

House Crow

Huiskraai

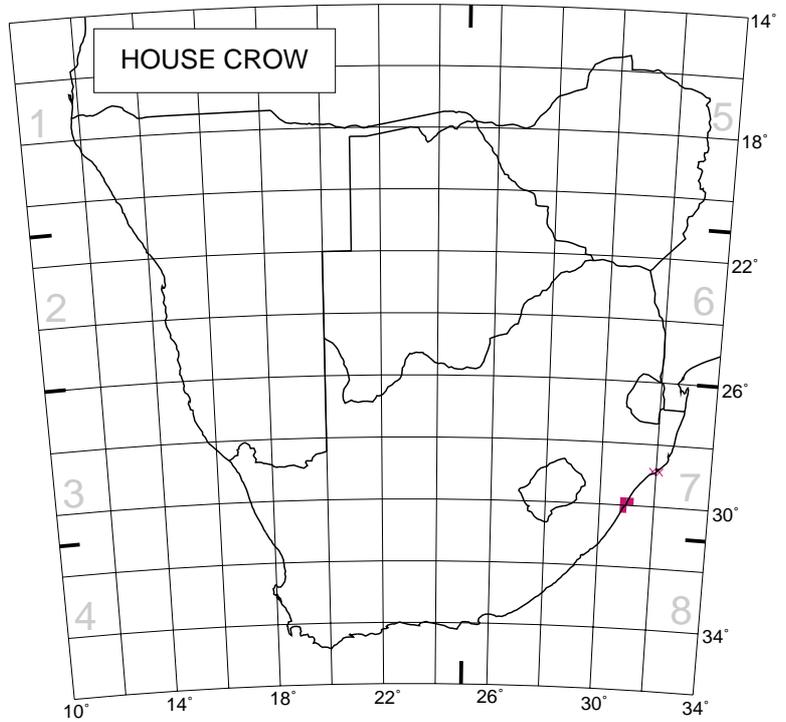
Corvus splendens

The House Crow is an aggressive alien species which occurs in suburban, urban and industrial areas. Its centre of distribution in South Africa is Durban (2931CC); there are also records from East London (3327BB), and Cape Town (3318CD) where it breeds (unpubl. data). In Mozambique it has been recorded in Maputo, and on Inhaca Island it is a resident breeder (Liversidge 1985a; Ginn *et al.* 1989; V. Parker pers. comm.). It is resident, but also a vigorous colonizer (Long 1981). It occurs naturally from Iran to Burma but has successfully colonized many Indian Ocean islands and port cities in the Middle East and along the east coast of Africa; some translocations were ship-assisted (Long 1981; Madge & Burn 1994).

It was first positively recorded in Durban in 1972 (Sinclair 1974), but may have been present by 1966–67 (Newmann 1974). Numbers grew slowly until 1989; an eradication campaign, sanctioned by conservation bodies and the Durban City Council (Berruti & Nichols 1991), reduced numbers to c. 150 birds by 1991; numbers then increased to over 500 birds by 1993. In Durban, it breeds mainly October–November. Outside the breeding season it forms large roosts and may occur in flocks.

The first records in the southwestern Cape Province were from Cape Town harbour (3318CD) in November 1977 and November 1979 and from Zeekoeivlei (3418BA) in December 1979 (Sinclair 1980; Woods 1980). It was next observed in December 1989, when a pair was seen near the Crossroads informal settlement (3318BA) on the Cape Flats (Hockey *et al.* 1989; Watt-Pringle 1990). A small colony has persisted in this area but a rapid increase in numbers or range had not occurred by mid-1996, possibly because of cold winters (D.G. Allan pers. comm.).

The House Crow is omnivorous and can become a significant predator in urban environments (Ryall & Reid 1987). It displaced Pied Crow *Corvus albus* from traditional roosts in Mombasa (Ryall & Reid 1987) and can be destructive of



Recorded in 5 grid cells, 0.1%
 Total number of records: 301
 Mean reporting rate for range: 9.7%

heronries and weaver colonies (Madge & Burn 1994). It is even more commensal with humans than the House Sparrow *Passer domesticus* and is a potential human health hazard (Madge & Burn 1994). It is likely to become a dominant and problematic urban species in southern Africa.

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