

## Little Sparrowhawk

### Kleinsperwer

*Accipiter minullus*

In South Africa, the Little Sparrowhawk is found in the southern and southeastern Cape Province, KwaZulu-Natal and the Transvaal. It also occurs in Zimbabwe, Swaziland, northern and eastern Botswana, and northern Namibia. Further north it is widespread in central and eastern Africa. Densities of 4–6 pairs in 350 km<sup>2</sup> of woodland and 5–6 pairs in 700 km<sup>2</sup> of grassland/woodland ecotone were measured in the Transvaal, and the total population in this province was estimated to exceed 1000 breeding pairs (Tarboton & Allan 1984). This is an inconspicuous species, easily overlooked, and can also readily be confused with other similarly plumaged accipiters.

**Habitat:** It prefers dense vegetation such as forests, riparian bush and thickets. The vegetation analysis emphasizes its presence in a wide range of forest and woodland habitats. It exploits stands of alien trees for breeding and hunting, and this habit has allowed it to colonize previously open regions (Tarboton & Allan 1984; Allan & Tarboton 1985).

**Movements:** It is believed to be sedentary (Brown *et al.* 1982) and the models do not show any evidence for migration.

**Breeding:** Breeding was recorded September–February and appeared to start later (October–November) in the southernmost parts of its range (Zones 4 and 8). Egglaying in Zimbabwe and the Transvaal spans September–December, with an obvious October peak (Irwin 1981; Tarboton *et al.* 1987b).

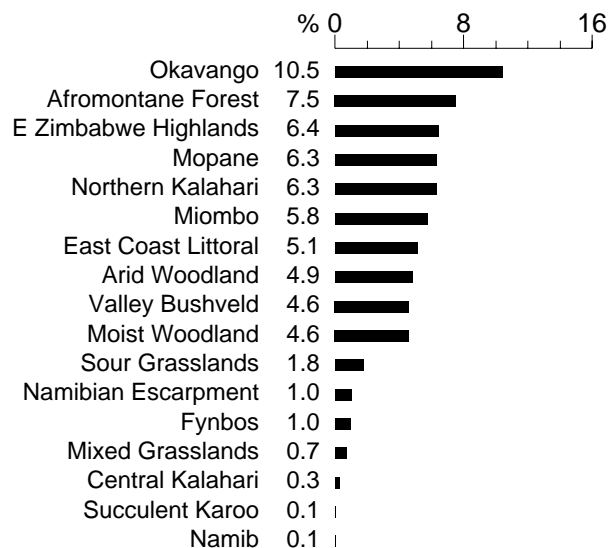
**Historical distribution and conservation:** It has increased in density and expanded its distribution in many regions owing to its ability to exploit stands of alien trees. It may be currently extending its range in the southwestern Cape Province (Anon. 1992; Silbernagl & Silbernagl 1993). Prior to 1980 there was only one record west of George

