

Threebanded Plover

Driebandstrandkiewiet

Charadrius tricollaris

Occurring in Africa and Madagascar, the Threebanded Plover has a range to the south of Ethiopia in the east and Gabon in the west (Hayman *et al.* 1986). It is widespread in southern Africa, absent only from the driest areas of Botswana, Namibia and the northern Cape Province, and from mountainous and heavily wooded regions. The total population in southern Africa is unknown and is difficult to estimate because it occurs in small numbers at widely scattered localities. Roosts of up to 100 or more birds may be found during winter. Parker (1994) estimated 1000 birds in Swaziland. An estimate of the southern African population would be in the range 25 000–50 000 birds.

Habitat: It occurs in the widest range of aquatic habitats of any wader in southern Africa and may be seen at any freshwater habitat with an open shoreline. It makes extensive use of artificial waterbodies, especially farm dams. The vegetation analysis shows that its choice of wetland habitat was almost independent of vegetation type; the reporting rate exceeded 10% in 18 of the vegetation types.

Movements: Complex movements are largely masked in the models, either by the presence of resident birds or by the seasonal replacement of one population by another. The models do suggest a degree of movement in the six northern Zones: reporting rates are higher in summer in the west, but in winter in the east. Ringing studies in Zimbabwe have shown, firstly, that birds present during the dry season are rarely retrapped during the wet season and, secondly, that birds with considerable fat deposits occur during the early part of the dry season. This may indicate that birds from higher-rainfall areas north of Zimbabwe may spend the summer in lower-rainfall areas of southern Africa (Tree 1977), or that birds breeding during the rains in the xeric areas in the west move out during the dry season. It is a dry-season visitor to Zambia, most leaving during the height of the rains (Tree 1969). There are substantial movements within Zone 8, with birds moving from the Karoo to the coast during winter; e.g. they are present at Cape Recife (3425BA) May–August (Tree 1979a; Spearpoint *et al.* 1988). The longest recorded movements were of juveniles that moved 265 km from Windhoek (2217CA) to the coast at Walvis Bay (2214CD) and 88 km within Zimbabwe (SAFRING).

Breeding: Taken overall, breeding occurs in southern Africa throughout the year. In the winter-rainfall region (Zone 4), the model indicates that most breeding takes place from late winter to midsummer, while in the summer-rainfall region

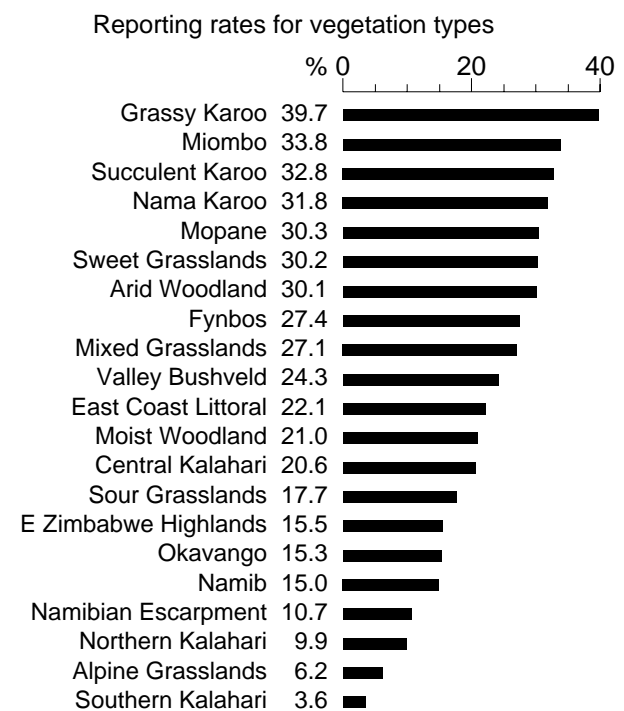
breeding is mostly at the end of the dry season, peaking progressively later southwards in the eastern Zones 5–8. This is also seen in published data for Zimbabwe and the Transvaal (Irwin 1981; Tarboton *et al.* 1987b). There were few breeding records for Zones 1–2 (most of Namibia and Botswana) but breeding there appears to be bimodal, taking place also in late summer and autumn, before ephemeral pans dry out; spring records could be coastal.

