

Chestnutbanded Plover

Rooibandstrandkiewiet

Charadrius pallidus

The Chestnutbanded Plover is the rarest of the small plovers which breed in southern Africa, with the nominate race being endemic to the region. The race in East Africa is even more spatially restricted. The largest concentrations occur on the saltpans of Etosha in Namibia, and Makgadikgadi in Botswana, but small numbers also occur in the natural pans of the northern Cape Province, Free State, southern Transvaal and southern Namibia. Small breeding populations are also found at pans and lagoons along the coast of Namibia and the western and southwestern Cape Province. There is a tiny population in the eastern Cape Province. Wanderers may turn up virtually anywhere within the region. Although it occurs in coastal Mozambique at times, numbers are unknown but are likely to be small. It is possible that some immature birds have been mistaken for Whitefronted Plovers *C. marginatus*.

The total coastal population, derived from a series of midsummer counts over a period of years, was estimated to be about 5200 birds (Summers *et al.* 1987a); many of these surveys took place during droughts when inland habitats such as the Etosha Pan were dry and birds would have moved to the coast. Taking into account other scattered populations, the overall population in southern Africa may be 6000–7000 birds.

Habitat: It is found primarily at saltpans, both natural and artificial. In Namibia, when inland habitats dry up, it moves to coastal habitats such as Walvis Bay Lagoon (2214CD) and Sandwich Harbour (2314AD), and the saltworks near Swakopmund (2214DA) and Cape Cross (2114CC). Apart from these localities, it is rarely found on coastal estuaries. On the east coast it occurs where there are extensive shallow bays such as at Richards Bay (2832CC) and Inhambane in Mozambique. High reporting rates were also obtained at pans in the northern Cape Province and the Free State, but actual numbers are not known.

Movements: Populations breeding on the pans of the interior move inland to breed when pans are wet, and then return to the coast when the habitat dries out, with most movement to the west coast and only small numbers visit-

