

Doublebanded Sandgrouse

Dubbelbandsandpatrys

Pterocles bicinctus

The Doublebanded Sandgrouse is almost endemic to southern Africa. It is confined to the regions north of the Orange and Vaal rivers, avoiding most of the central Kalahari basin and the highveld, and becoming scarcer towards the southern edge of its range. Beyond the atlas region it extends into southern Mozambique and only narrowly into southern Angola and Zambia.

It occurs almost throughout Namibia, becoming scarce in the extreme south, except along the Orange River valley. It is also uncommon in the flat open spaces of northern Owambo. In the Kalahari sandveld it is uncommon except where the woodland is relatively dense and near reliable sources of water, so that in Botswana it is largely confined to the north and east (Smithers 1964; Penry 1994). It is regarded as fairly common in the Transvaal, mainly in the eastern lowveld and in the woodlands of the north, especially in the Limpopo Valley (Tarboton *et al.* 1987b). It is the only species of sandgrouse occurring in southern Mozambique where it is locally common (Clancey 1971a). It is locally plentiful in Zimbabwe, favouring semi-arid parts of Matabeleland in the south and the Zambezi Valley in the north, but avoiding the central watershed (Irwin 1981).

There are four subspecies in the region (Clancey 1980b) of which three have rather distinct population centres: *P. b. multicolor* in the Limpopo drainage and in the Transvaal and southern Zimbabwe lowlands, *usherii* in the middle Zambezi drainage, and *chobiensis* in the Okavango, Bushmanland Pans (1920) and Etosha region, while *bicinctus* appears to be rather scattered and localized throughout the arid western part of the range.

This rather cryptic species may be overlooked during the day, but is usually common enough to be encountered along the edges of roads. Since it drinks at dusk, and is virtually silent at water, it does not draw attention to itself as do other day-drinking sandgrouse species. The male is easily identified by the bold black-and-white facial pattern; the female could be confused with female Namaqua Sandgrouse *P. namaqua* and Yellowthroated Sandgrouse *P. gutturalis*. Its woodland habitat usually separates it from both.

Habitat: It has a clear preference for Mopane woodland; it also occupies dry woodland on Kalahari sands especially along drainage lines, rocky mountain slopes of the Namibian escarpment, rocky almost treeless country at the edge of the Namib Desert with sparse tussocky grass, often on low hills and wooded river valleys in drier country (e.g. Orange, Limpopo, Zambezi rivers).

Movements: It is largely sedentary throughout its range, but may move about in search of water, especially in the dry season. The models suggest lower reporting rates in the wet season in Zones 5–6, but this may result from wider water availability and consequent dispersal away from the waterholes where it is most frequently observed.

Breeding: Breeding was recorded throughout the year, but with a clear peak during the dry season (May–October). The peak is in early spring (August) in Zimbabwe and the

Transvaal, which conforms with published information (Irwin 1981; Tarboton *et al.* 1987b) while, at variance with atlas records, breeding of *chobiensis* in northern Botswana has been reported to peak April–June (Skinner 1996a) and May–August in Namibia (Brown & Clinning in press).

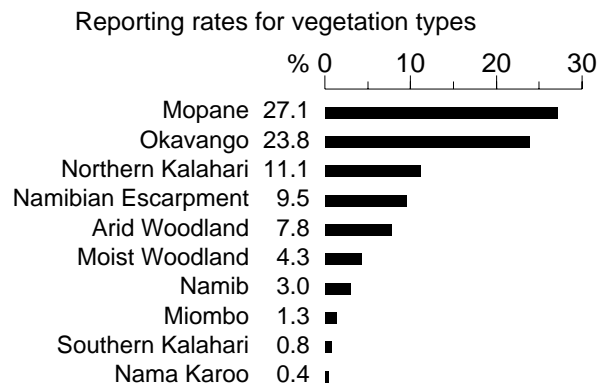
Interspecific relationships: It does not come into direct contact with other bird species at watering places at dusk, nor does it seem to interact with other species of granivorous birds by day. The centres of its distribution are nevertheless mainly complementary with those of the other sandgrouse species.

