

## Stanley's Bustard

### Veldpou

#### *Neotis denhami*

Stanley's Bustard *N. d. stanleyi* is the name given to the southernmost race of Denham's Bustard. This is an isolated and endemic subspecies occurring in South Africa from the southwestern Cape Province to the northern Transvaal, in western Swaziland, and occasionally wandering into southern Mozambique (Clancey 1971a) and Lesotho (Bonde 1993) as a nonbreeding bird. The records from northern Botswana and northwestern Zimbabwe refer to nonbreeding visitors from further north of the subspecies Jackson's Bustard *N. d. jacksoni* (e.g. Howells & Fynn 1979; Clancey 1980b; Irwin 1981), which inhabits open areas in woodland. This Afrotropical endemic is widespread in Central, East and West Africa.

Total population estimates exist for several areas: less than 300 birds in the Transvaal (Tarboton *et al.* 1987b), 100–200 birds in the eastern Cape Province (Brooke 1984b), about 950 birds on the coastal plain between Bot River (3419AA) and Mossel Bay (3422AA) in the southwestern Cape Province (Allan 1993), and about 20 birds in Swaziland (Parker 1994). The total population size of *stanleyi* is believed to be less than 5000 individuals (Allan 1993). It is usually encountered alone or in small groups of about 2–7 birds, occasionally in flocks as large as 28 individuals (Allan 1993). It is fairly conspicuous owing to its large size, but some observers misidentified Ludwig's Bustard *N. ludwigii* for this species in the semi-arid areas (Herholdt 1988). Records outside the established range were carefully checked and unsubstantiated records deleted.

**Habitat:** During the breeding season, its habitat is high-rainfall sour grassland in the grassland biome, usually at fairly high altitudes, but including the coastal grasslands of northern KwaZulu-Natal. Breeding birds also occur in the mosaic of coastal fynbos, cultivated pastures and cereal cropfields in the fynbos biome of the southwestern Cape Province (Herholdt 1988; Allan 1993). There is a small isolated breeding population in the grasslands of the Waterberg Plateau (2427B) which is situated in the woodland biome (Tarboton *et al.* 1987b). During the nonbreeding season it can be found in lower-lying regions, moving into parts of the Karoo directly adjacent to grassland areas, i.e. in the eastern Cape Province (Allan 1993), and into woodland, i.e. in the central Transvaal (Tarboton *et al.* 1987b).

**Movements:** In the Transvaal it shows an altitudinal movement in winter from the highest grasslands down to lower-lying grassland and woodland regions (Tarboton *et al.* 1987b). The populations in the high-lying grasslands of the northeastern Free State and KwaZulu-Natal move eastward in winter, also to lower-lying areas, including an apparent movement to the coastal grasslands of northern KwaZulu-Natal (Earlé & Grobler 1987; Herholdt 1988). In the southwestern Cape Province, Allan (1993) found higher densities in a coastal area in the winter but it was unclear whether the lower number of birds counted in the summer was due to movement out of the region or reduced conspicuousness of both sexes owing to a local change in habitat use, and of females owing to breeding activity. The models do not show any clear pattern of movements in *stanleyi*. This is probably due to the geographical extent of the Zones which masks any relatively short-distance altitudinal movements. They do, however, show that *jacksoni* is primarily recorded November–May in southern Africa; Howells & Fynn (1979) gave December–May as the predominant months of occurrence.

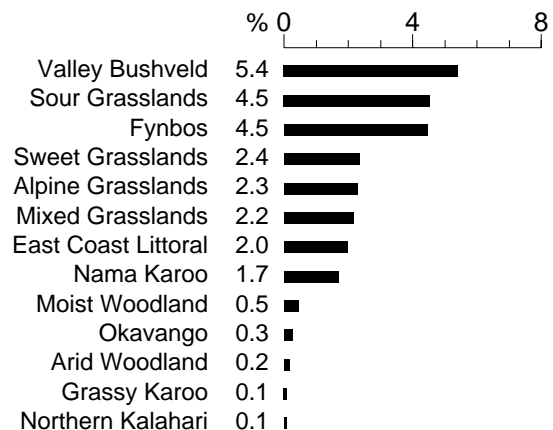
**Breeding:** Breeding was recorded September–March, peaking in October in the southwestern Cape Province (Zone 4), in November in the eastern Cape Province (Zone 8) and in December in KwaZulu-Natal and the Transvaal (Zone 7). Few published egg-laying dates exist to confirm this apparent trend towards earlier breeding in the south (Tarboton *et al.* 1987b; Allan 1993).

