

Purple Gallinule

Grootkoningriethaan

Porphyrio porphyrio

The Purple Gallinule is a large, ponderous rail of reedbeds and other dense aquatic vegetation. It is widespread, occurring from the Mediterranean region through the Middle East and southern Asia to Australasia and the islands of the southwest Pacific, as well as in Africa and Madagascar (Urban *et al.* 1986). The race *P. p. madagascariensis*, which occurs in Egypt, sub-Saharan Africa and Madagascar, is patchily distributed and locally uncommon to common, occurring almost continuously from southern Kenya and Uganda south through central and southern Africa to the Cape, and being absent from the arid areas of southern and southwestern Africa (Urban *et al.* 1986). Atlas data confirm the distribution and status in southern Africa, and extend its known range with scattered records through central and western Namibia and the northern Cape Province, while also showing that it is largely absent from the arid Karoo and Kalahari biomes.

Although it is a skulking wetland bird, recording was probably reasonably complete owing to its size and loud diagnostic vocalization.

Habitat: It inhabits fresh to brackish, sheltered, still to slow-flowing waters fringed or overgrown by reeds, rushes, sedges, etc. It occurs at large and small waters and its habitat is normally permanent, although it does also utilize seasonal and temporary wetlands (Cramp *et al.* 1980; Urban *et al.* 1986; Del Hoyo *et al.* 1996). The vegetation analysis shows the highest reporting rates in the moist grassland, East Coast Littoral, Fynbos and Okavango biomes, which may be expected to contain the greatest amounts of suitable wetland habitat.

Movements: No regular migrations occur and the analyses show little seasonal variation in reporting rates. However, it is known to have at least local seasonal movements in response to changing habitat conditions. In the Transvaal it occurs erratically but sometimes abundantly on the seasonally flooded Nyl River floodplain (2428DA) where variations between 5000+ nesting pairs in wet years and almost none in

drought years have been reported, and large-scale movements must occur in wet years (Tarboton *et al.* 1987b). In the south-western Cape Province it is described as a resident and a winter visitor (Hockey *et al.* 1989).

Breeding: In southern Africa breeding occurs mainly in summer but probably throughout the year (Maclean 1993b). Breeding is known from Zimbabwe in all months except November–December, from Botswana in January–April and July–October, KwaZulu-Natal August–April, the Transvaal July–March, and the southwestern Cape Province August–February (Hockey *et al.* 1989; Maclean 1993b; Penry 1994; N.J. Skinner *in litt.*). Atlas data give evidence of breeding in Zone 5 (most of Zimbabwe) February–April, but throughout the year in Zones 4, 6 and 7, which encompass the south and southwestern Cape Province, the Transvaal, Free State, KwaZulu-Natal and southeastern Botswana; in the rest of Botswana, Namibia and the northern Cape Province (Zones 1–3), there is evidence of breeding only in the wet season, November–May.

Interspecific relationships: In Africa and Madagascar it is widely sympatric with the Lesser Gallinule *Porphyryla alleni*. The latter is a much smaller species which is migratory over most of its African range and differs somewhat in habitat requirements, preferring waters with floating-leaved plants, often inhabiting shorter and more grass-dominated vegetation, and occurring widely on temporary wetlands.

Historical distribution and conservation: Little information is available on recent changes in distribution or abundance, but it has declined in North Africa and Nigeria (Urban *et al.* 1986) and its numbers must have declined at least locally elsewhere through wetland destruction, as is suggested for the eastern Cape Province (Skead 1967b). The Purple Gallinule is vulnerable to frequent disturbance, and to the removal of marginal wetland vegetation and wetland drainage, but responds well to protection and will occupy artificially created wetlands, including dams and sewage treatment sites (Cramp *et al.* 1980; Del Hoyo *et al.* 1996), and may have expanded its range accordingly in dry areas.

