

## Lanner Falcon

### Edelvalk

#### *Falco biarmicus*

The Lanner Falcon occurs in Africa, southeastern Europe, the Middle East and the Arabian Peninsula (Del Hoyo *et al.* 1994). It is distributed virtually throughout southern Africa, with a stronghold in Lesotho and southeastern South Africa. A total of 1400 pairs were estimated to occur in the Transvaal (Tarboton & Allan 1984). It is usually encountered singly or in pairs, but aggregations can occur, usually of juveniles in the dry west. Although especially juveniles can be confused with the Peregrine Falcon *F. peregrinus*, Lanners outnumber Peregrines by at least 10:1 in most areas (Thomson 1984; Jenkins 1994), and the distribution map is unlikely to have been affected.

**Habitat:** It is generally a cliff-nester and its breeding distribution is closely associated with that of cliffs. This association is less marked than in the Peregrine (Jenkins 1994) because Lanners are able to breed on lower rock-faces, as well as in disused nests of other birds, especially those of Black *Corvus capensis* and Pied *C. albus* Crows, both in trees and on electricity pylons (Steyn 1982b; Kemp 1993). It generally prefers open habitats (e.g. alpine grasslands and the Kalahari) (Steyn 1982b; Jenkins 1994). The vegetation analysis reflects the wide range of habitats exploited. It also breeds in wooded or forested areas where cliffs occur.

**Movements:** Movements in southern Africa have been noted by Liversidge (1989) in the Kalahari, and by Hockey *et al.* (1989) in the southwestern Cape Province. Van Zyl *et al.* (1994) analysed patterns of seasonality in South Africa, and concluded that it is a partial, differential, facultative migrant, i.e. some birds are sedentary while others migrate, immature birds are more mobile than adults, and the extent of migration varies with environmental conditions, especially rainfall patterns and their effects on prey abundance (Liversidge 1989; Van Zyl *et al.* 1994). Some annual movement takes place on an east–west axis, from breeding areas on the eastern escarpment to flatter, drier areas in the west. The models and, to a lesser extent, the seasonal distribution maps, show higher reporting rates from midsummer in the west (Zones 1–4), but reporting rates in the east (Zones 5–8) show little seasonal variation. Summer increases in reporting

rates in the Kalahari and northern Namibia result mainly from an influx of birds from the north (Herremans & Herremans-Tonnoeyr 1996); this is confirmed by ringing recoveries in Zambia and Malawi of birds ringed in the Kalahari Gemsbok Park (Van Zyl *et al.* 1994). The post-breeding increase in numbers in the southwestern Cape Province (Zone 4) coincides with the harvesting of cereal crops, which may influence prey availability.

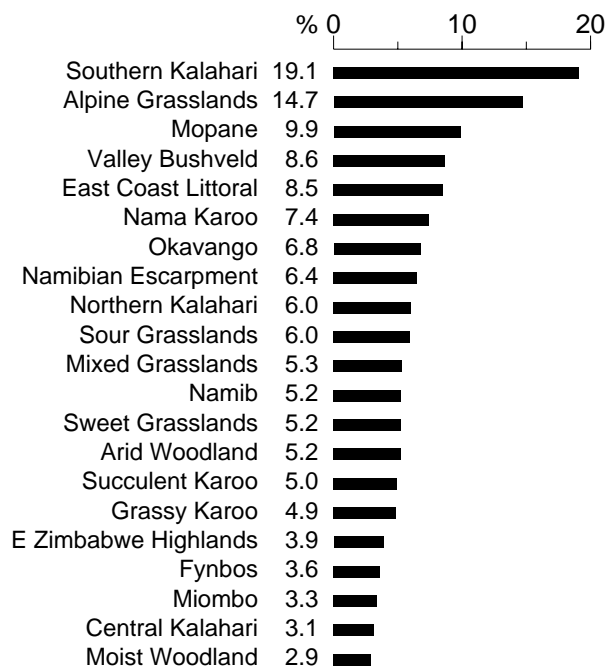
**Breeding:** Most records were from the east of the region and largely July–December. Egg-laying occurs June–November, mainly July–August (Dean 1971; Irwin 1981; Tarboton *et al.* 1987b). It breeds about one month earlier than the Peregrine, and both models and egg-laying data show slightly later breeding southwards, as for the Peregrine.

