

Augur Buzzard

Witborsjakkalsvoël

Buteo augur

Two separate populations of the Augur Buzzard are present in southern Africa. The Zimbabwean population is at the southernmost limit of a broad range stretching northwards through eastern Zambia, Malawi, through East Africa into Ethiopia (Del Hoyo *et al.* 1994). The Namibian population is part of an isolated southwest African population restricted to Namibia and the southern half of Angola (Traylor 1963; Pinto 1970). Its distribution here approximates that of many Namibian near-endemics that are also most abundant in mountainous habitats in Namibia and Angola, for example, Monteiro's Hornbill *Tockus monteiri*, Rockrunner *Achaetops pycnopygius* and Whitetailed Shrike *Lanioturdus torquatus*. Although these two populations of the Augur Buzzard are treated as identical, I predict that closer examination may reveal taxonomic differences indicative of a long period of independent evolution.

The density of a breeding population in the Matobo Hills of Zimbabwe (2028C,D) was estimated at 4–6 pairs/100 km² (Macdonald & Gargett 1984), each pair occupying 18–25 km². Territories or home ranges are much smaller during the breeding than in the nonbreeding season (Lendrum 1979).

Habitat: Both the Namibian and Zimbabwean populations are associated with hilly or mountainous habitats, especially the eastern Zimbabwean highlands and Namibian escarpment, and the Matobo Hills (Macdonald & Gargett 1984) and other granite inselbergs in both regions. This dependence on hilly regions may largely be due to preference for nesting on cliffs, although nests in alien pine trees away from cliffs have been found in eastern Zimbabwe and Namibia (Steyn 1982b; pers. obs).

Movements: No information on movements is available and the atlas models reveal no clear-cut evidence for seasonal migration. Territories were occupied year-round in the Matobo Hills (Lendrum 1979), where one bird was recovered at the original ringing site after seven years.

Breeding: The atlas data suggest the possibility of a bimodal breeding season in Zimbabwe, but this is probably an artefact of a small sample size. It is more likely that a

single spring season occurs throughout the subcontinent; in Zimbabwe, Irwin (1981) reported July–November as the months of egg-laying with an August–September peak.

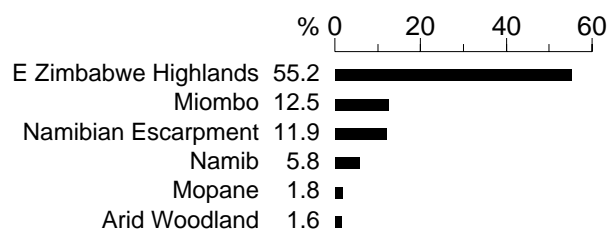
Interspecific relationships: Augur and Jackal *B. rufifuscus* Buzzards have been treated as conspecific (Brooke 1975a). The allopatry of the eastern population from the Jackal Buzzard to the south supports the argument that they are the same species, while the sympatry of Augur and Jackal Buzzards in the west suggests that the two taxa are specifically distinct. Isolated cases of hybridization have been thought to occur in Namibia, but none have been confirmed.