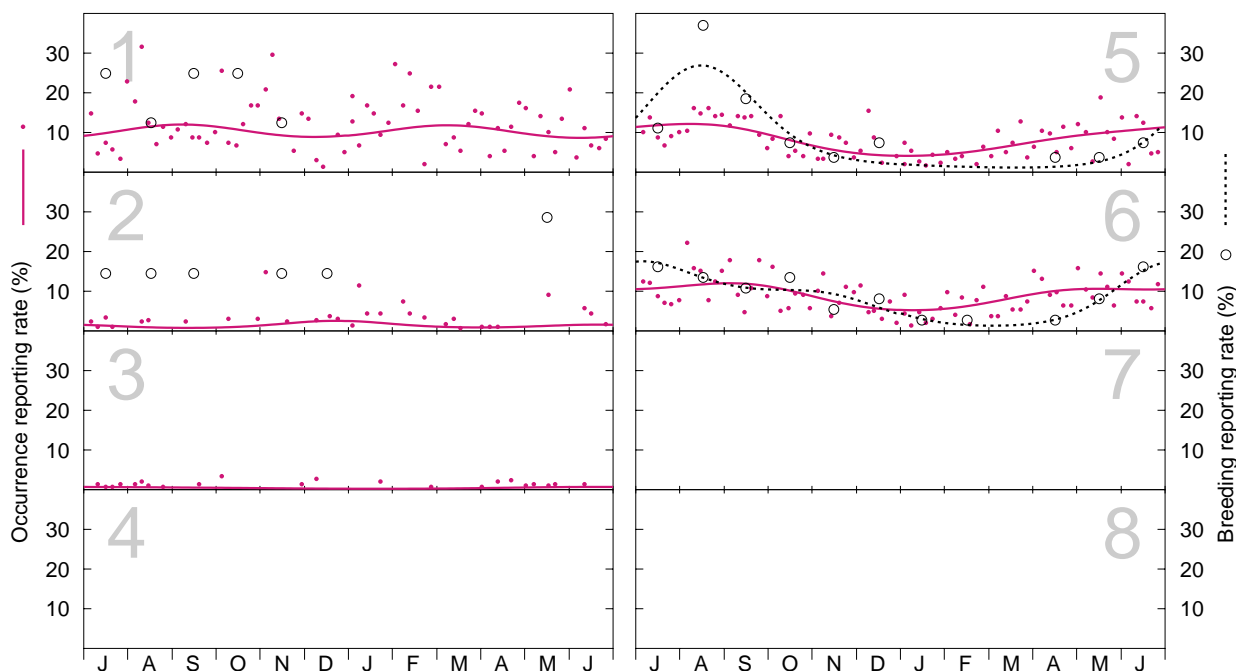
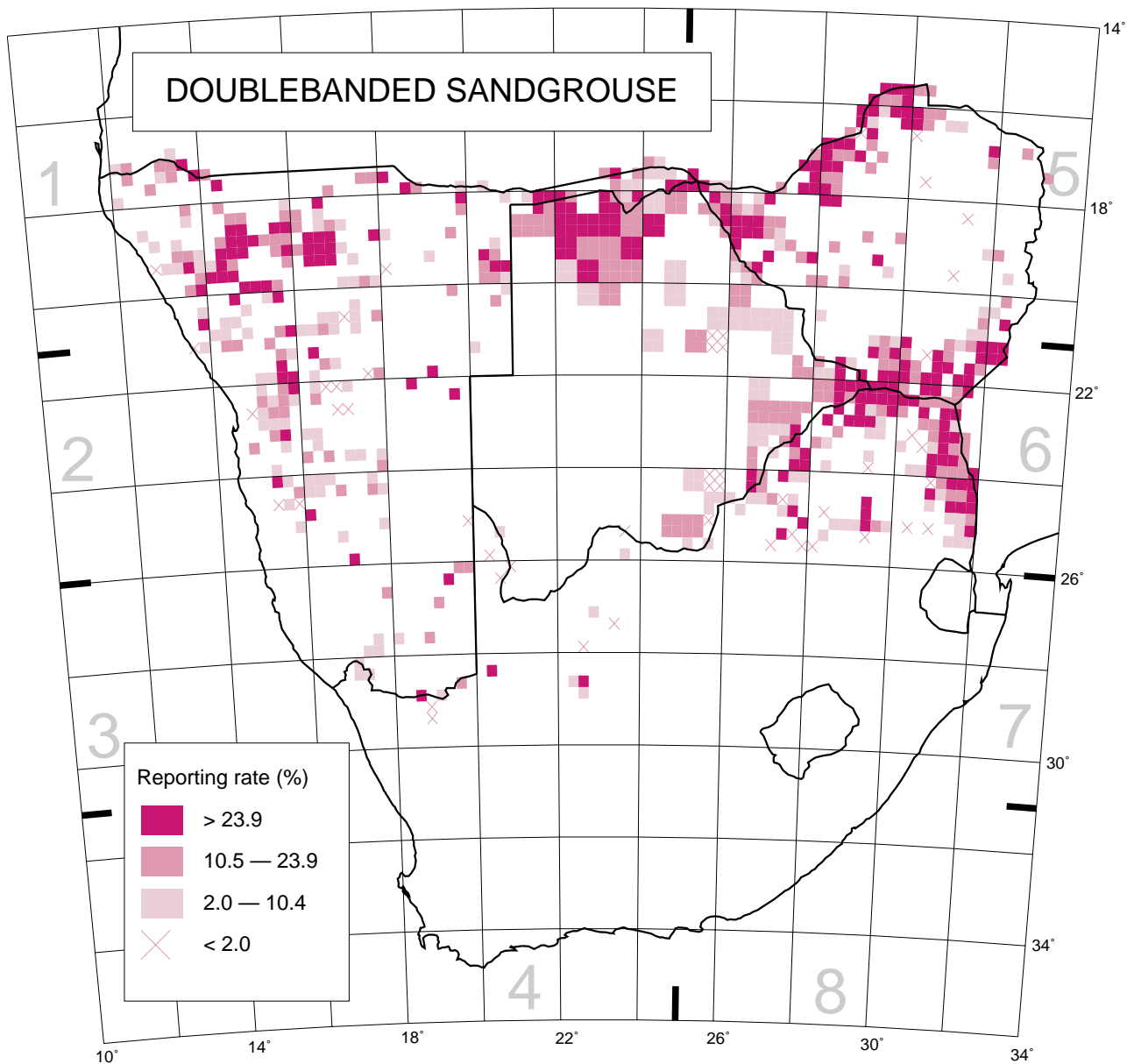
Historical distribution and conservation: The distribution appears not to have changed significantly in historical times. The provision of artificial watering points for stock may have enabled it to extend its range somewhat into more arid country.

There appears to be no cause for concern over the survival of the Doublebanded Sandgrouse. It still occurs abundantly in game reserves and may do so adequately in stock-farming areas. Crepuscular drinking habits make it less vulnerable to hunting.

G.L. Maclean and M. Herremans

Recorded in 749 grid cells, 16.5%
Total number of records: 4831
Mean reporting rate for range: 17.9%





Models of seasonality for Zones. Number of records (top to bottom, left to right):
 Occurrence: 344, 48, 26, 0, 727, 1031, 0, 0; Breeding: 8, 7, 0, 0, 27, 37, 0, 0.