

Egyptian Goose

Kolgans

Alopochen aegyptiaca

The Egyptian Goose is an abundant, conspicuous and widespread resident, absent from the extreme Namib, the waterless Kalahari and the Lesotho massif. It occurs throughout sub-Saharan Africa and formerly into Egypt and Israel (Stark & Sclater 1906), but is absent from Madagascar. It has become a naturalized escape in parts of Europe (Cramp *et al.* 1977).

Reporting rates were the highest for any species of southern African waterfowl. The Transvaal highveld population numbers at least 30 000 birds and individual flocks of more than 1000 are encountered (Tarboton *et al.* 1987b). It is the only species of waterfowl to have been included in the 'abundant' category by Geldenhuys (1976a) in his survey of waterfowl in the Free State, recording it in every count made during a year's survey in 1972–73 (Geldenhuys 1975). It is widespread and common in Zimbabwe, Swaziland, KwaZulu-Natal, eastern Cape Province and the southwestern Cape Province, wherever water is available (Skead 1967b; Cyrus & Robson 1980; Irwin 1981; Hockey *et al.* 1989; Parker 1994). It may be confused with the South African Shelduck *Tadorna cana* at a distance.

Habitat: It is found on almost any inland water: rivers, dams, lakes, pans, estuaries, sewage ponds, preferably with some exposed shoreline. Proximity to croplands lends preference to any waterbody (Geldenhuys 1975). Less often it breeds on offshore marine islands and takes to sea if disturbed (Hockey *et al.* 1989). It often forages in farmland (Halse 1985) where it is sometimes a pest in crops. Originally it was probably an inhabitant of the sandbanks of larger rivers (Irwin 1981).

Movements: It is nomadic in the drier regions (Maclean 1993b). There seems to be a winter influx into the eastern and southwestern Cape Province (Tree 1987a; Hockey *et al.* 1989). Movements in Zimbabwe are seasonal, including a May–June post-breeding dispersal and movement onto the central plateau (Irwin 1981) and into the Zambezi Valley (A.J. Tree pers. comm.). Dispersal from Barberspan (2625DA) in the western Transvaal is in all directions; the median distance moved in 329 ring recoveries was 204 km, with a maximum of 1164 km (Milstein 1975; Oatley & Prŷs-Jones 1986). The models show a February–April dip in reporting rates in Zones 3–8, and a subsequent rise August–November. Lower reporting rates could be related to concentration in large numbers

at selected waterbodies after breeding, and therefore being recorded less often than when individuals are widely dispersed.

Breeding: Egglaying occurs throughout the year, but mainly from late winter to early summer. Egglaying peaks in Zimbabwe during May–October, in the Transvaal during July–December, in the Free State during August–September, and in the southwestern Cape Province during August–October (Winterbottom 1968a; Irwin 1981; Tarboton *et al.* 1987b). The data for the eastern Zones (5–8) show later breeding southwards, peaking in September–October in Zimbabwe (Zone 5) and in November–December in the eastern Cape Province (Zone 8). Breeding is slightly earlier in the southwestern (Zone 4), compared with the southeastern Cape Province (Zone 8), owing to winter rainfall in the southwest. Peak breeding in Zone 1 occurs completely out of synchrony with the remainder of southern Africa, occurring February–April. Breeding in the semi-arid Zone 2 appears to be aseasonal.

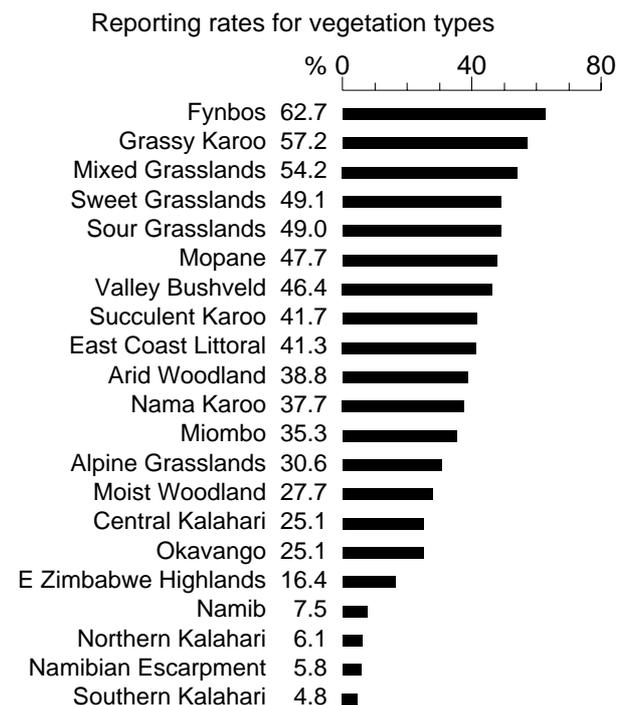
Interspecific relationships: It sometimes congregates with the Spurwinged Goose *Plectropterus gambensis* and the South African Shelduck in large numbers on suitable large waters to moult; less often these species forage amicably together on farmland.

