

Ludwig's Bustard

Ludwigse Pou

Neotis ludwigii

In southern Africa, Ludwig's Bustard occurs in western Namibia and western South Africa, with a few records along the southwestern border in Botswana (Hunter 1990b; Penry 1994) and western Lesotho (Bonde 1993). It is virtually endemic to the atlas region, extending marginally into southwestern Angola (Clancey 1986a).

The total southern African population has been estimated at 56 000–81 000 individuals (Allan 1994b). It is usually found solitarily or in small groups, but occasionally aggregations of up to 80 birds have been recorded (pers. obs). This relatively large species is fairly conspicuous, especially when males are calling and displaying, but it is regularly confused with Stanley's Bustard *N. denhami* (Herholdt 1988). Records outside of the established range were carefully checked and unsubstantiated records deleted.

Habitat: It inhabits the open plains of the arid Namib and Namibian Escarpment, and the semi-arid Karoo. It also visits the xeric scrub in the vicinity of Etosha Pan, the drier western grasslands in South Africa, the southern Kalahari, especially along calcrete watercourses, and even the agricultural regions of the southwestern Cape Province in the fynbos biome (Jensen & Clinning 1976; Herholdt 1988; Allan 1994b).

Movements: Winterbottom (1971d) suggested that it may have rainfall-dependent east–west movements in Namibia, and Herholdt (1988) suggested that in South Africa it may migrate into the winter-rainfall Succulent Karoo along the west coast during winter, and into the summer-rainfall Nama Karoo during summer. A more detailed investigation confirmed a winter movement into the Namib and Succulent Karoo, and a summer movement into the Namibian Escarpment, but could not find any evidence for a reduction in the number of birds present in the Nama Karoo during the winter (Allan 1994b). The models fail to detect this movement owing to the geographical limits of the Zones not corresponding with the areas discussed above, except for Zone 4 (winter-rainfall southwestern Cape Province) where a winter increase in reporting rates is evident. The seasonal distribution maps, however, do show the east–west movement in Namibia and the winter influx into the west coast Succulent Karoo in South Africa.

Breeding: The records collected during the atlas period span most months of the year. The South African breeding records in Herholdt (1988) span August–December, while Winterbottom (1971d) stated that the species breeds in Namibia in March.

Interspecific relationships: The distributions of the similar Stanley's and Ludwig's Bustards overlap only slightly and neither is more than a nonbreeding vagrant into the habitats of the other (Herholdt 1988; Allan 1993).

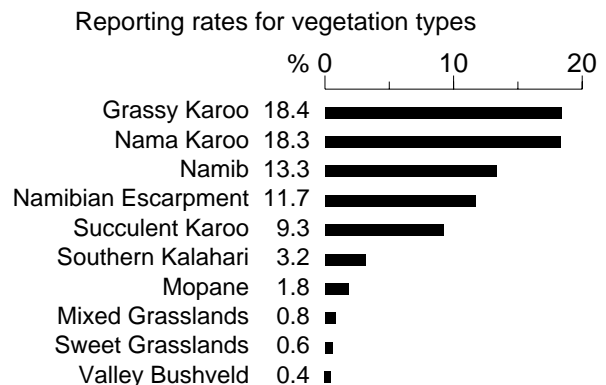
Historical distribution and conservation: It is listed in the South African Red Data book as 'vulnerable' (Brooke 1984b), based on its putative retraction from the grassland biome. Herholdt (1988), however, showed that it never occurred there, except in the extreme western grasslands where it still occurs as a nonbreeding visitor, and that previous records were based on misidentification of Stanley's Bustard. He therefore argued that it should not be considered vulnerable. However, Ludwig's Bustard appears to be highly susceptible to collisions with overhead transmission lines (Johnsgard 1991) and its status requires monitoring.