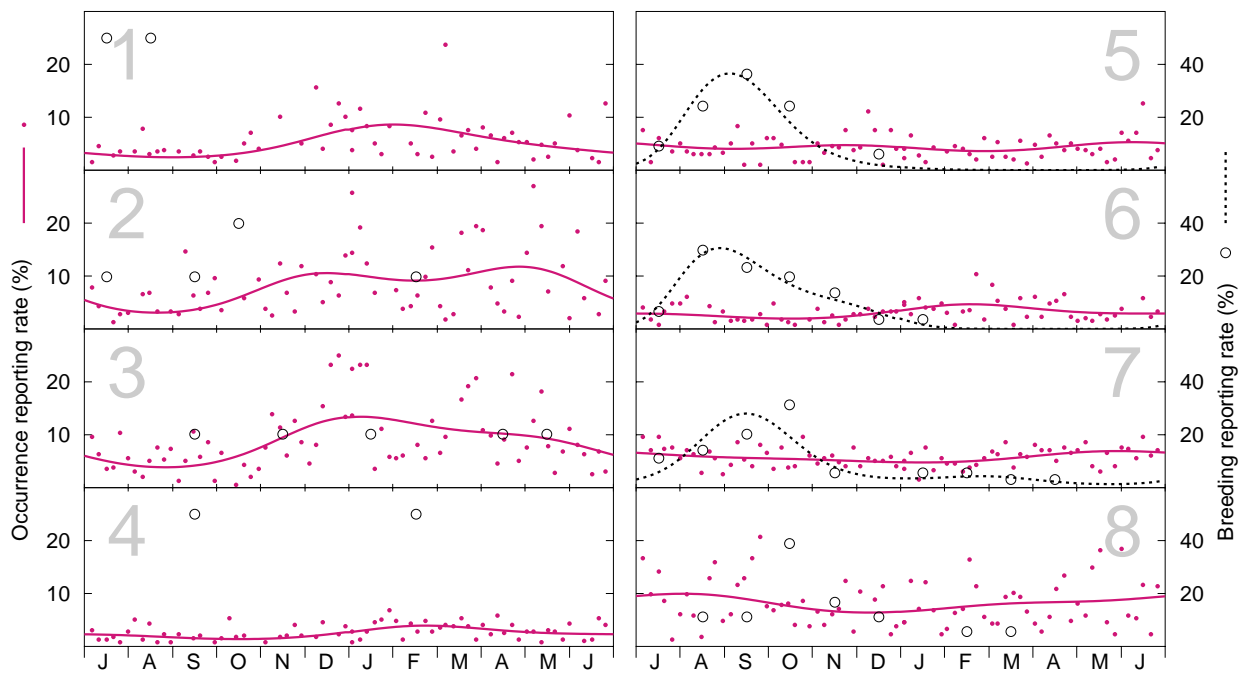
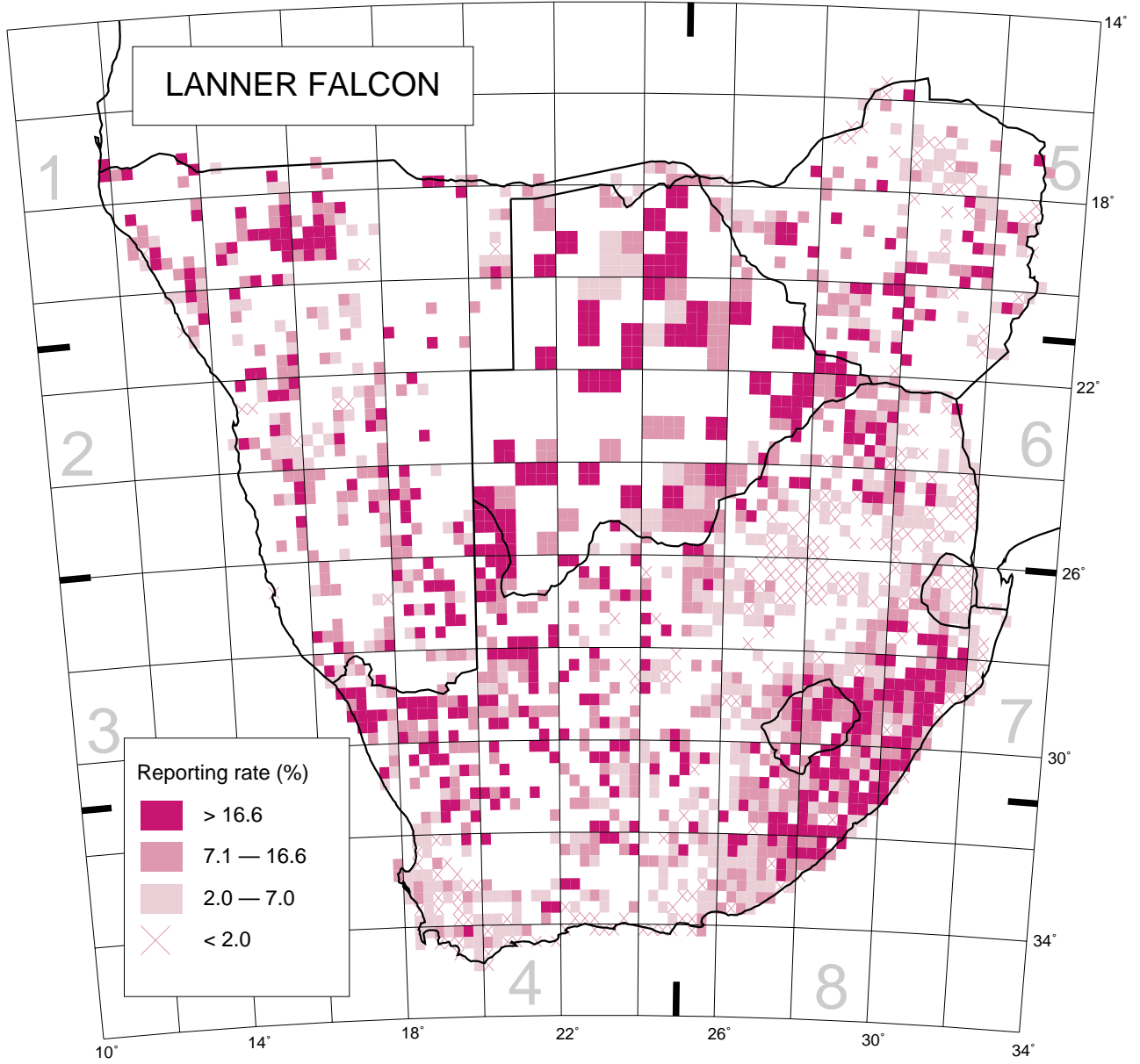
**Historical distribution and conservation:** Use of crow nests in trees and pylons has probably increased numbers in flat treeless areas, such as the Karoo and parts of the Transvaal (e.g. Kemp 1993). As a bird-eating species, the Lanner Falcon is prone to pesticide contamination, which may impair the productivity of breeding birds, especially where it hunts over agricultural areas. The localized application of poisons to control pests, e.g. locusts and Redbilled Queleas *Quelea quelea*, may cause direct mortality. Kemp (1993) documented the extinction of one population in the central Transvaal and attributed this to poisoning; and there are numerous anecdotal reports of decreasing numbers in areas of intensive agriculture in the grassland biome where it was previously common (W.R. Tarboton pers. comm.). The distribution map shows an obvious ‘hole’ with uniformly low reporting rates corresponding with this biome. In parts of Zimbabwe, Botswana, the Transvaal, KwaZulu-Natal, the Transkei and Lesotho, however, it benefits from rural settlements by preying on free-range domestic chickens (Steyn 1982b). The conservation status of the Lanner Falcon is unclear and its population demography and the threats posed by poisons should be investigated.