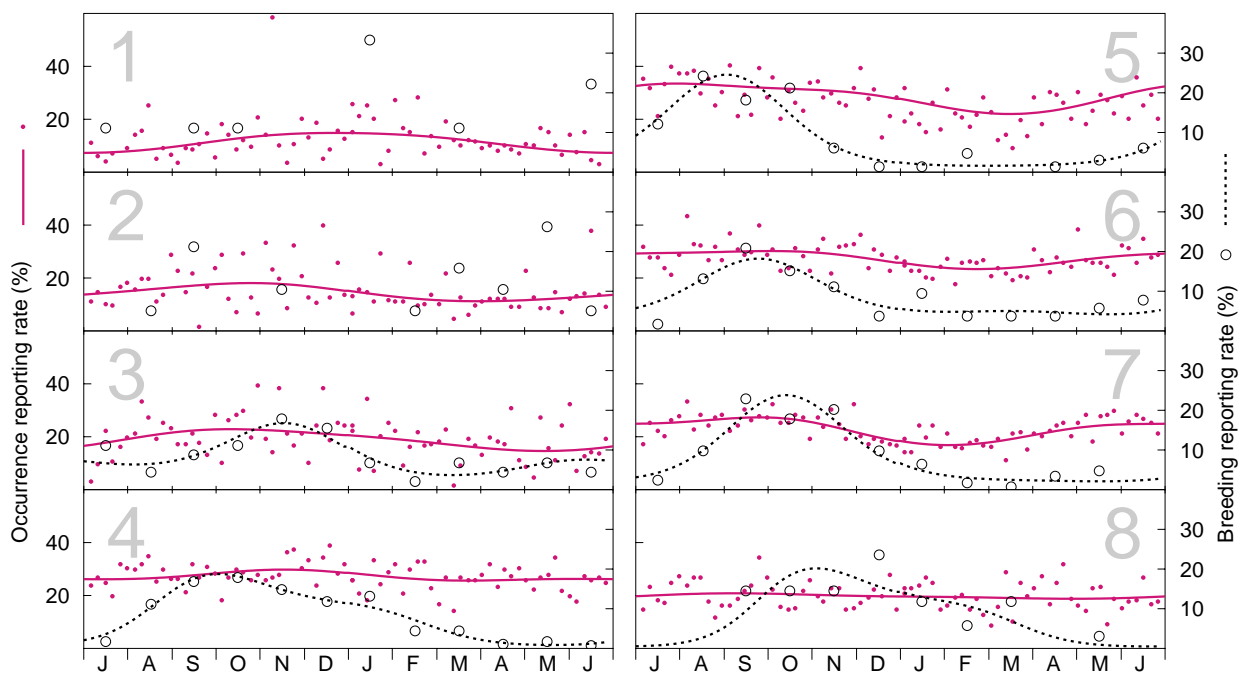
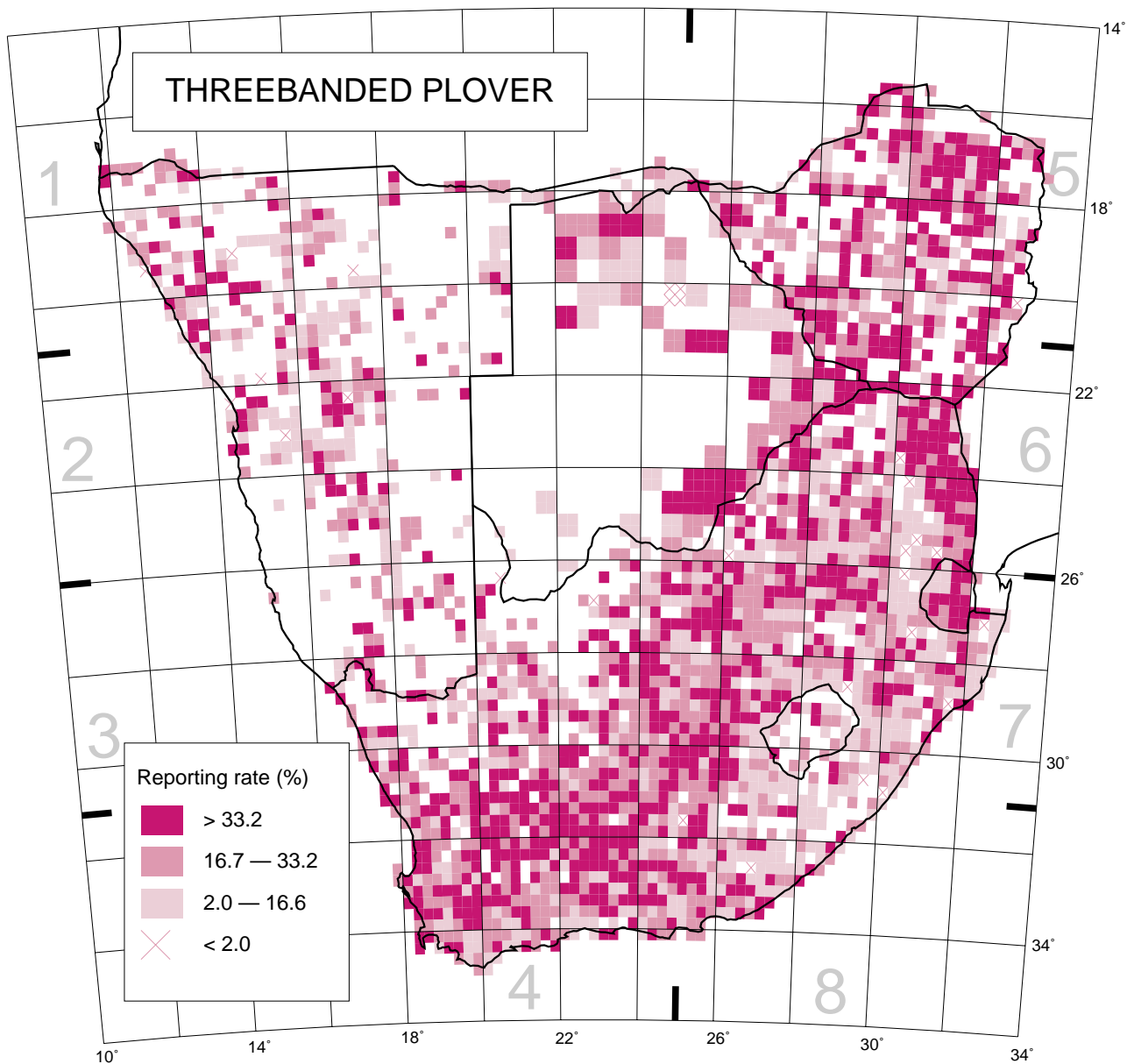
Interspecific relationships: It forms a superspecies with Forbes' Plover *C. forbesi* of West Africa (Hayman *et al.* 1986). At the beginning of the 20th century, it was widely known as the 'Sea-cow Bird' because it was frequently observed to be 'in constant attendance on the Hippopotamus' (Stark & Sclater 1906), presumably because it fed on both associated and disturbed insects.

Historical distribution and conservation: Prior to the advent of dam building throughout southern Africa, the distribution must have been more fragmented. The Threebanded Plover has a good conservation status.

A.J. Tree

Recorded in 2607 grid cells, 57.5%
Total number of records: 37 126
Mean reporting rate for range: 27.1%





Models of seasonality for Zones. Number of records (top to bottom, left to right):
 Occurrence: 358, 504, 1029, 2368, 2510, 3126, 4446, 1084; Breeding: 9, 19, 45, 161, 66, 53, 123, 34.