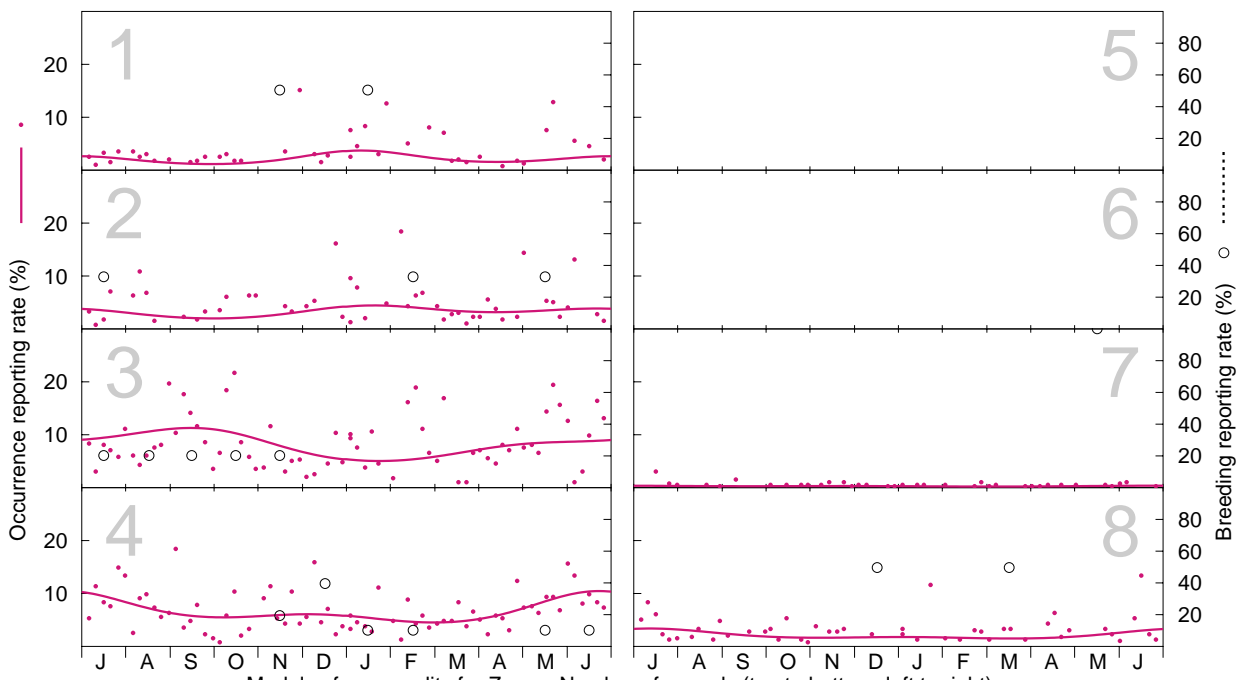