A.R. Jenkins

Recorded in 1863 grid cells, 41.1%  
Total number of records: 8673  
Mean reporting rate for range: 7.5%

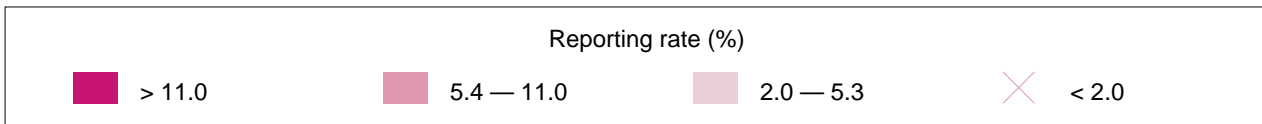
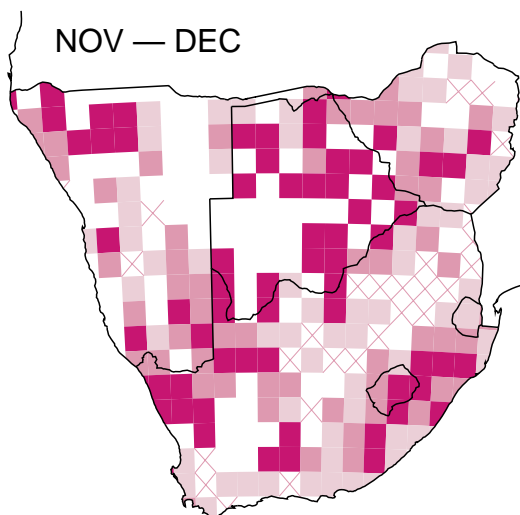
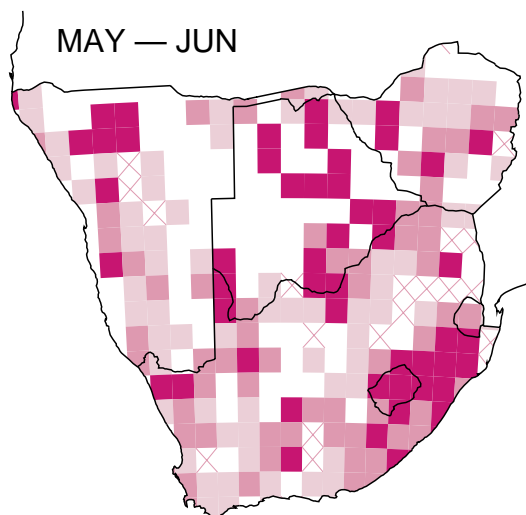
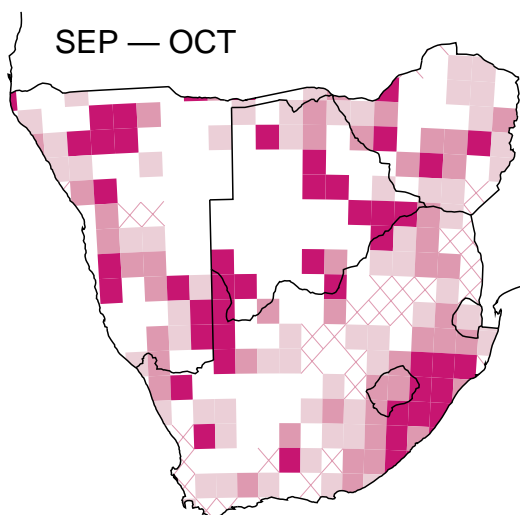
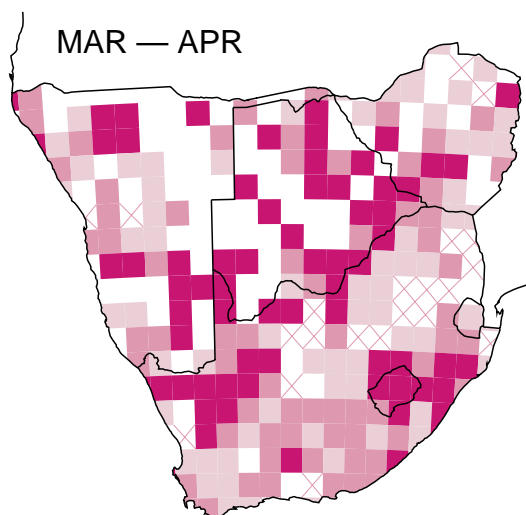
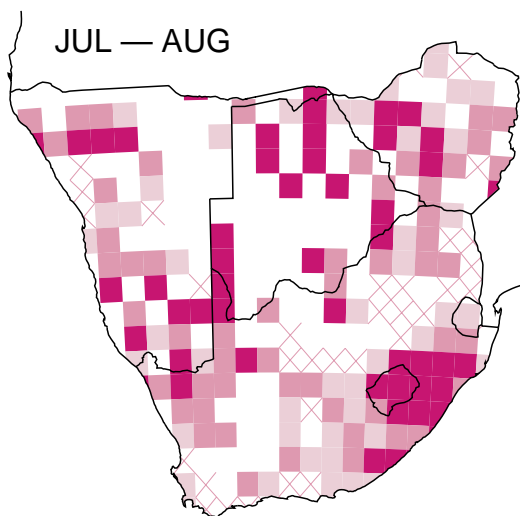
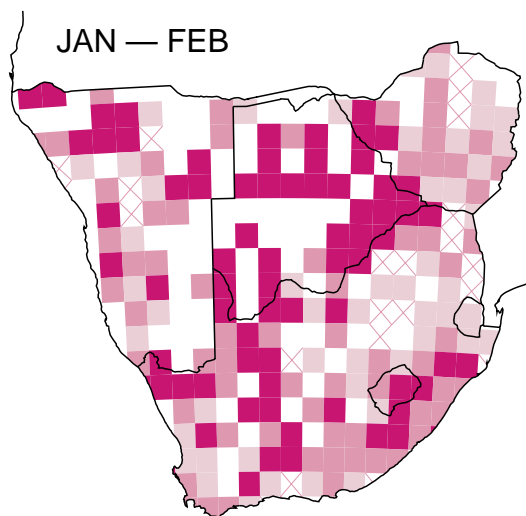
#### Reporting rates for vegetation types





Models of seasonality for Zones. Number of records (top to bottom, left to right):  
 Occurrence: 159, 291, 464, 213, 383, 354, 1119, 447; Breeding: 2, 5, 5, 2, 33, 30, 35, 18.

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Seasonal distribution maps; one-degree grid.