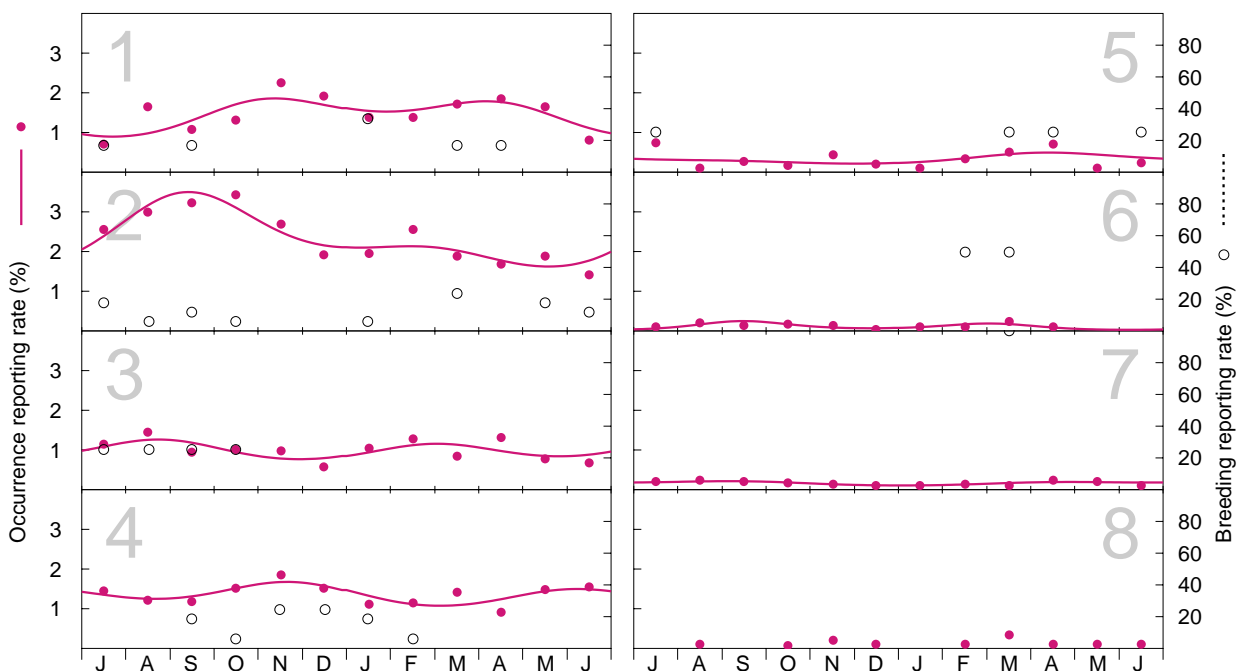
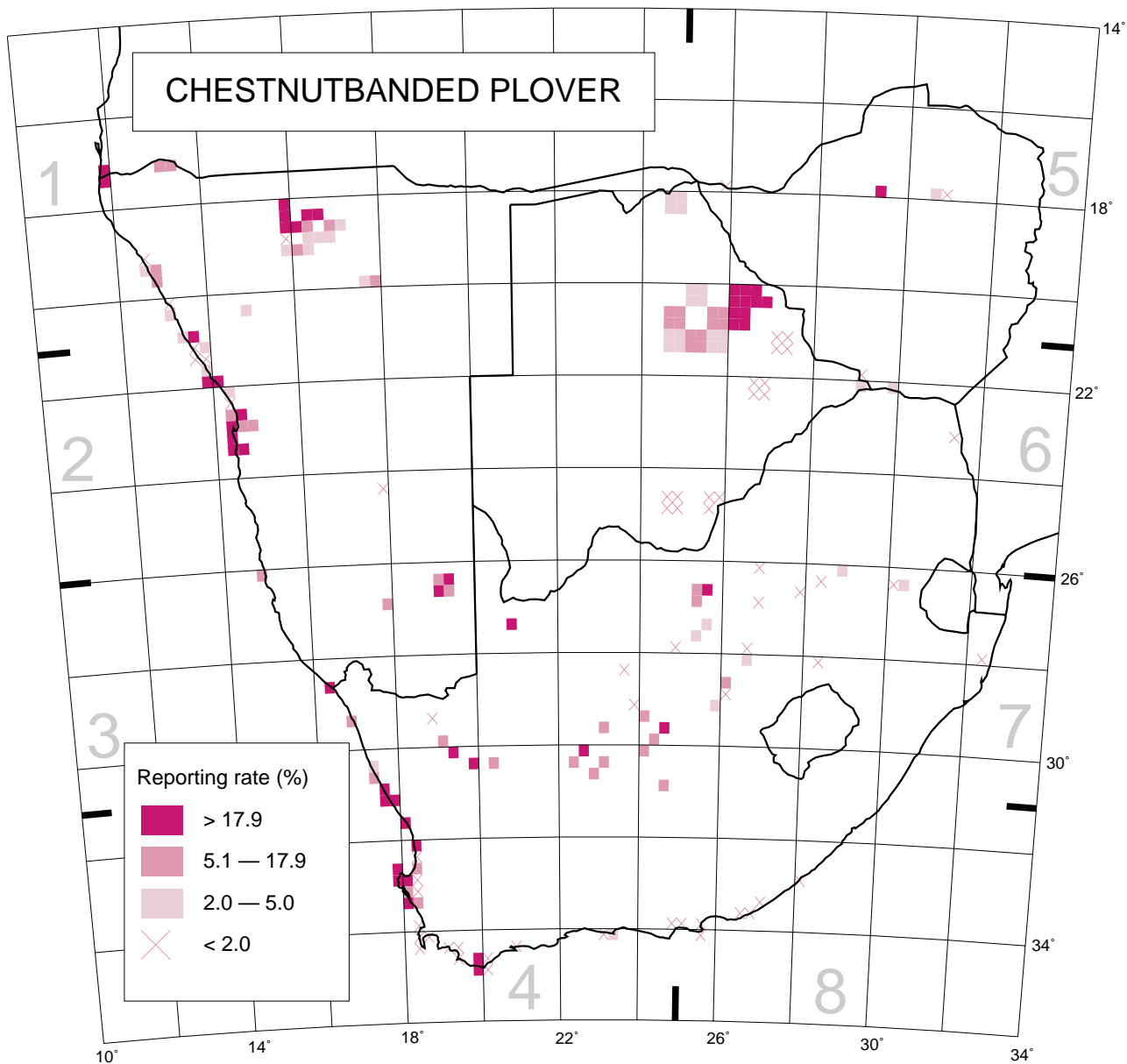
ing the south and east coasts. Most of the year is spent at the coast, and during droughts they may remain at the coast all year. Coastal breeding populations in the Cape Province appear to be fairly sedentary. The large concentrations found at Walvis Bay and Sandwich Harbour must come from Etosha and Makgadikgadi pans, as no comparable numbers have been seen elsewhere.

Breeding: Breeding records are scattered throughout the year, as could be expected from an opportunistic breeder so dependent on a restricted and temporary habitat. As shown by the data for Zones 5, 6 and 7, breeding is most likely to take place at inland sites late in the rainy and early in the dry season, while water is widely available but unlikely to rise further; this confirms data from nest record cards for Botswana (N.J. Skinner *in litt.*). In Namibia, breeding is mainly in the dry season, March–October. Moving further south (Zone 3), the few records indicate breeding July–October, and in the winter-rainfall area of the western Cape Province, September–February.

Historical distribution and conservation: It is unlikely that the historical and current distributions differ. The development of saltworks may have led to an increase in the size of coastal populations. With a large majority of the breeding population centred on two pan systems and subsequently moving to two major coastal wetlands, the future of this race is dependent on adequate conservation measures being maintained. Fortunately, both Etosha Pan and Sandwich Harbour are protected, while parts of Makgadikgadi Pan and Walvis Bay are also conserved. Human disturbance is, however, high in the brine well-field in the most frequently flooded northern part of Sua Pan (eastern part of Makgadikgadi), a favoured habitat (M. Herremans pers. comm.). There is therefore no immediate threat to the Chestnutbanded Plover in southern Africa, but its small population should be monitored regularly.

A.J. Tree

Recorded in 190 grid cells, 4.2%
Total number of records: 986
Mean reporting rate for range: 5.2%



Models of seasonality for Zones. Number of records (top to bottom, left to right):
 Occurrence: 132, 249, 97, 349, 38, 28, 75, 12; Breeding: 6, 17, 4, 16, 4, 2, 1, 0.