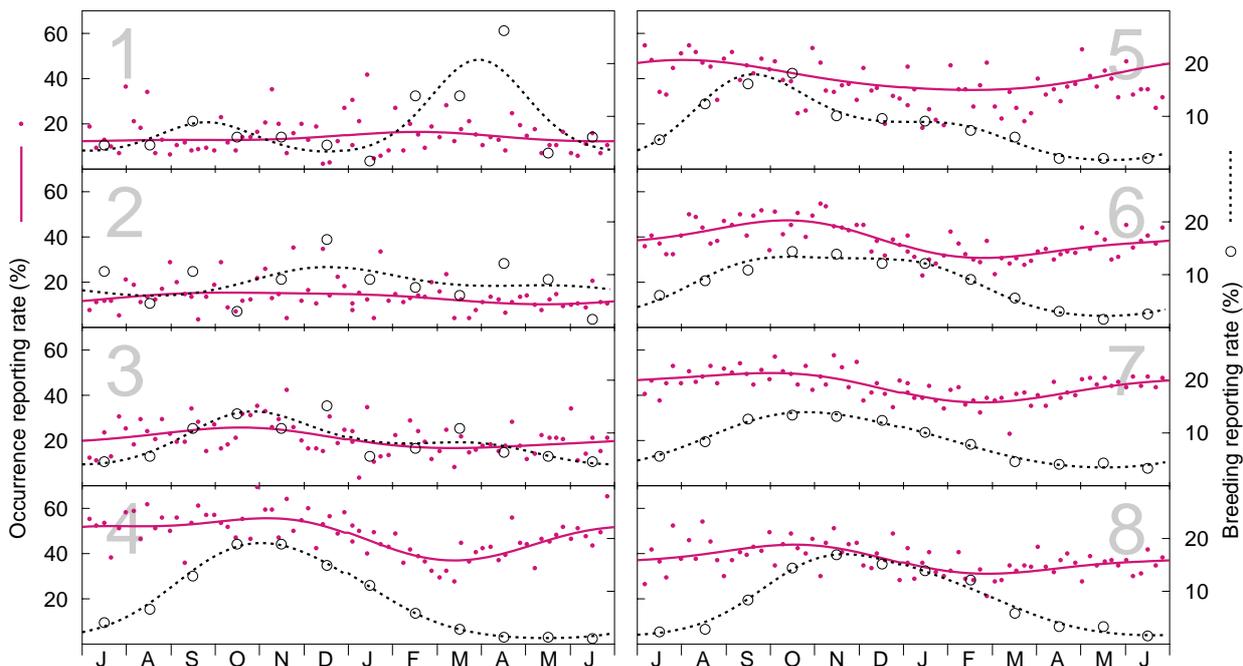
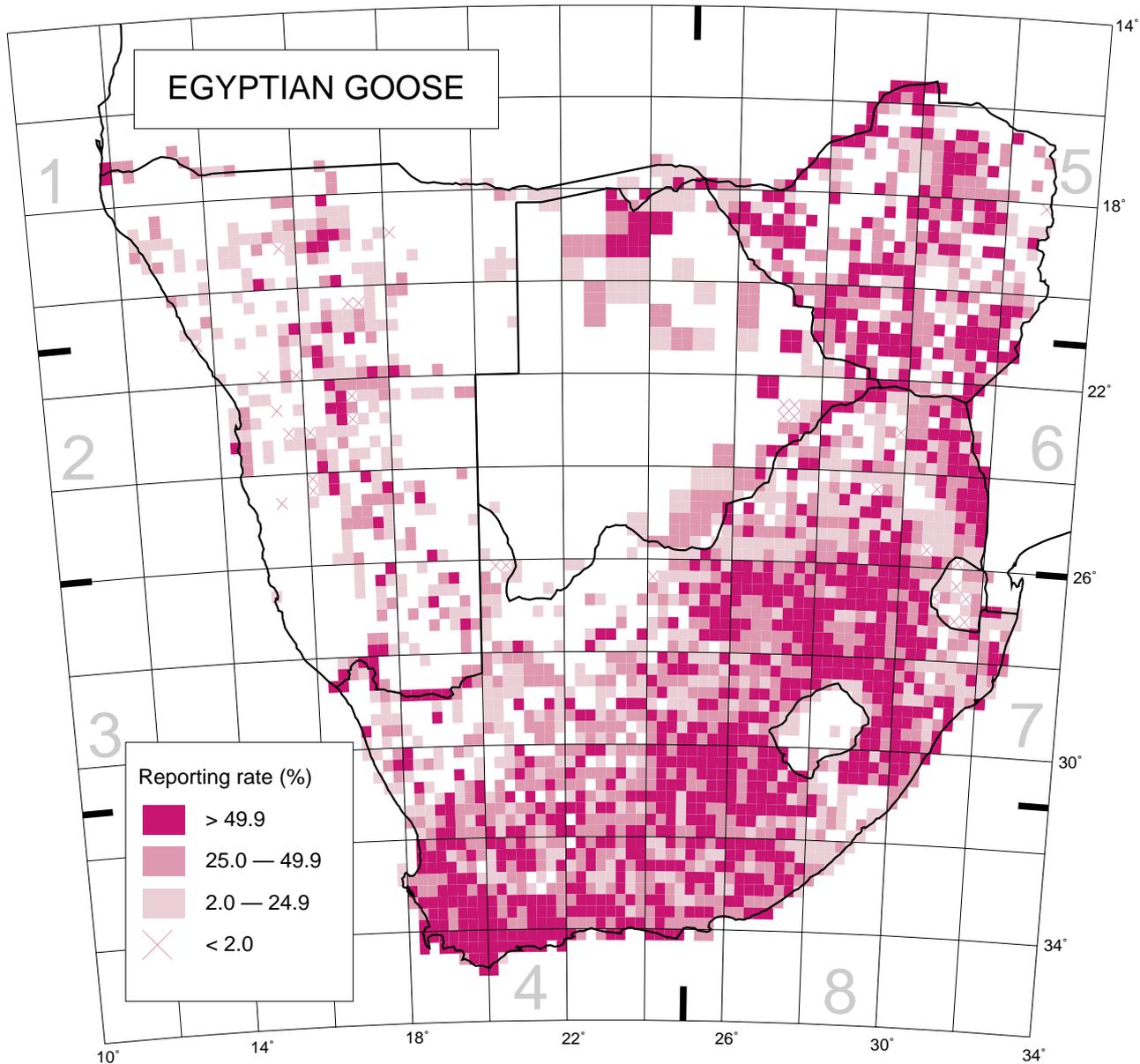
Historical distribution and conservation: It has long been the commonest and most widespread large duck in South Africa (Stark & Sclater 1906), but the intensification of agriculture and the provision of farm dams have resulted in an increase in both numbers and distribution, both in South Africa and further north (Irwin 1981).

No conservation measures are necessary. Although hunted, the Egyptian Goose is not a popular eating bird and comprises only 2.2% of Zimbabwe's annual game bag (Irwin 1981). It is in danger of being treated as a pest on grain farms, which may have deleterious effects on non-target species.

G.L. Maclean

Recorded in 2506 grid cells, 55.2%
Total number of records: 63 736
Mean reporting rate for range: 46.6%





Models of seasonality for Zones. Number of records (top to bottom, left to right):
 Occurrence: 456, 465, 1133, 4199, 3598, 4388, 8619, 2051; Breeding: 65, 66, 111, 1135, 422, 736, 2007, 539.