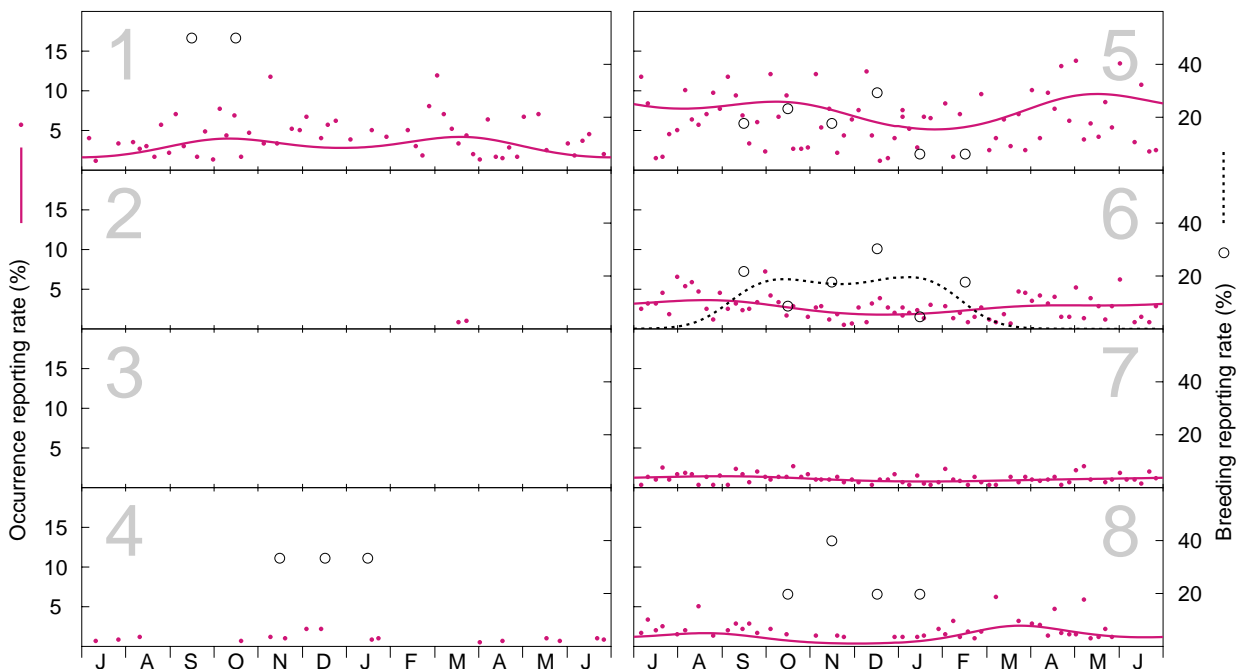
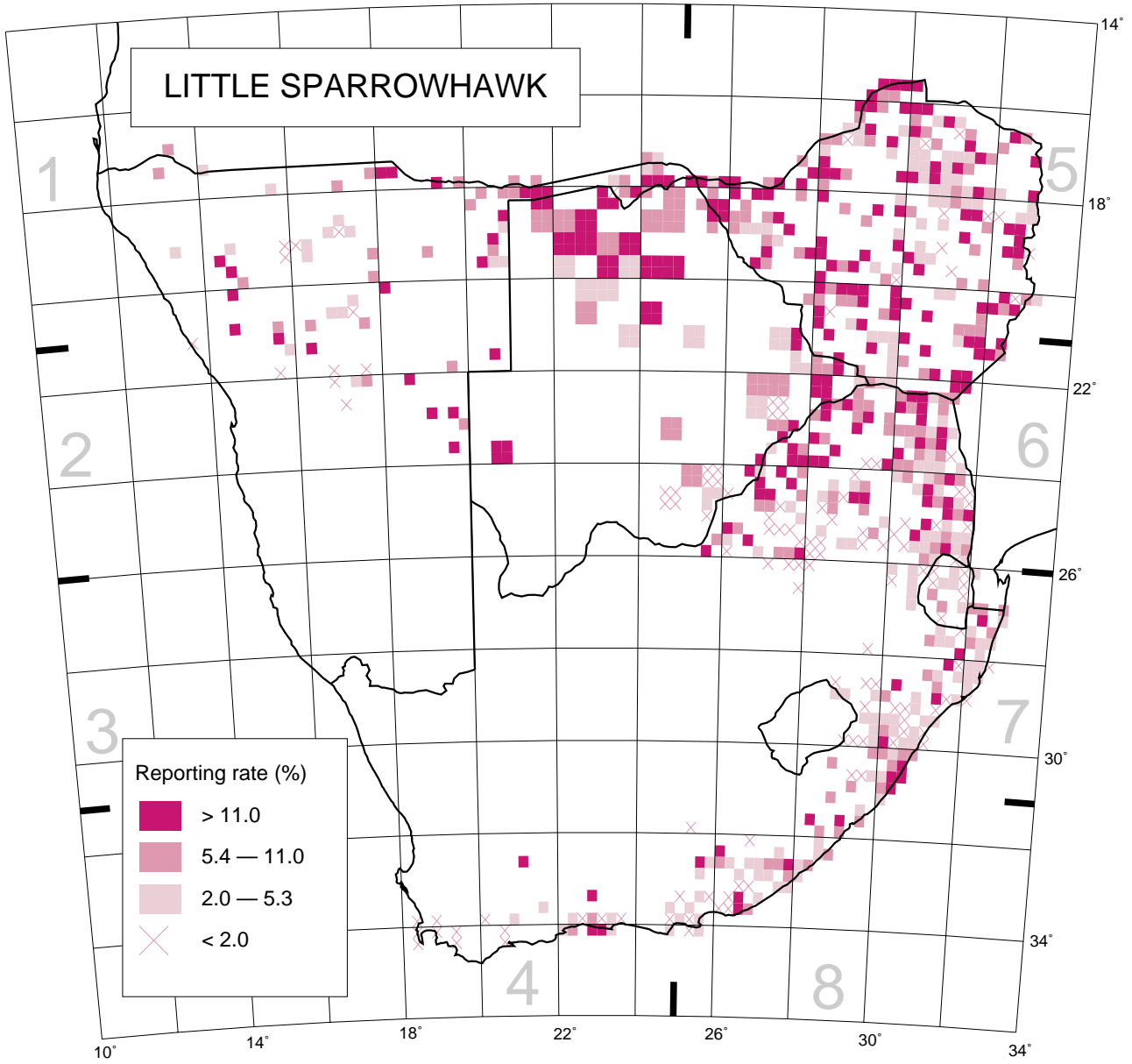
(3322CD) (Boshoff *et al.* 1983). There was an unusual and isolated breeding record during the atlas period from near Sutherland (3221CA) in the arid Karoo (Silbernagl & Silbernagl 1993). The avian diet of the Little Sparrowhawk renders it potentially vulnerable to contamination by pesticide residues (Tarboton & Allan 1984).

*D.G. Allan*

Recorded in 812 grid cells, 17.9%  
Total number of records: 3935  
Mean reporting rate for range: 5.6%

Reporting rates for vegetation types





Models of seasonality for Zones. Number of records (top to bottom, left to right):  
 Occurrence: 101, 2, 0, 18, 669, 313, 213, 71; Breeding: 2, 0, 0, 3, 17, 23, 0, 5.