

BLACK-WINGED PRATINCOLE |

Glareola nordmanni

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Conservation Status:	Near Threatened
Southern African Range:	Namibia, Botswana, South Africa, Zimbabwe
Area of Occupancy:	30,000 km ²
Population Estimate:	770 individuals
Population Trend:	Probably declining
Habitat:	Grasslands
Threats:	Grassland transformation, pesticides, loss of food source

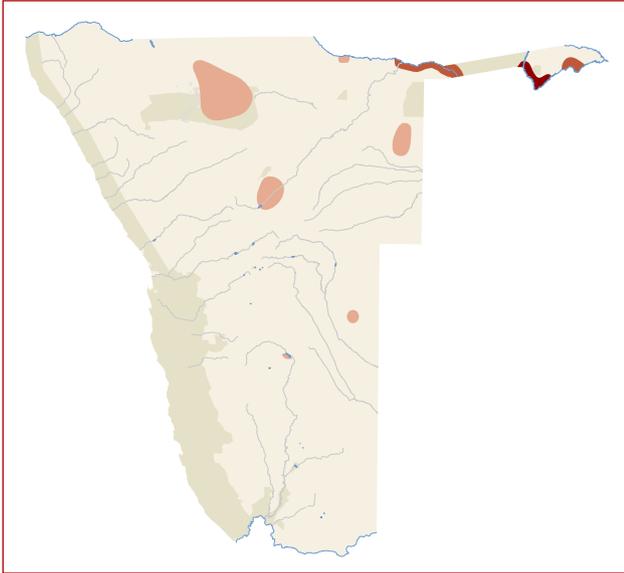


DISTRIBUTION AND ABUNDANCE

This species breeds in a narrow belt across southern Russia and Kazakhstan, with small colonies in Ukraine, Belarus, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Romania and Hungary (Kamp 2012). Nearly the entire population of between 76,000 and 95,000 pairs is thought to winter from October to April in Namibia, Botswana and South Africa (Maclean & Herremans 1997, Tree 2005a, Kamp *et al.* 2009). It is recorded most abundantly in Botswana, where reporting rates during the SABAP1 atlassing period were above 7% in the grasslands to the south-east of the Okavango Delta (Maclean & Herremans 1997). In Namibia, where it occupies an area of 30,000 km², it is found sporadically in flocks that vary from tens to hundreds of birds mainly in Etosha and grasslands to the north, and along the Okavango, Kwando and Chobe rivers, particularly in the vicinity of the ephemeral Lake Liambezi (Maclean & Herremans 1997).

In Namibian wetland counts, it was recorded in numbers varying from one to 180 birds from the Tsumkwe Pans and areas surrounding Etosha, including Fischer's Pan (12 to 17 birds), Lake Oponono (16 to 70 birds from three counts), artesian wells at Okashana (24 birds), Omatako Dam (one and six birds), and the highest (180 birds) from Middelbult Dam, south of the Waterberg Plateau Park (Jarvis *et al.* 2001). Up to 338 birds were recorded during these counts, and since other sites on the Okavango River, as well as in the Zambezi region and Hardap Dam, where they possibly occur, were not captured in this data set (missing about 56% of the known distribution: Jarvis *et al.* 2001) we suggest that the maximum number of birds in Namibia is about 770.

Some confusion surrounds the world population status of this species. It has been classified as rapidly declining in its breeding range, with a population numbering fewer



than 45,000 individuals (Wetlands International 2002) and is a globally threatened species as a result. However, this estimate was probably based on incomplete data (Kamp *et al.* 2009). A revised estimate of up to 95,000 pairs (Kamp *et al.* 2009) would corroborate records of extremely large flocks sighted in South Africa, including one recorded in 1991 that numbered between 250,000 and 800,000 birds (du Plessis 1995) and one of 76,500 individuals seen in 2006 (Wheeler 2007).



ECOLOGY

This bird migrates into southern Africa from the Eurasian steppes, arriving in October and leaving by March (Maclean & Herremans 1997). Most observation records stem from November and December. It prefers short grassy areas around intensive agricultural areas, but it is most abundant in the grasslands associated with the large pans of Makgadikgadi, and south-east of the Okavango Delta, Botswana, and to a lesser extent with Etosha. Mowed and ploughed lands attract it, particularly after rains, as it moves nomadically around the subcontinent in search of suitable insect swarms, especially termites and grasshoppers (Maclean 1993). It rarely forms mixed flocks with the locally breeding Collared Pratincole (Red-winged Pratincole) *G. pratincola*, because that species is found in wetter habitats associated with the Okavango Delta in Botswana. Overlap may, however, occur on the Okavango, Kwando and Chobe rivers. The two species can be differentiated by the black underwing coverts of the migrant Black-winged Pratincole.



THREATS

The conversion of Eurasian grassland steppe habitat to intensively farmed areas is seen as the main reason for the decline of this species in its breeding quarters (Stattersfield

& Capper 2000). After the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, arable fields across much of its breeding range were abandoned and grazing patterns changed, increasing the availability of breeding habitat (Kamp *et al.* 2009). However, there is a recent trend towards reclamation of fallow land, expansion of arable land and an increase in livestock numbers, a development that is likely to intensify in future (Kamp 2012).

In southern Africa, grassland is being burned increasingly, particularly in north-eastern Namibia (Mendelsohn & Roberts 1997), or is intensively farmed or transformed to plantation forestry, especially in South Africa (Allan *et al.* 1997, Barnes 2000a). Locust control measures might also pose an additional threat in terms of poisoning by pesticides and loss of food source (Hockey & Douie 1995). Thus, both extremes of this species' migratory range are being threatened by habitat loss through agriculture.



CONSERVATION STATUS

This species is classified as *Near Threatened* in Namibia because of the small, but possibly important populations that visit Namibia that have probably declined as agriculture has intensified in the last century. Grasslands are under threat everywhere due to agriculture and afforestation and this is the stated reason for the decline in its breeding grounds. There is some evidence for a decline in South Africa from historical records (Maclean & Herremans 1997, Barnes 2000a), but this is unknown in Namibia. It is currently globally classified as *Near Threatened* (IUCN 2012a) and is given *Near Threatened* status in South Africa (Taylor *et al.* in press), because of the small fragmented population and historical declines in population range, which may increase with continued grassland degradation. It is listed in Annex 2 of the Agreement on the Conservation of African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbirds (AEWA), in Appendix II of the Convention for the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS) and should be given *Specially Protected* status in Namibia.



ACTIONS

Co-ordinated assessments of the population sizes of this nomadic species in southern Africa are required to accurately gauge the world population. These should be carried out in the period between December and March. Any large flocks should be photographed and systematically counted. This might be best undertaken after substantial rains have precipitated termite emergences in late rain years when this species probably congregates at a few sites. Conservation assessments should be undertaken to determine the effects, if any, of pesticides that may be sprayed at such times.