



# Biodiversity Observations

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## **GARDEN WARBLER RINGED IN CAPE TOWN**

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### GARDEN WARBLER RINGED IN CAPE TOWN

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While walking along our line of mist nets we noticed an unfamiliar warbler among the many weavers. We suspected that it was a Garden Warbler *Sylvia borin*, even though this species rarely occurs in Cape Town. At the ringing table it was soon confirmed as a Garden Warbler due to the light eye-ring, dark eye, and no eyebrow.

We were ringing at Princess Vlei on the western side (our site name is Windsor reeds – we have also ringed at other sites around Princess Vlei). The mist nets were put up before dawn on 6 February 2016. The first catch was at 05h45 and comprised two African Reed Warblers *Acrocephalus baeticatus* and a Southern Masked Weaver *Ploceus velatus*. At 06h05 flocks of weavers started flying into the nets. About 10 minutes later we started extracting the birds from this first exodus from the reeds. The birds were mostly Southern Masked Weavers, Cape Weavers *Ploceus capensis* and African Reed Warblers, with several other species, and the single Garden Warbler. The Garden Warbler must have been roosting in the reeds, although not necessarily close to the weavers.

We started ringing at this site in 2008 and have held irregular sessions here, to target weavers and Yellow Bishops *Euplectes capensis*. We have caught 20 species (Table 1), including one or two Southern Double-collared Sunbirds *Nectarinia chalybea*, though once 14 were ringed in one morning (Oschadleus & Schultz 2015). The weavers often roost in the reeds and fly out to forage during the day.

Bushes and trees, between the reeds around the vlei near the ringing site, provide possible foraging habitat for the Garden Warbler. It was not noted here during our previous session on 2 January 2016.



Fig. 1. Garden Warbler, ring FB47375, caught at Princess Vlei, Cape Town, on 6 February 2016. There are more photos at <http://vmus.adu.org.za/?vm=BirdPix-24086>

The Garden Warbler (ring FB47375) had no visible fat and a weight of 17.0 g. The primary feathers were all new, and the secondaries had the last two feathers growing. The wing (83 mm) and tail (57.5 mm) measurements for our bird are at the upper limit for the species (Hockey et al. 2005), suggesting that it is a male.

The Garden Warbler breeds in Europe east to Russia. It migrates to sub-Saharan Africa, occurring from Senegal, east to Kenya, and south to South Africa. In South Africa, it is mainly confined in the eastern half, with scattered records from the drier west, including Namibia. The majority of birds arrive in October–November, and depart March–April. Birds in South Africa are thought to originate from the eastern half of the breeding range of the species, perhaps from as far east as Siberia (Hockey et al. 2005). 3270 Garden Warblers have been ringed in Africa with SAFRING rings (Fig. 2).

The Garden Warbler has been recorded in the Western Cape four times previously, three records being ringing records (Martin et al. 1994). So the best way to tick Garden Warbler in the Western Cape may be to go ringing rather than birding!

**References**

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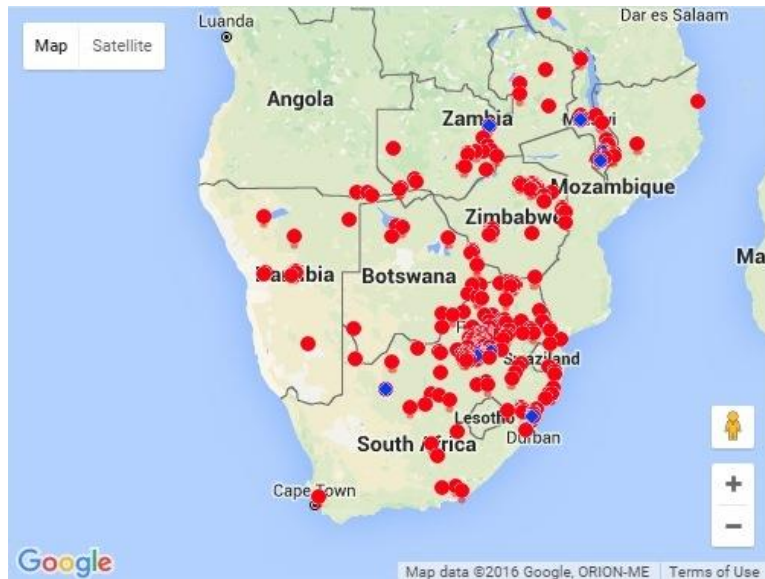


Fig. 2. Sites where Garden Warblers have been ringed in southern Africa (red dots – ringed, blue dots – recaptured).

Table 1. Species totals (ringed and recaptured) at Windsor reed patch, Princess Vlei, between March 2008 and February 2016.

Sp. No.	Species	n
391	White-backed Mousebird <i>Colius colius</i>	1
397	Malachite Kingfisher <i>Alcedo cristata</i>	4
502	Greater Striped Swallow <i>Hirundo cucullata</i>	1
506	Rock Martin <i>Hirundo fuligula</i>	1
543	Cape Bulbul <i>Pycnonotus capensis</i>	86
581	Cape Robin <i>Cossypha caffra</i>	3
595	Garden Warbler <i>Sylvia borin</i>	1
604	Lesser Swamp Warbler <i>Acrocephalus gracilirostris</i>	38
606	African Reed Warbler <i>Acrocephalus baeticatus</i>	42
609	Little Rush Warbler <i>Bradypterus baboecala</i>	22
646	Levaillant's Cisticola <i>Cisticola tinniens</i>	60
760	Southern Double-collared Sunbird <i>Nectarinia chalybea</i>	29
799	Cape Weaver <i>Ploceus capensis</i>	153
803	Southern Masked Weaver <i>Ploceus velatus</i>	132
808	Southern Red Bishop <i>Euplectes orix</i>	2
810	Yellow Bishop <i>Euplectes capensis</i>	77
843	Common Waxbill <i>Estrilda astrild</i>	110
846	Pin-tailed Whydah <i>Vidua macroura</i>	2
1172	Cape White-eye <i>Zosterops capensis</i>	2
4139	Karoo Prinia <i>Prinia maculosa</i>	6
	<b>Total</b>	<b>772</b>