



Redwing Francolin

Rooivlerkpatrys

Francolinus levaillantii

The Redwing Francolin has an extremely patchy distribution from Kenya, Uganda and Zaire southwards. At least six isolated populations exist and the southern African population is isolated from populations to the north (Urban *et al.* 1986). In southern Africa it was recorded on high ground in the southern Transvaal and Swaziland, southwards through the eastern Free State and KwaZulu-Natal, to the eastern and southern Cape Province. There is a notable gap in its distribution in the Transkei and Lesotho.

Crowe *et al.* (1992) suggested somewhat anomalously that it is relatively distantly related to the other southern African francolins. However, recent mtDNA sequence analysis suggests that it is a member of the red-winged group, with Greywing *F. africanus*, Orange River *F. levaillantoides* and Shelley's *F. shelleyi* Francolins (Bloomer *et al.* in press).

It is usually found in pairs or in coveys of 5–8 birds (Urban *et al.* 1986), and it tends to be rather uncommon throughout its range (e.g. Tarboton *et al.* 1987b). Its dense-grass habitat renders it fairly inconspicuous, except when calling.

Habitat: Redwing Francolin generally inhabit open grasslands, or grassy fynbos in the southern Cape Province, in hilly, high-rainfall regions.

Movements: Seasonal fluctuations in reporting rates are probably due to variations in the conspicuousness, especially calling frequency. It is probably resident throughout its range. The marked patterns in Zone 6 and 8 may be artefacts of the relatively small number of records.

Breeding: The atlas data indicate summer breeding in Zone 7, which has the bulk of the records. Liversidge (1987) suggested that it breeds during the winter-rainfall season in the southern Cape Province, and with the early summer rains in KwaZulu-Natal. Mentis & Bigalke (1980b) confirmed peak egg-laying November–December in KwaZulu-Natal.

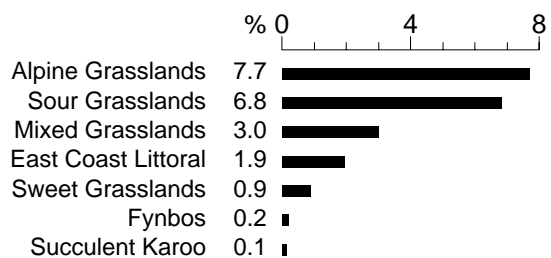
Interspecific relationships: It occurs in ranker habitats, usually over deeper soils, than those inhabited by the Greywing Francolin (Mentis & Bigalke 1981). The Redwing Francolin is more tolerant of the prolonged absence of fire than Greywing Francolin (Mentis & Bigalke 1979, 1981). In the Transvaal, the Redwing Francolin is commoner at lower altitudes and in a wider range of habitats than the Greywing Francolin (Tarboton *et al.* 1987b). In the southern Cape Province this is reversed, and it is restricted to the higher slopes, with the Greywing Francolin being found in the wider range of habitats below. Similar to the Transvaal situation, it occurs in partial sympatry with the Greywing Francolin throughout the Drakensberg system; the latter occurs above 1800 m and the former below 2450 m (Mentis & Bigalke 1980a). Within the zone of sympatry these two species are not isolated ecologically, but are in partial competition. It is less tolerant of grasslands which are frequently burnt and moderately grazed than is the Greywing Francolin, and is displaced by the latter in areas of commercial livestock production (Mentis & Little 1992).

