

Lesser Moorhen Kleinwaterhoender

Gallinula angulata

This small moorhen closely resembles its larger congener, the Moorhen *G. chloropus*, with which it is sympatric throughout its range. It is widespread and locally common over most of sub-Saharan Africa, from Senegal east to Sudan and Ethiopia and south to Namibia, Botswana and northeastern South Africa (Urban *et al.* 1986; Del Hoyo *et al.* 1996). In southern Africa, numbers fluctuate widely between years, depending on rainfall and wetland availability. It is locally common to abundant in suitable habitat over much of Zimbabwe, in northeast Namibia, northern Botswana and in the Transvaal, where from 8000–50 000 breeding pairs may occur at the Nyl River floodplain (2428DA) in years of high rainfall; it also extends rarely into Swaziland, KwaZulu-Natal and coastal regions of the southern Cape Province (Snow 1978; Cyrus & Robson 1980; Irwin 1981; Tarboton *et al.* 1987b; Hines 1993; Parker 1994; Del Hoyo *et al.* 1996). Atlas data confirm its known status, extend its known range slightly in Botswana and in southcentral Namibia, and show that the limits of its southern African distribution are similar to those of two other migratory rallids, the African Crake *Crex egregia* and the less widespread and less common Lesser Gallinule *Porphyryla alleni*.

Habitat: It occupies permanent and temporary freshwater wetlands, including papyrus swamps, reedbeds, marshes, ponds with waterlilies, rank vegetation fringing still and flowing waters, sewage ponds, and floodplains, pans and seasonally inundated grasslands with emergent grass or sedge cover and often with floating plants; in Zimbabwe, Botswana and Namibia it breeds on temporary wetlands in semi-arid areas (Urban *et al.* 1986; Del Hoyo *et al.* 1996). The vegetation analysis shows a similar pattern to that for the African Crake and the Lesser Gallinule, and reflects the bird's occurrence in biomes where suitable seasonally flooded wetland habitats, including inundated grasslands, are found.

Movements: Some are resident throughout the year in permanently flooded habitats, but most migrate to higher latitudes to breed during the rains (Urban *et al.* 1986). In southern Africa most occur December–April or May, early arrivals being recorded from October in Botswana and

Zimbabwe (Urban *et al.* 1986; Del Hoyo *et al.* 1996). The atlas models show that most are present November–April or May; additional records in Zone 1 until early August and from Zone 5 until late June and August–September possibly refer to birds remaining in suitable habitat during the nonbreeding season, as is known to occur in Zambia (Taylor 1979).

Breeding: Breeding is in the wet season; evidence of breeding activity spanned December–May, with a January–February peak in Zone 6, and possibly somewhat later breeding in Zimbabwe (Zone 5). Egg-laying data in the region span December–April (Irwin 1981; Tarboton *et al.* 1987b; Brown & Clinning *in press*; N.J. Skinner *in litt.*).

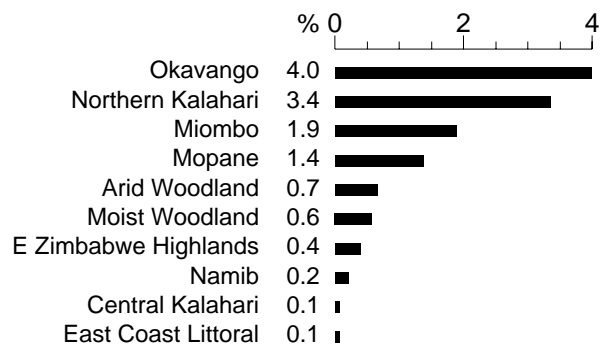
Interspecific relationships: It is generally ecologically segregated from the Moorhen, preferring temporary waters, often in seasonally inundated areas, with abundant cover of emergent vegetation as opposed to permanent waters with fringing vegetation (Snow 1978; Del Hoyo *et al.* 1996).

