

## Gymnogone Kaalwangvalk

*Polyboroides typus*

The Gymnogone (African Harrier-hawk) occurs in the Afrotropics through most of sub-Saharan Africa, apart from deserts (Del Hoyo *et al.* 1994). It is widespread in the high-rainfall areas of the southern and eastern parts of southern Africa. It is rare in, or absent from, the low-rainfall areas of the central and western parts, but relatively more frequent in the Etosha area of northern Namibia. The distribution map shows strongholds with high reporting rates in central and northeastern KwaZulu-Natal, the eastern Transvaal escarpment, in southeastern and northeastern Zimbabwe and in the Okavango. Although widespread in the fynbos region of the southwestern Cape Province, reporting rates were uniformly low, especially in the western parts of this biome.

It usually occurs singly or in pairs. A density of 4.0–5.3 pairs/100 km<sup>2</sup> has been recorded in the eastern Waterberg (2428A,B) of the Transvaal (Tarboton & Allan 1984) and two home ranges there measured 5.3 and 5.5 km<sup>2</sup> (Thurow & Black 1981). The Transvaal population has been estimated to be 500–1000 breeding pairs (Tarboton & Allan 1984), and *c.* 200 birds occur in Swaziland (Parker 1994). Adults are easily identified but immatures can be confused with other similar raptors.

**Habitat:** It occurs mainly in forest, dense woodland, tall riparian vegetation and well-wooded ravines. It is often associated with cliff faces in hilly or mountainous terrain but also inhabits flat plains. In arid regions it often frequents wooded ravines. It is partial to stands of alien trees, such as wattles and eucalypts. The highest reporting rates came from Miombo, Eastern Zimbabwe Highlands, Mopane and Arid Woodland; in vegetation types with the lowest reporting rates, the species is localized in patches of suitable habitat.

**Movements:** The atlas data show that it is present all year round through most of its range. The models show increased reporting rates in early summer in eastern parts of the atlas region (Zones 5–8). This period coincides with the pre-breeding period when adults are strongly territorial and therefore possibly more conspicuous to atlasers. In the northwestern parts (Zones 1 and 2), however, reporting rates

peaked March–April. The reason for this is unclear but, together with the paucity of breeding data from Zones 1 and 2, the possibility that there is east–west migration in the north requires further investigation. Breeding individuals are thought to be largely sedentary but they may occasionally wander during the nonbreeding season (Del Hoyo *et al.* 1994) and immatures are believed to disperse from natal territories (Hockey *et al.* 1989).

**Breeding:** Most breeding activity was recorded in eastern areas (Zones 5–8), mainly September–March. The reason for the general lack of breeding records from the northwestern parts (Zones 1 and 2) is not known; either breeding sites were overlooked or the species may be primarily a nonbreeding visitor from the east. Egg-laying is known to be restricted to early summer (August–December, mainly September–October) in southern Africa (Winterbottom 1968a; Dean 1971; Irwin 1981; Tarboton *et al.* 1987b).

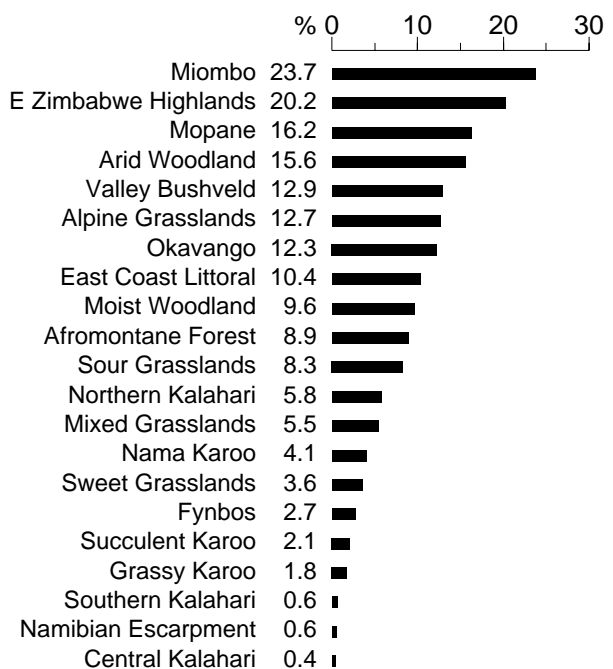
**Historical distribution and conservation:** There has been no apparent change in distribution in the Cape Province (Boshoff *et al.* 1983), and overall the current distribution is considered to reflect closely the historical distribution. Its partiality to stands of alien trees has resulted in the colonization of some regions; for example, Hockey *et al.* (1989) listed it as a species that had increased in the southwestern Cape Province.