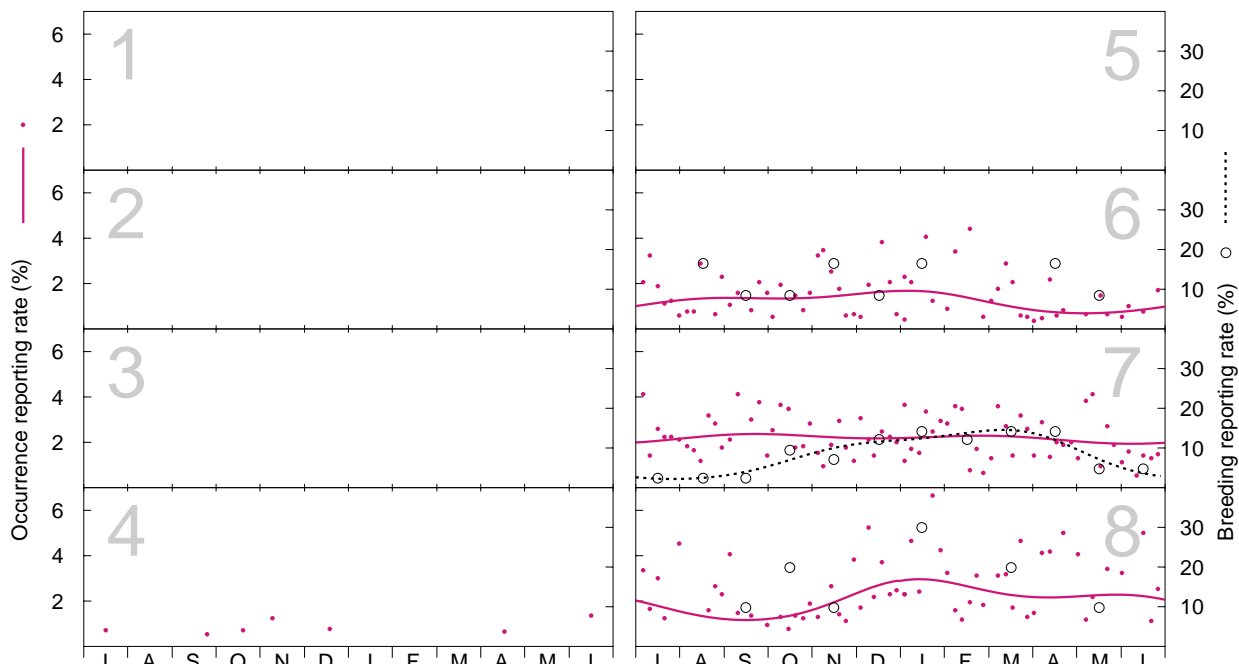
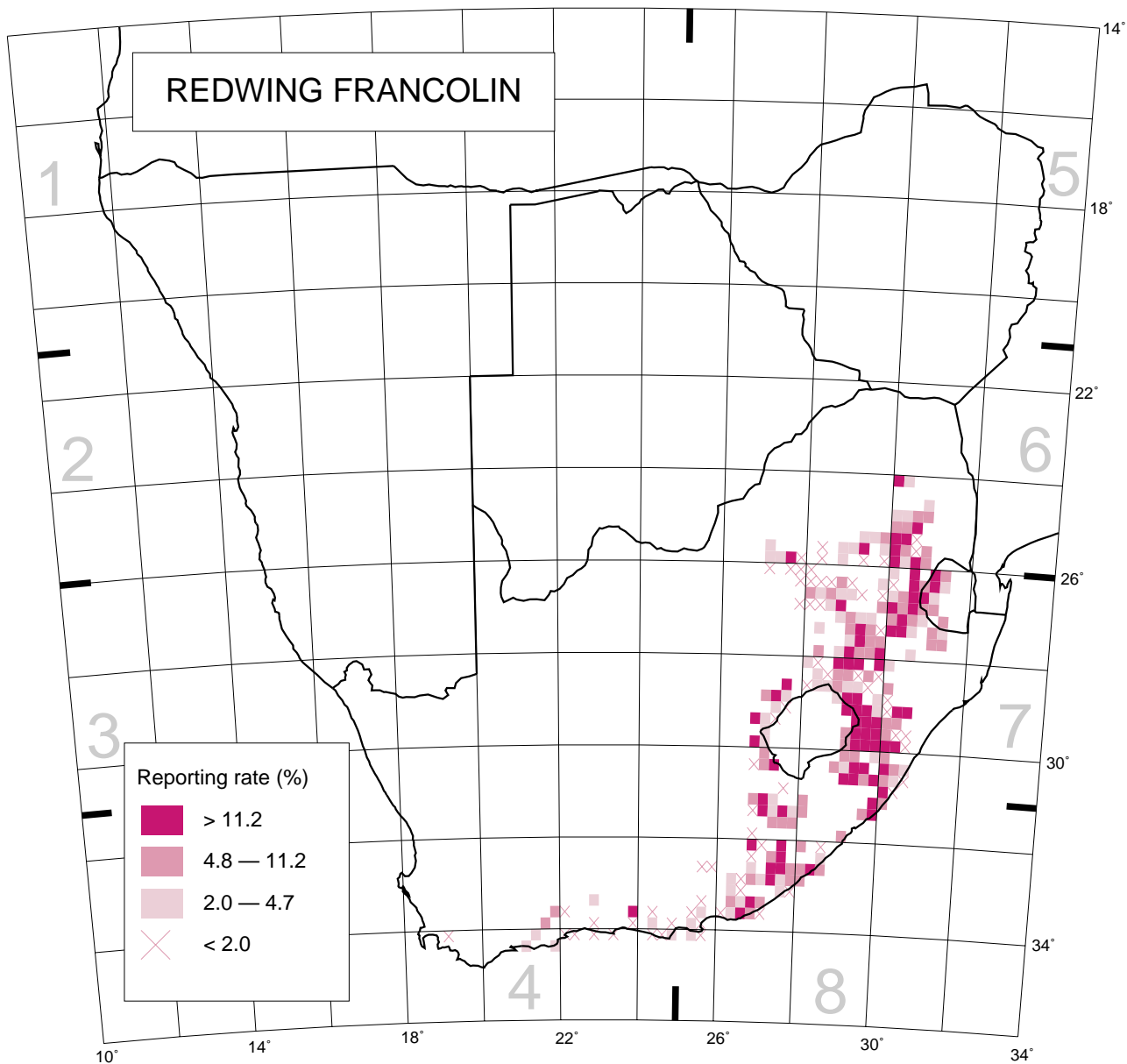
Historical distribution and conservation: There are various claims of local declines in numbers (Mentis & Bigalke 1973; Mentis & Little 1992), and areas of unconfirmed absence of this species in apparently suitable habitat (Little 1992a) in southern Africa. Its apparent absence from most of the Transkei and Lesotho probably indicates a dramatic local extinction, resulting from severe modification of the grasslands in those regions, especially from overgrazing. As evidenced by relatively high reporting rates in grid cell 2929, the current management policy of biennial burning and light grazing by wild herbivores in the Natal Drakensberg Park provides one of the most important sanctuaries for the Redwing Francolin in southern Africa (Little & Bainbridge 1992).

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Recorded in 287 grid cells, 6.3%
Total number of records: 2744
Mean reporting rate for range: 7.1%

Reporting rates for vegetation types





Models of seasonality for Zones. Number of records (top to bottom, left to right):
 Occurrence: 0, 0, 0, 8, 0, 138, 427, 113; Breeding: 0, 0, 0, 0, 0, 12, 42, 10.