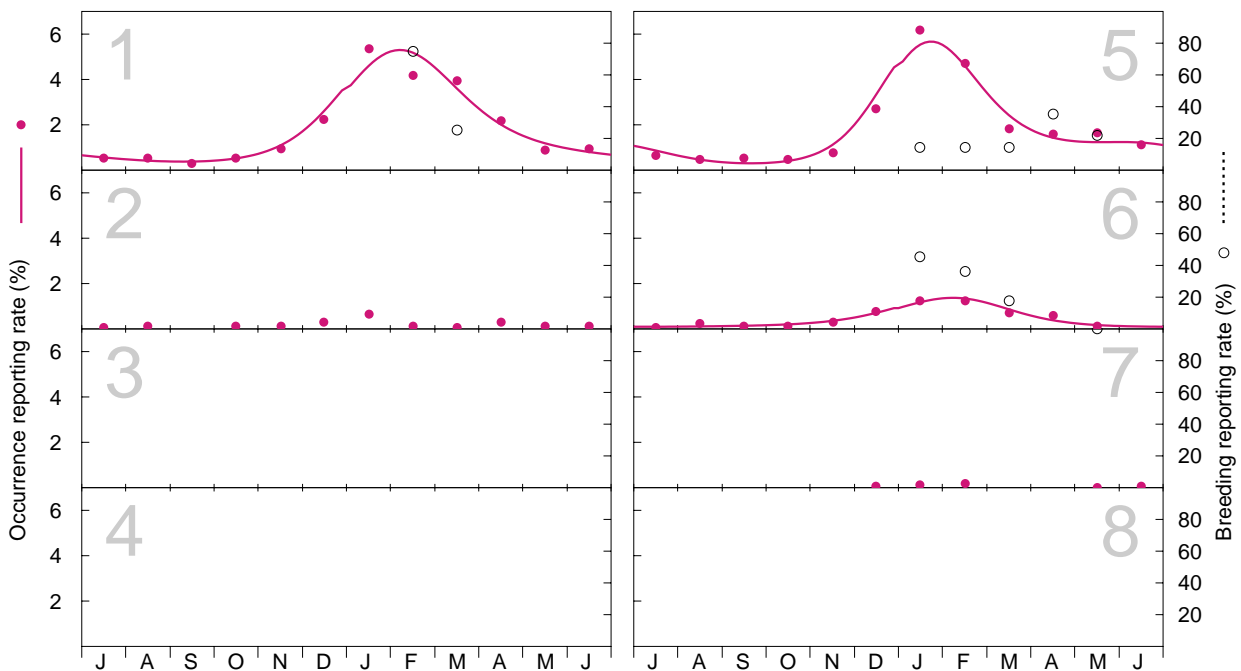
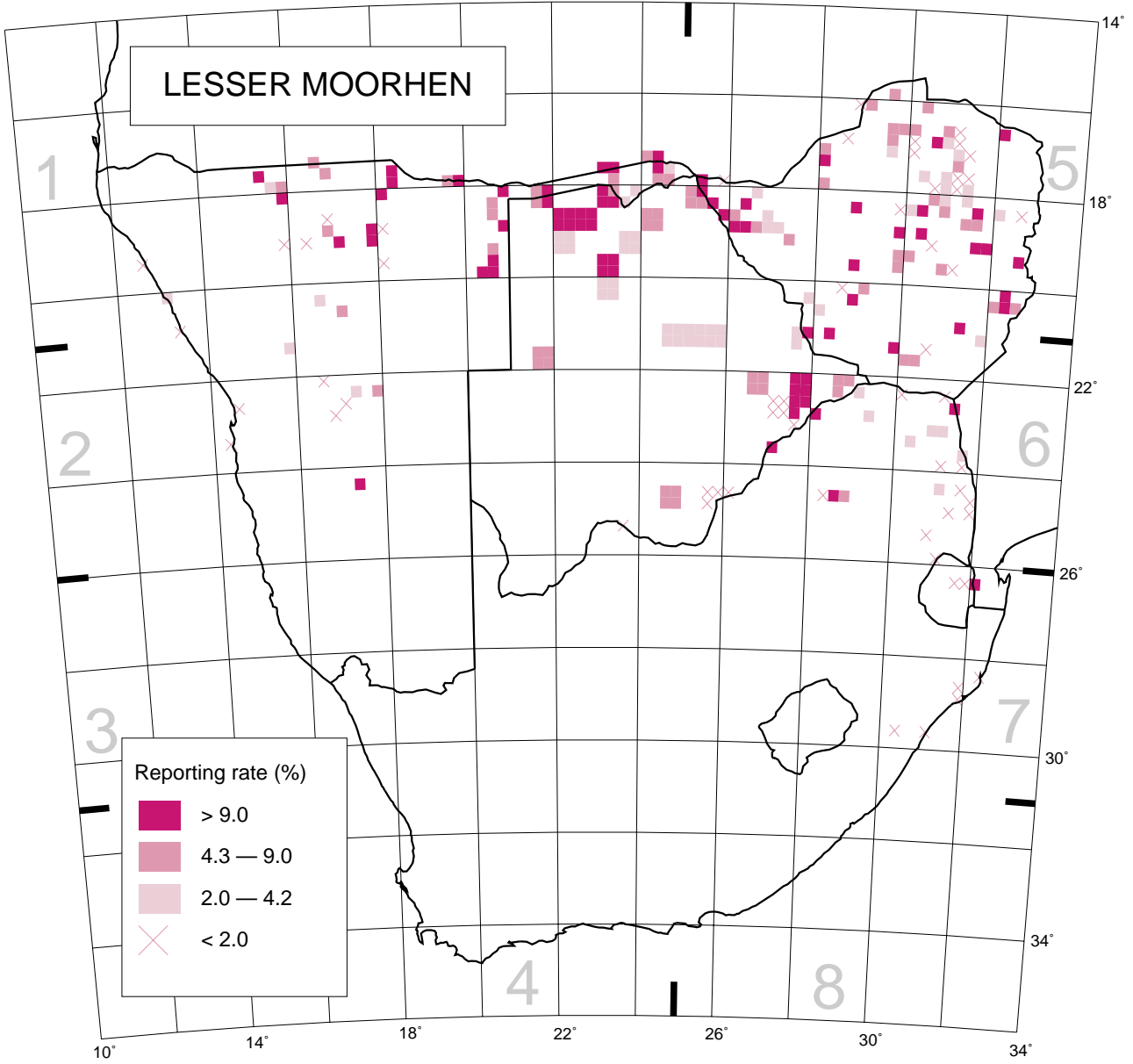
Historical distribution and conservation: Although habitat loss must have occurred as a result of wetland destruction, the Lesser Moorhen is still locally very numerous in seasons of good rainfall, and overall population trends are not clear.

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Recorded in 258 grid cells, 5.7%
Total number of records: 521
Mean reporting rate for range: 3.5%

Reporting rates for vegetation types





Models of seasonality for Zones. Number of records (top to bottom, left to right):
 Occurrence: 160, 18, 0, 0, 210, 113, 15, 0; Breeding: 4, 0, 0, 0, 14, 11, 1, 0.