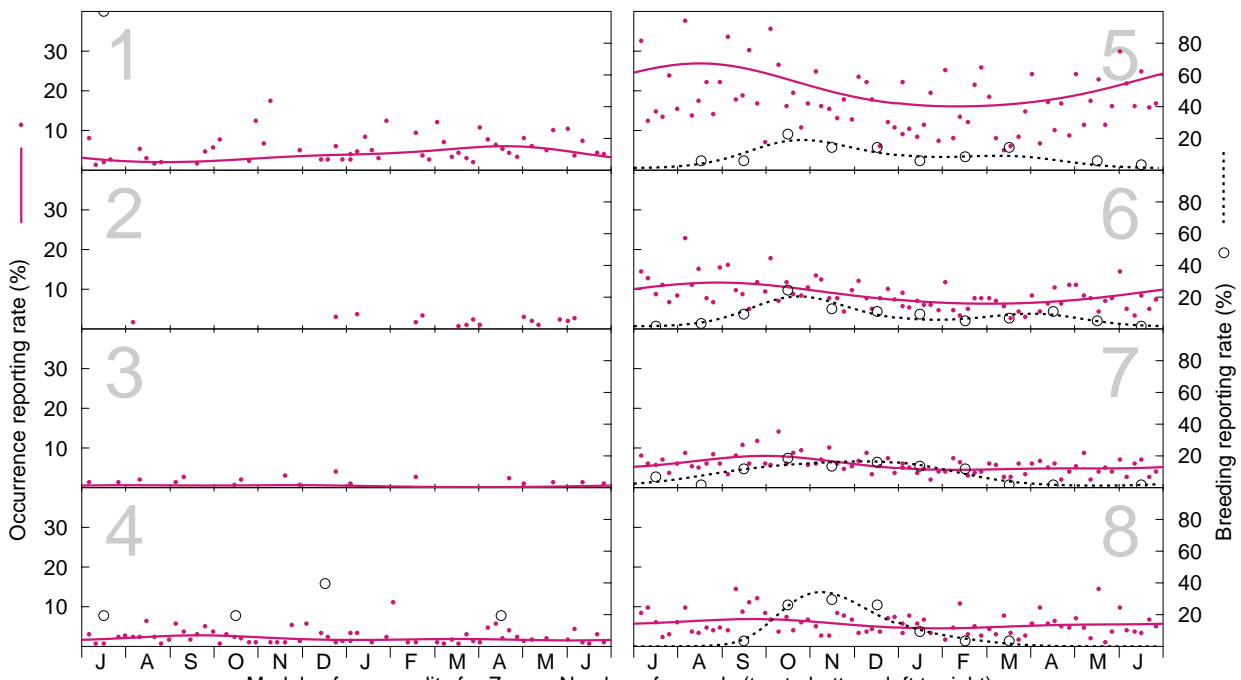
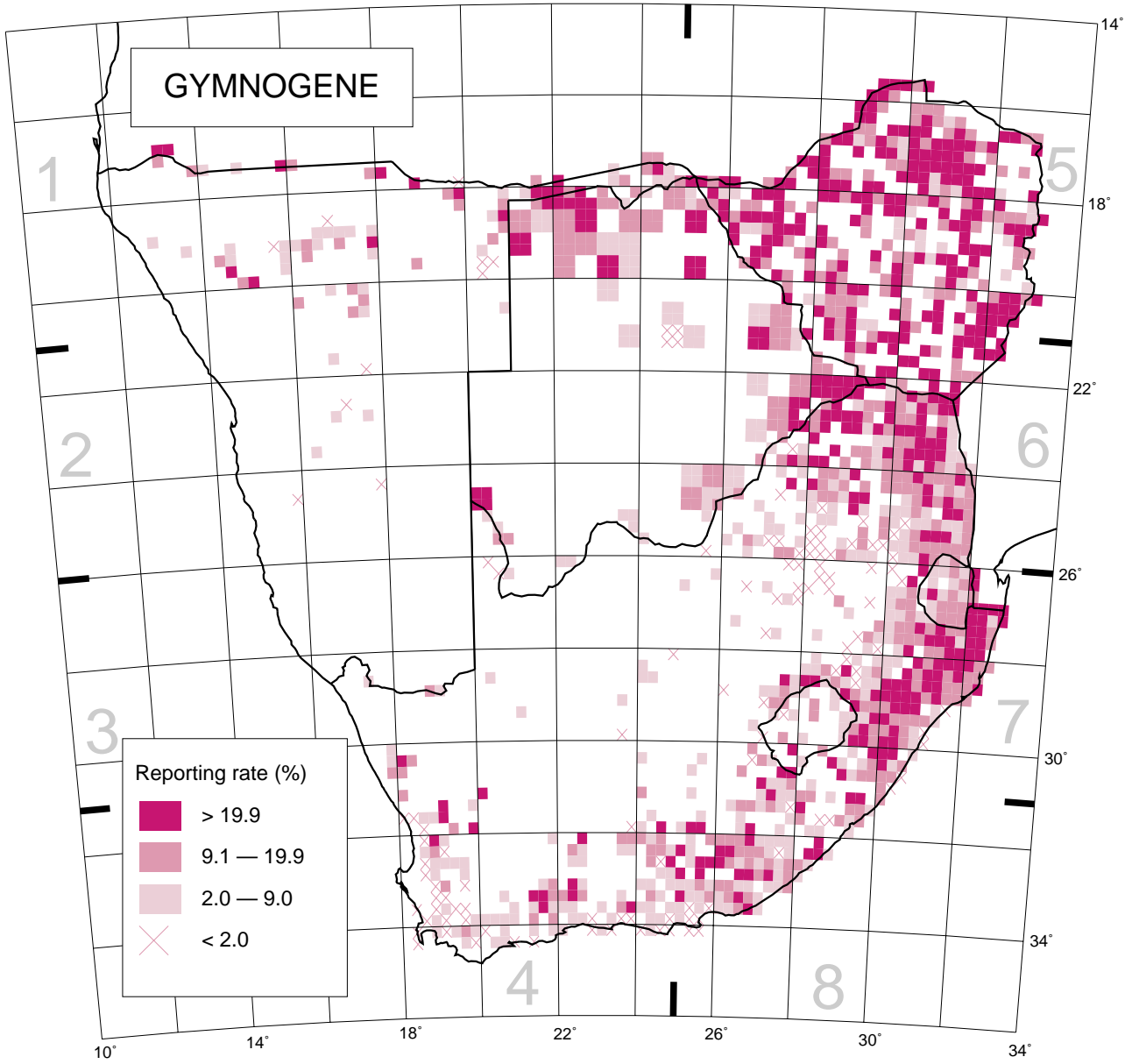
The conservation status of the Gymnogone is considered to be good. Isolated incidents of direct persecution by the pigeon-racing fraternity have been recorded (pers. obs).

A.F. Boshoff

Recorded in 1375 grid cells, 30.3%  
Total number of records: 12 287  
Mean reporting rate for range: 12.8%

### Reporting rates for vegetation types





Models of seasonality for Zones. Number of records (top to bottom, left to right):  
 Occurrence: 132, 16, 23, 172, 1833, 992, 1118, 310; Breeding: 1, 0, 0, 5, 35, 57, 44, 31.