**Historical distribution and conservation:** There is consensus that the Stanley's Bustard has decreased in South Africa and it is listed in the South African Red Data book as 'vulnerable' (Brooke 1984b; Herholdt 1988; Tarboton 1989). The threats responsible for this situation include: loss of habitat through commercial afforestation, crop farming and high human densities, overhead transmission lines, entanglement in fences, hunting, snaring and poisoning (see Allan 1993 and references therein). The atlas map clearly shows the scarcity of the species in Transkei; this is attributed to human disturbance (Skead 1967b; Quicquelberge 1989).

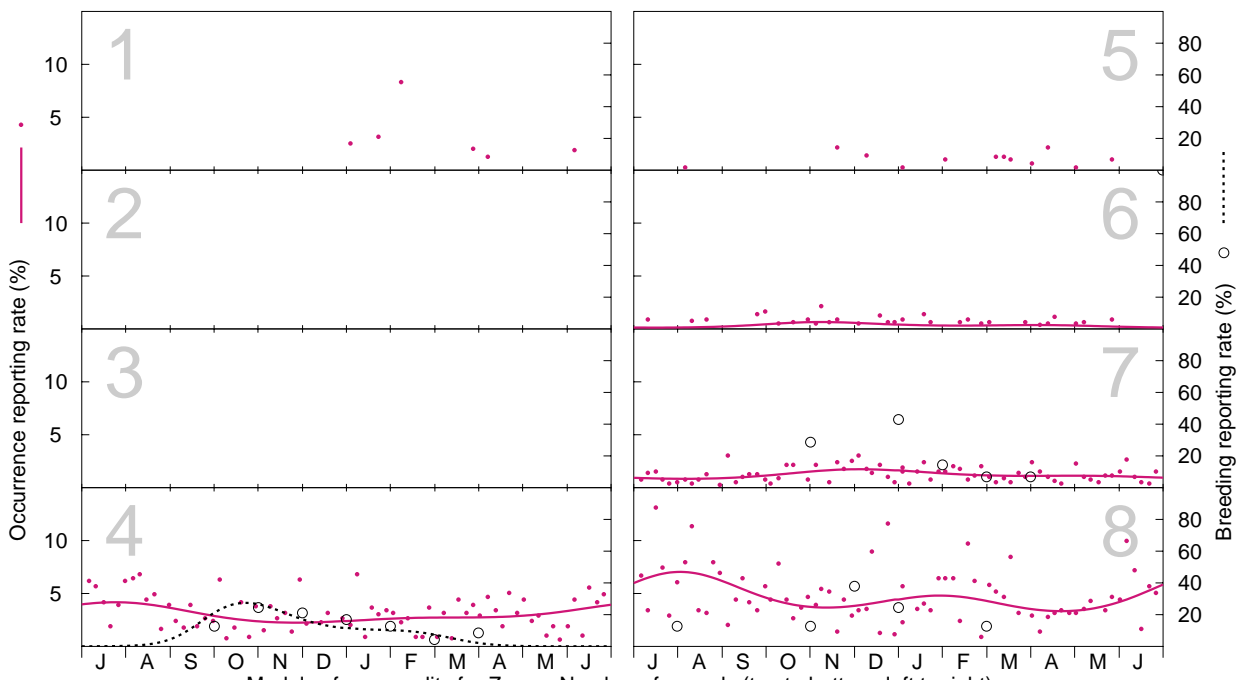
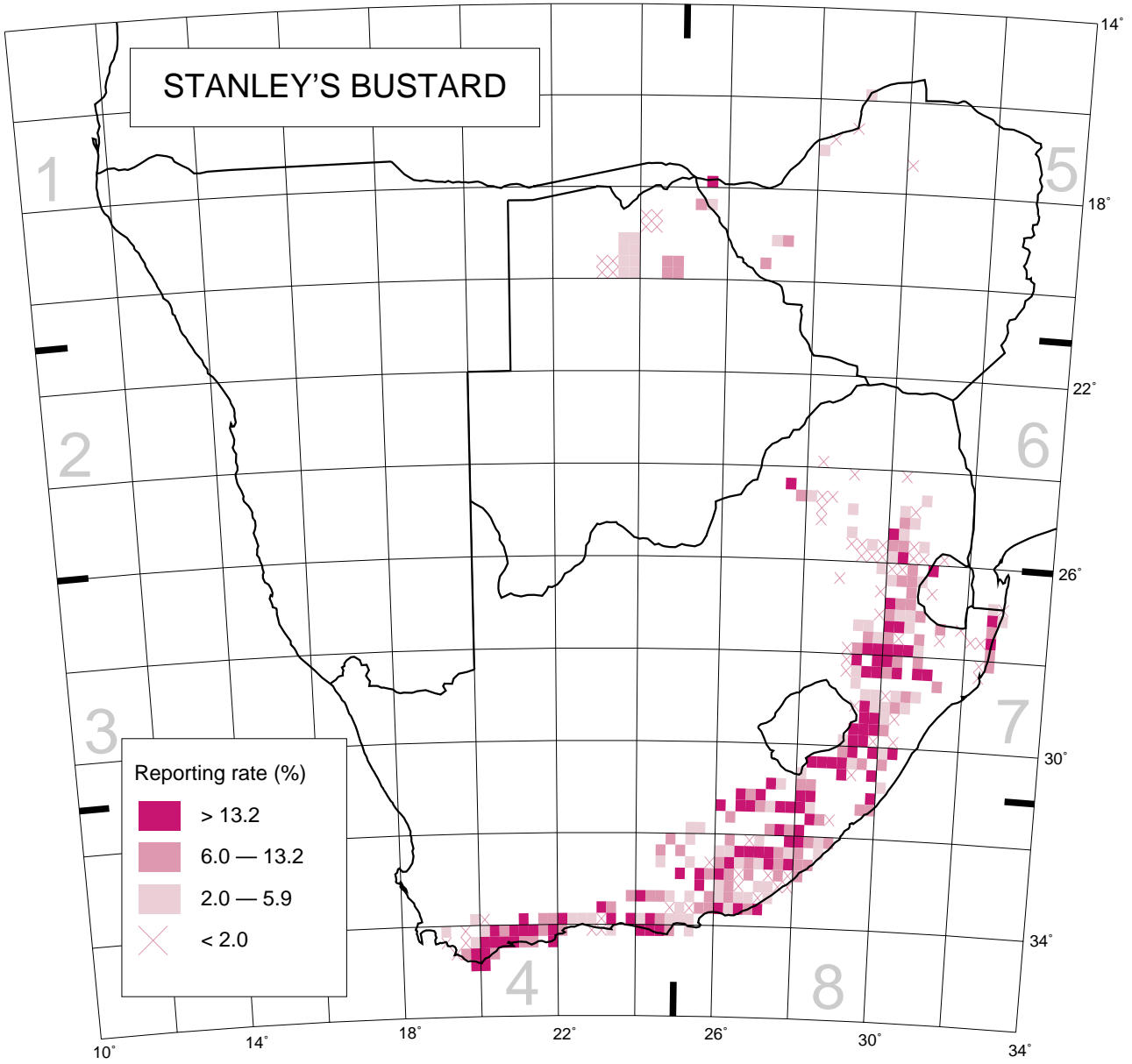
D.G. Allan

Recorded in 339 grid cells, 7.5%  
Total number of records: 3091  
Mean reporting rate for range: 9.8%

#### Reporting rates for vegetation types



Also marginally in Miombo.



Models of seasonality for Zones. Number of records (top to bottom, left to right):  
 Occurrence: 6, 0, 0, 263, 16, 39, 238, 253; Breeding: 0, 0, 0, 24, 0, 1, 14, 8.