parts of the range it has an affinity for thickets along watercourses (Maclean 1993b).

Movement: Reporting rates are widely scattered and no consistent evidence for seasonal movements is discernible. It appears to be resident throughout its range, but presumably it wanders in response to localized rainfall events.

Breeding: In the winter-rainfall region of the southwestern Cape Province, egg-laying has been recorded July–November (Winterbottom 1968a), but October–January in the Transvaal, September–January in Botswana, and September–March (January peak) in Namibia (Tarboton *et al.* 1987b; Skinner 1995a; Brown & Clinning in press). These data suggest breeding in response to rainfall. The atlas data conform to this pattern.

Interspecific relationships: The ranges of the Cape and Grey Penduline Tits overlap. However, the Cape Penduline Tit normally prefers open thornveld whereas, in the area of contact, the Grey Penduline Tit prefers broadleaved woodland such as *Brachystegia*, *Baikiaea* and Mopane. They are therefore mostly parapatric (cf. Brewster 1991) but have occasionally been recorded in mixed flocks during winter (Ginn *et al.* 1989).

Historical distribution and conservation: Atlas data extend its known range in the central and northern Transvaal (cf. Maclean 1993b). The Cape Penduline Tit is widespread and common and responds positively to thornbush encroachment resulting from overgrazing in arid areas. It has been suggested that additional nesting material in the form of sheep's wool has favoured its nesting success in the Karoo (Skead 1959).

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Recorded in 1134 grid cells, 25.0%
Total number of records: 2891
Mean reporting rate for range: 6.9%

Reporting rates for vegetation types