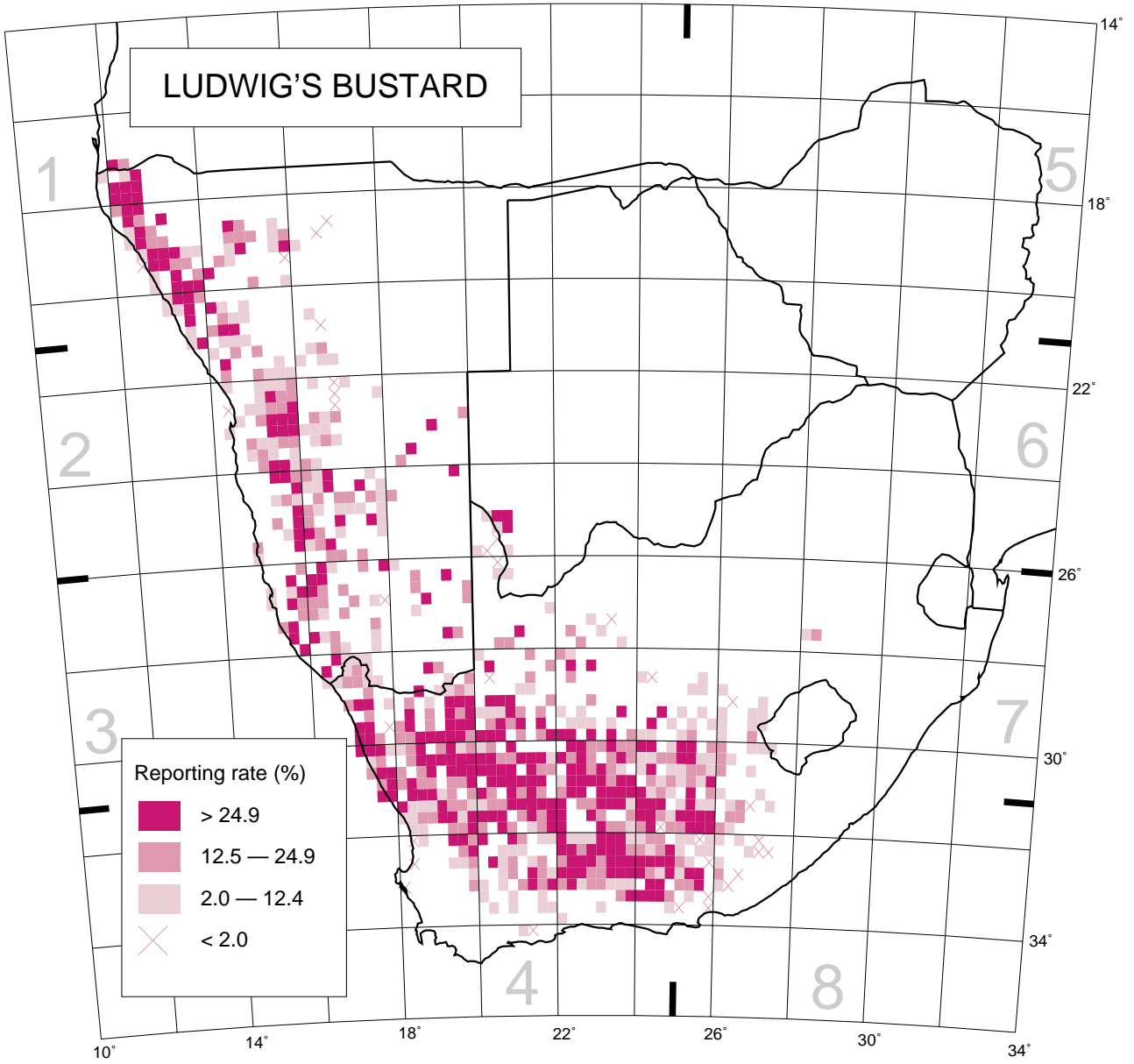
D.G. Allan

