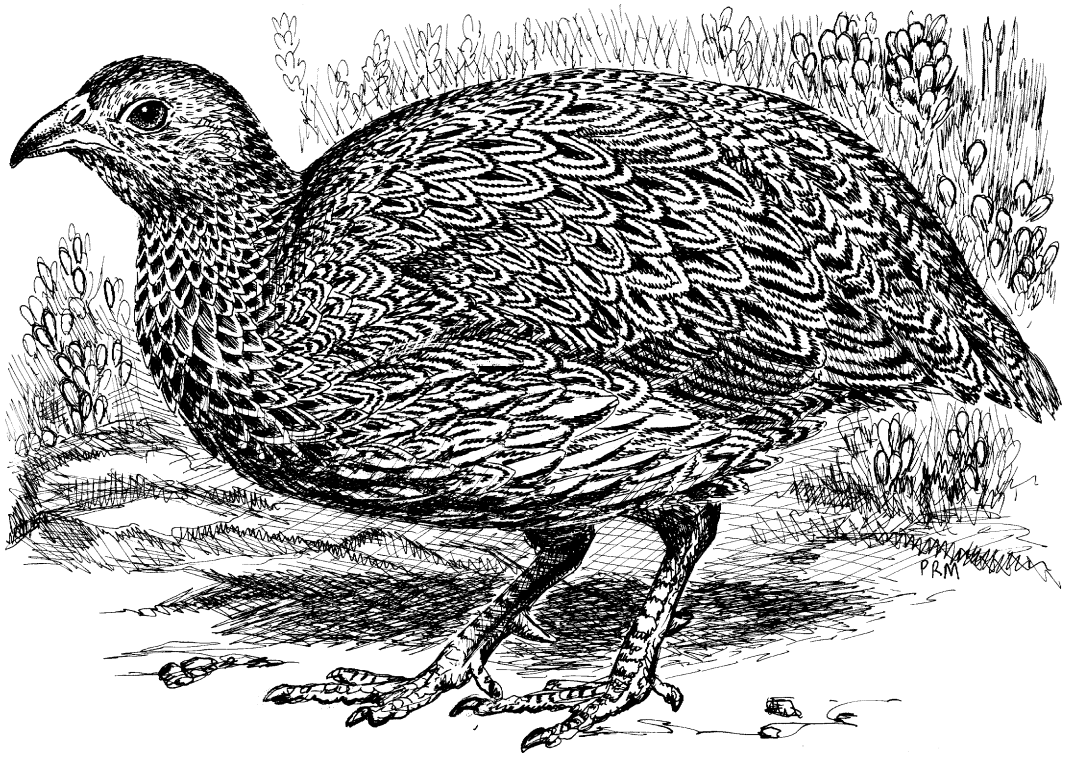


Cape Francolin

Kaapse Fisant

Francolinus capensis

The Cape Francolin is the largest of the southern African francolins. It is endemic to southern Africa, occurring mainly as a fynbos endemic, with apparently isolated populations near Kamieskroon (3017BB) in Namaqualand, and along the lower reaches of the Orange River, from about Prieska (2922DA) to the estuary.

It is a member of the 'vermiculated group' of francolins (Urban *et al.* 1986), with the Natal Francolin *F. natalensis* as its closest relative (Crowe *et al.* 1992).

It occurs in pairs or small coveys and its presence is often revealed by its call, although it is not a shy species.

Habitat: It occurs in areas of scrubby heath, especially coastal fynbos and strandveld, and in scrub along streams and rivers. It also favours stands of alien *Acacia* spp. on the Cape Flats (3418BA). It is probably commonest in the strandveld of the west coast where it is abundant in the West Coast National Park (3318AA).

Movements: The higher reporting rates during late winter and spring are probably due to greater conspicuousness during this period, possibly owing to increased calling prior to the breeding season.

Breeding: Winterbottom (1968a) recorded egglaying August–February with a peak September–October. The atlas data confirm a spring/early-summer breeding season, with a later peak than that for egglaying, probably owing to most atlas records representing sightings of young.