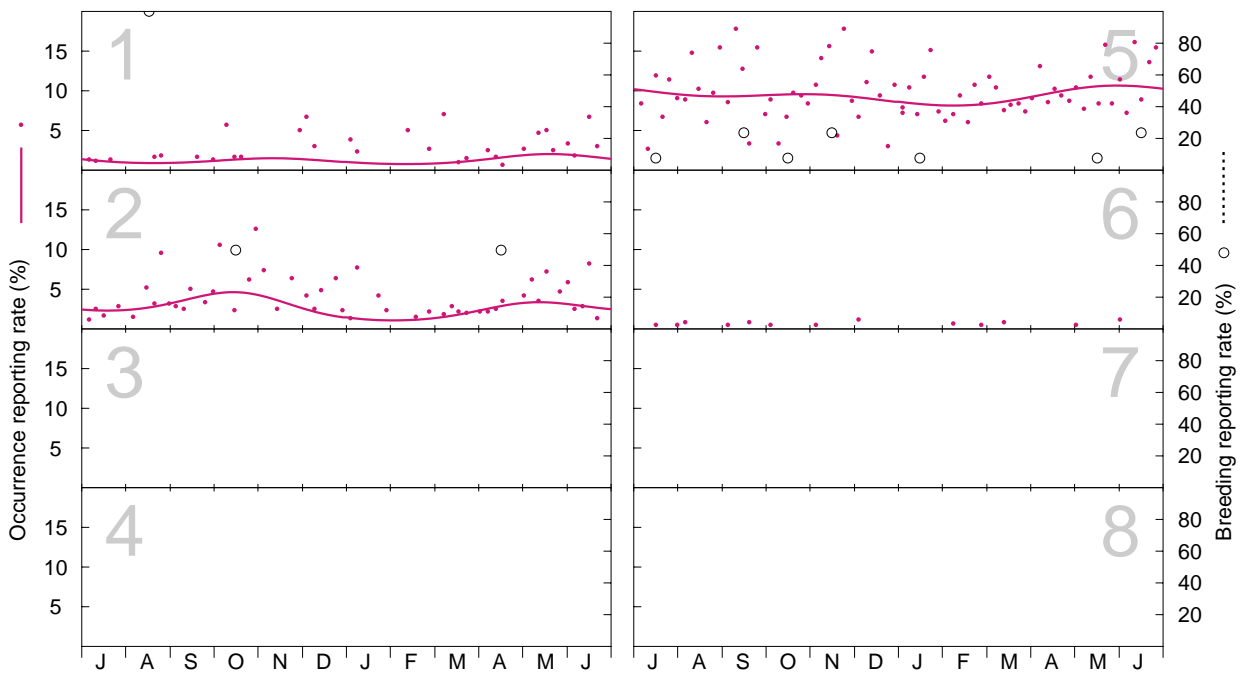
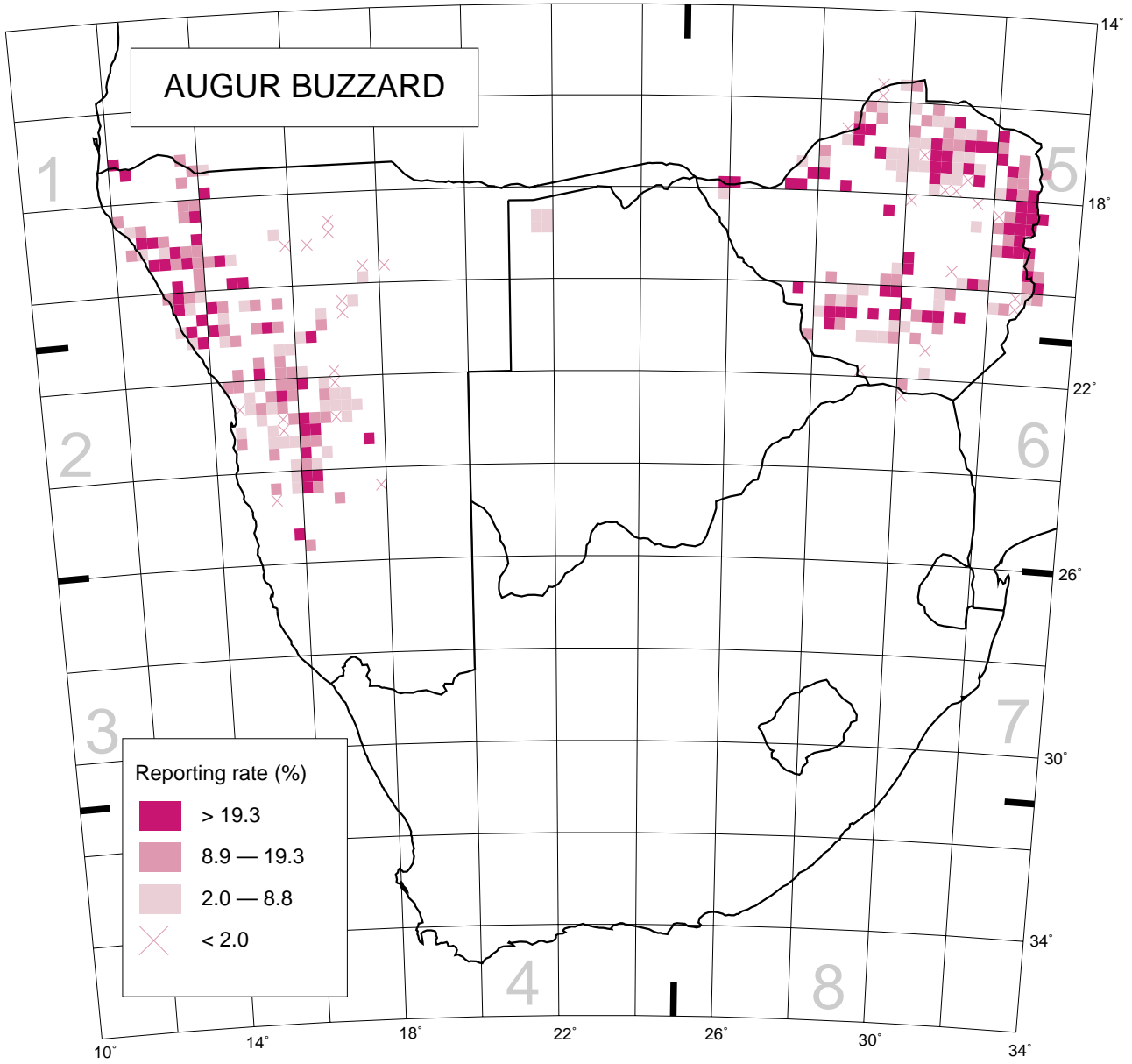
Historical distribution and conservation: No information is available to suggest changes in the distribution or overall numbers in historical times. In view of the species' preference for moderately undisturbed habitats in mountainous areas, major changes are unlikely to have occurred. For similar reasons it is unlikely that the Augur Buzzard presents any conservation problem. Its preference for reptile and small-mammal prey (Lendrum 1979) also means that it is less likely to suffer from the organo-chlorine residues that may accumulate in bird- and fish-eating raptors.

J.M. Mendelsohn

Recorded in 315 grid cells, 6.9%
Total number of records: 1899
Mean reporting rate for range: 13.5%

Reporting rates for vegetation types





Models of seasonality for Zones. Number of records (top to bottom, left to right):
 Occurrence: 43, 93, 0, 0, 821, 15, 0, 0; Breeding: 1, 2, 0, 0, 13, 0, 0, 0.