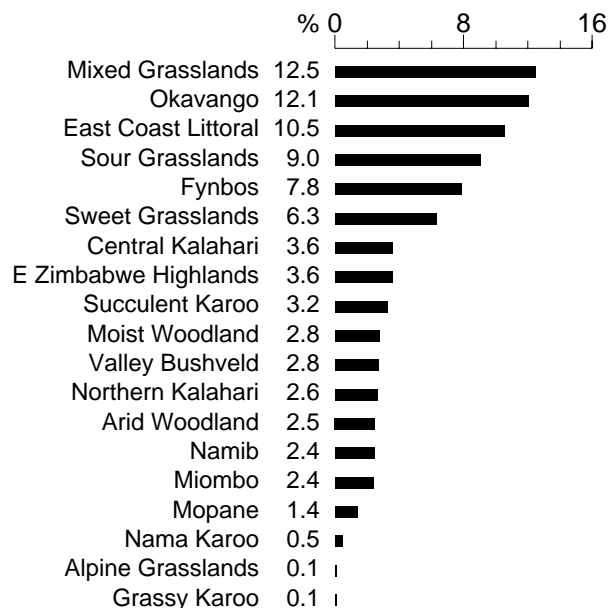
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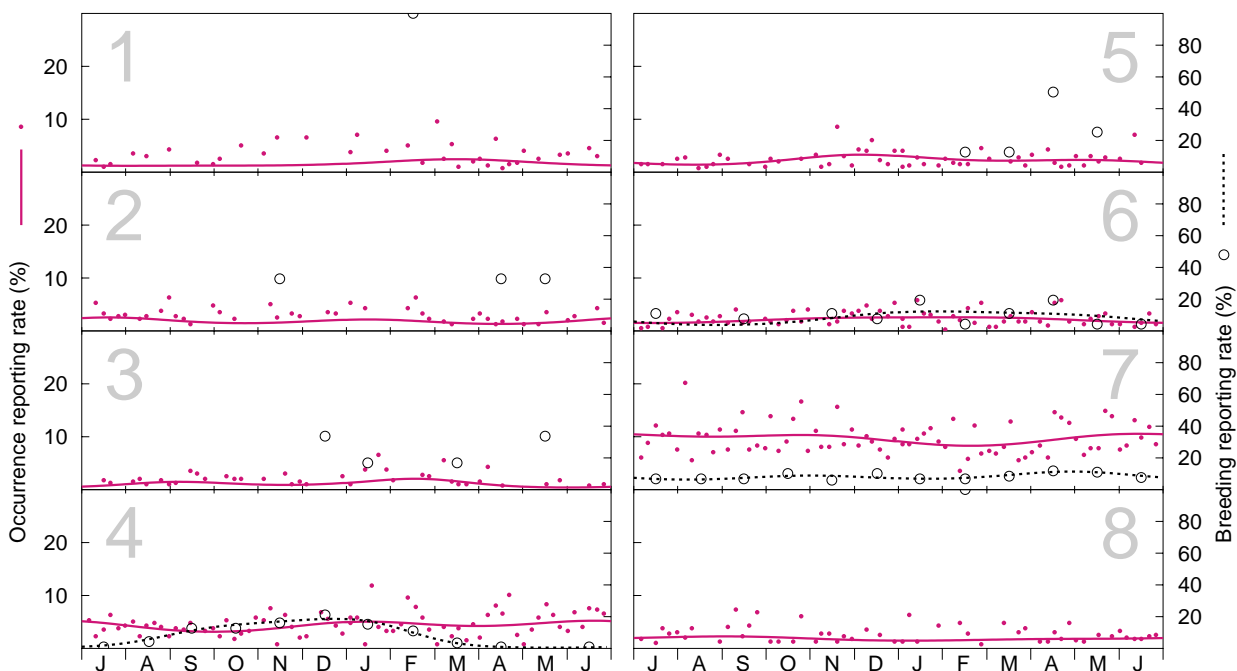
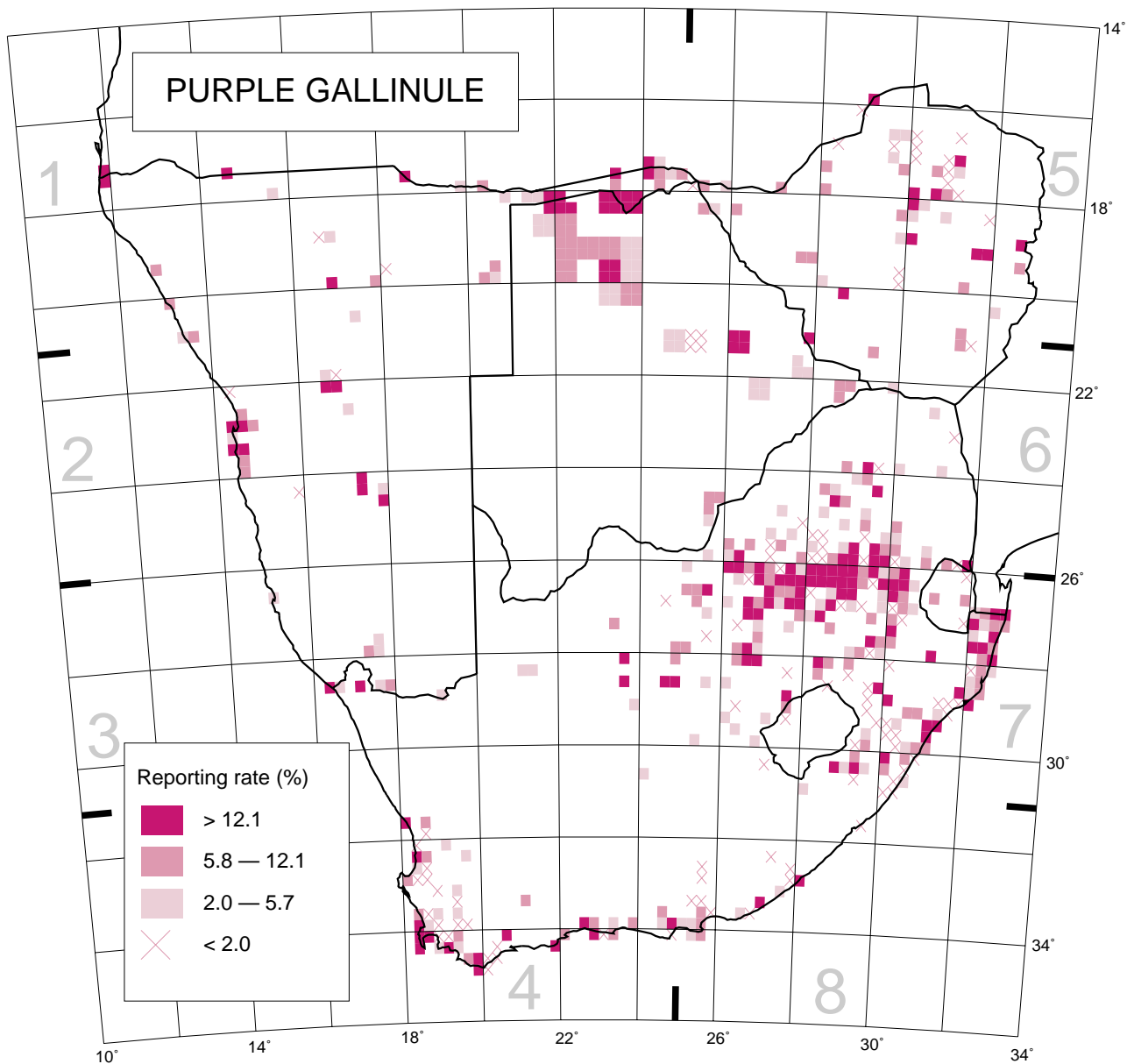
Recorded in 534 grid cells, 11.8%

Total number of records: 8458

Mean reporting rate for range: 12.4%

Reporting rates for vegetation types





Models of seasonality for Zones. Number of records (top to bottom, left to right):
 Occurrence: 55, 67, 60, 377, 195, 244, 1894, 101; Breeding: 1, 6, 6, 86, 8, 26, 286, 2.