Interspecific relationships: The only francolin species with which it has extensive distributional overlap is the taxonomically distant Greywing Francolin *F. africanus.*

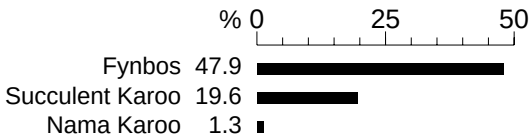
Historical distribution and conservation: There is no evidence of range contraction, other than speculation that the population along the lower Orange River was once continuous with the population in the southwestern Cape Province (Clancey 1967c). It has been proposed that the Orange River population was introduced, but Rookmaaker (1989) recorded them at the mouth of the Orange River (2816CB) and near Augrabies (2820CB) during 1779 and at Ramansdrif (2818CD) during 1783, clearly prior to any relocation of gamebirds in southern Africa. They have been introduced to Robben Island (3318CD) where they persist in a parasite-free environment (Little & Earlé 1994).

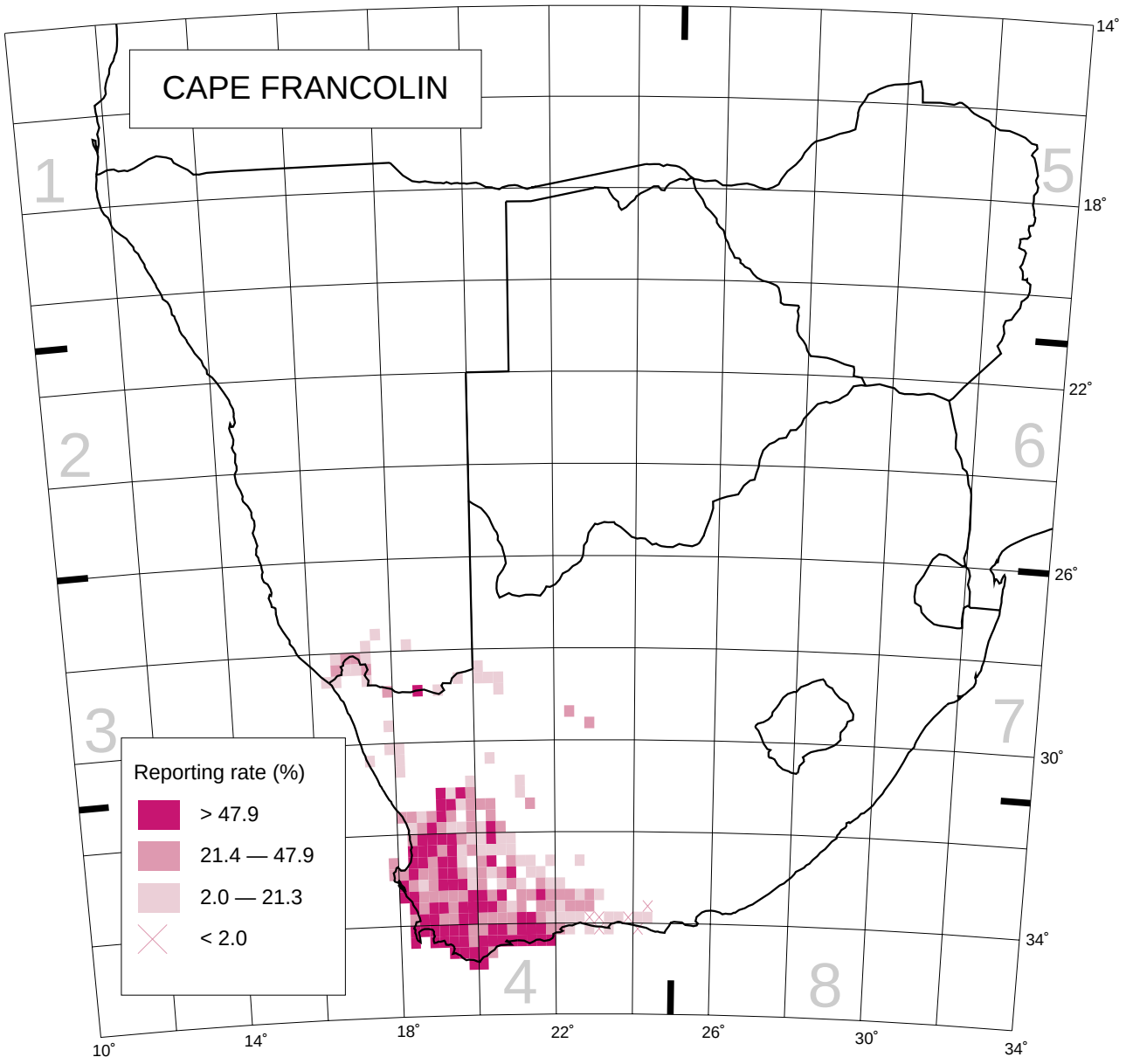
Although the Cape Francolin might be considered commensal with man in its ability to colonize alien vegetation and suburban parklands, recent research has highlighted its dependence on fragments of natural habitats in human-modified environments for roosting and nesting (Little & Crowe 1994). Examples of modified environments are, in particular, cereal croplands, vineyards and deciduous fruit orchards, where mountain and coastal fynbos is fragmented into scattered patches along drainage lines and between agricultural fields (Little & Crowe 1994).