Recorded in 803 grid cells, 17.7%

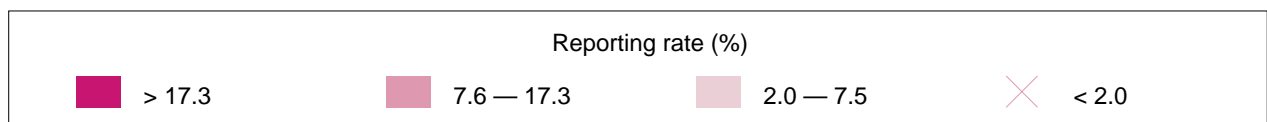
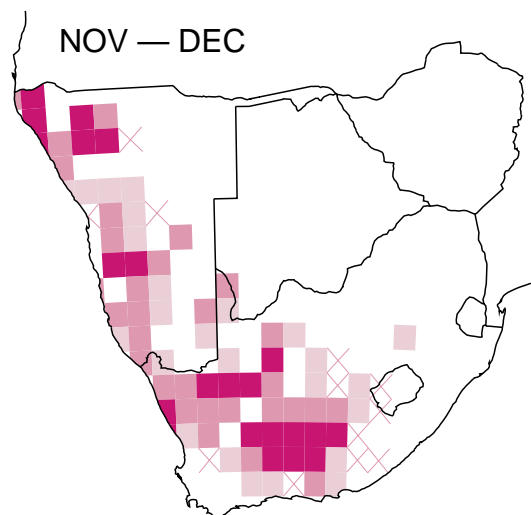
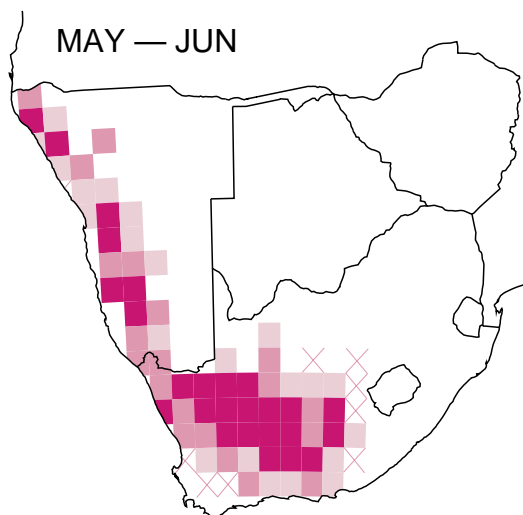
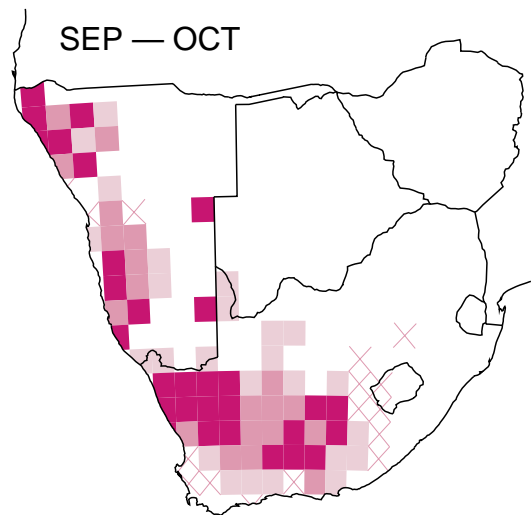
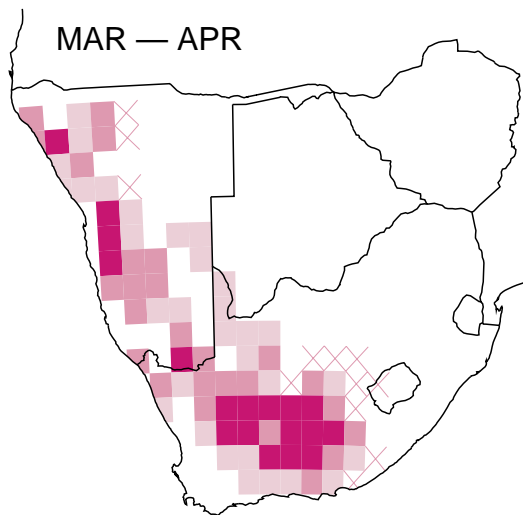
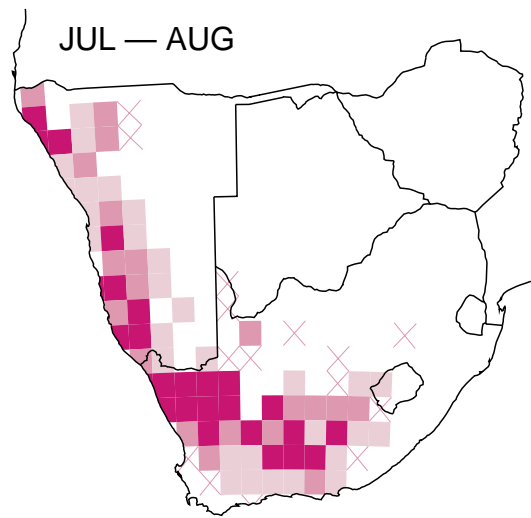
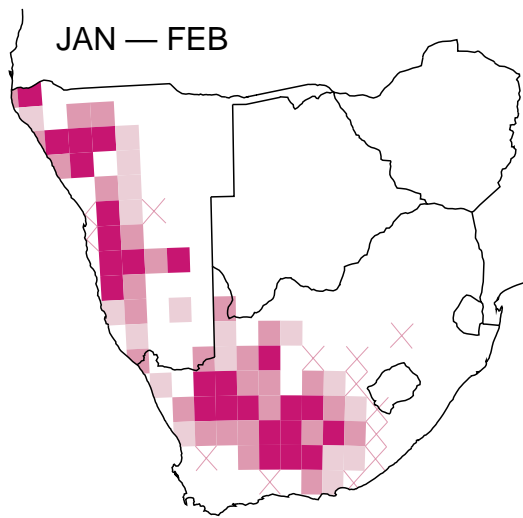
Total number of records: 3605

Mean reporting rate for range: 16.4%





LUDWIG'S BUSTARD



Seasonal distribution maps; one-degree grid.