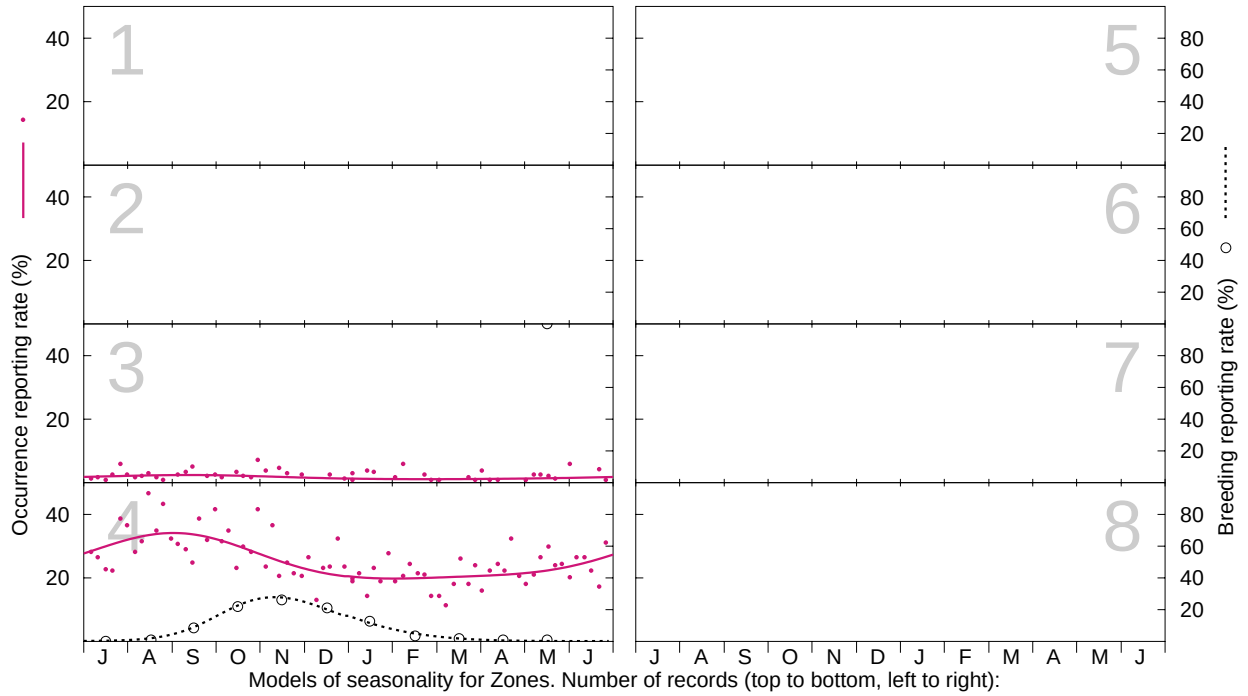
R.M. Little

Recorded in 232 grid cells, 5.1%
Total number of records: 10 439
Mean reporting rate for range: 46.9%

Reporting rates for vegetation types







Models of seasonality for Zones. Number of records (top to bottom, left to right):
Occurrence: 0, 0, 92, 2214, 0, 0, 0, 0; Breeding: 0, 0, 1, 483, 0, 0, 0, 0.