

## Rock Pigeon

### Kransduif

#### *Columba guinea*

The Rock Pigeon is common and large, and was reported from most of South Africa, though with only scattered records from northern KwaZulu-Natal, the northern and eastern Transvaal lowveld, and far northern Cape Province. It is particularly common in the eastern half of South Africa, above *c.* 1200 m. There are *c.* 2000 birds in Swaziland, where it is common only in the western highveld (Parker 1994). It is common in the eastern hardveld of Botswana, and extends into Zimbabwe, where it is found largely along the central plateau, mainly above 1200 m. In Namibia, it occurs mostly along the escarpment and adjacent uplands. It extends into Angola, but the Zambezi Valley is the northern limit in the east. The ranges of the two subspecies in the region are continuous (Clancey 1980b). The nominate race occurs in a separate northern distribution, from eastern Tanzania north to Ethiopia and westwards to Senegal (Rowan 1983).

It is well known and its call, particularly when uttered from a cliff face or high building, carries far. It may occasionally have been confused with the Feral Pigeon *C. livia*, but this is unlikely to have been significant. Scattered records from flat country in moist woodland areas in the north of the region should be regarded with caution, as the large, dark race *S. s. maxima* of the Redeyed Dove *Streptopelia semitorquata* also frequents villages and can be mistaken for the Rock Pigeon.

**Habitat:** Although formerly mainly an inhabitant of cliffs and crags from where it flew out to forage on open ground, this bird is adaptable; over much of southern Africa it has taken advantage of various artificial structures and also some exotic trees, for roost and nest sites, and also uses various crops and stock feeds. The habitat preferences suggested by the vegetation analysis reflect the distribution of those sites having suitable nearby food sources; these are limited in the dry savannas and woodlands of northcentral southern Africa.

**Movements:** In the southwest (Zones 3 and 4), reporting rates peak in early summer and are at a low in early winter; in the southeast (Zones 7 and 8) there is a midwinter peak and a midsummer low. These somewhat complementary patterns are suggestive of a partial east–west migration across South Africa, but are more likely to reflect exploitation of relatively local patterns of seasonally abundant food on agricultural lands. Of 59 ringing recoveries, only three exceeded 50 km and the furthest was only 255 km (SAFRING). The status of ‘partial migrant’ has been suggested in the western Cape Province, from evidence that birds move out of mountainous regions during winter (Hockey *et al.* 1989). Daily movement between roosts on the Cape Peninsula (3318CD) and wheat-

lands to the north, a distance of *c.* 50 km, has been inferred from observations of flocks and ringing recoveries (G.D. Underhill pers. comm.; SAFRING). In the Lesotho highlands, birds are more abundant in fields of harvested maize in winter (Tarboton *et al.* 1993; D.G. Allan unpubl. data), probably also reflecting local movements.

**Breeding:** Breeding was recorded throughout its range, and in all months. A marked spring–summer peak is evident in the southwest where there were few winter records. There is a later, less marked summer peak in the eastern Cape Province, while further north in eastern South Africa, seasonality is less obvious. These results are in broad agreement with published data (Rowan 1983). In the Transvaal there is a marked mid-summer low in egg-laying (Tarboton *et al.* 1987b).

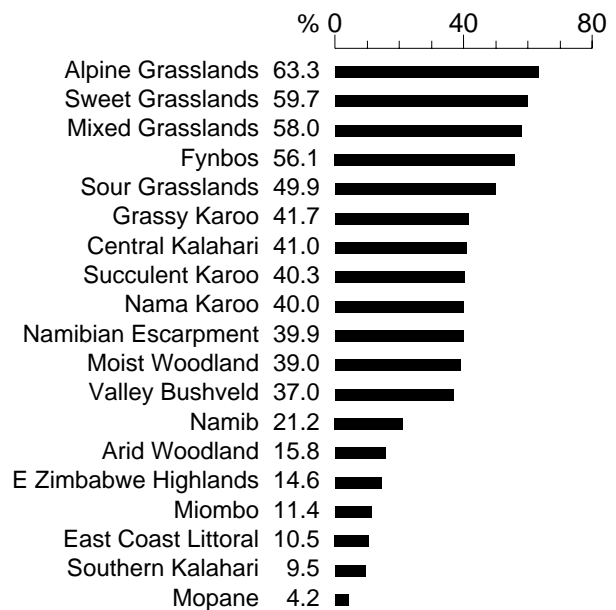
**Interspecific relationships:** Although it is found alongside the Feral Pigeon in many South African towns and cities, there is limited evidence of competition for nest or roost sites, while differences in foraging behaviour imply limited competition for food (Rowan 1983; Little 1994). However, elsewhere in Africa the two species evidently displace each other – in many cities the one is common and the other scarce (Urban *et al.* 1986; see text for Feral Pigeon). Hybridization may happen occasionally (Rowan 1983; Herremans 1994a).

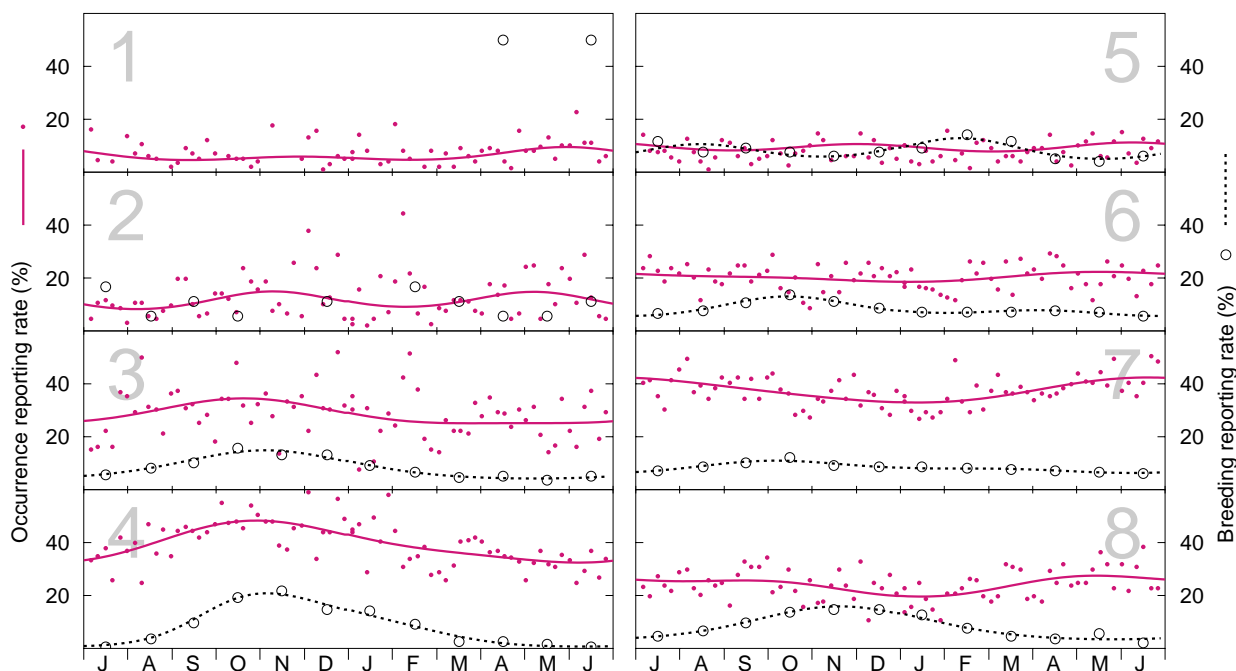
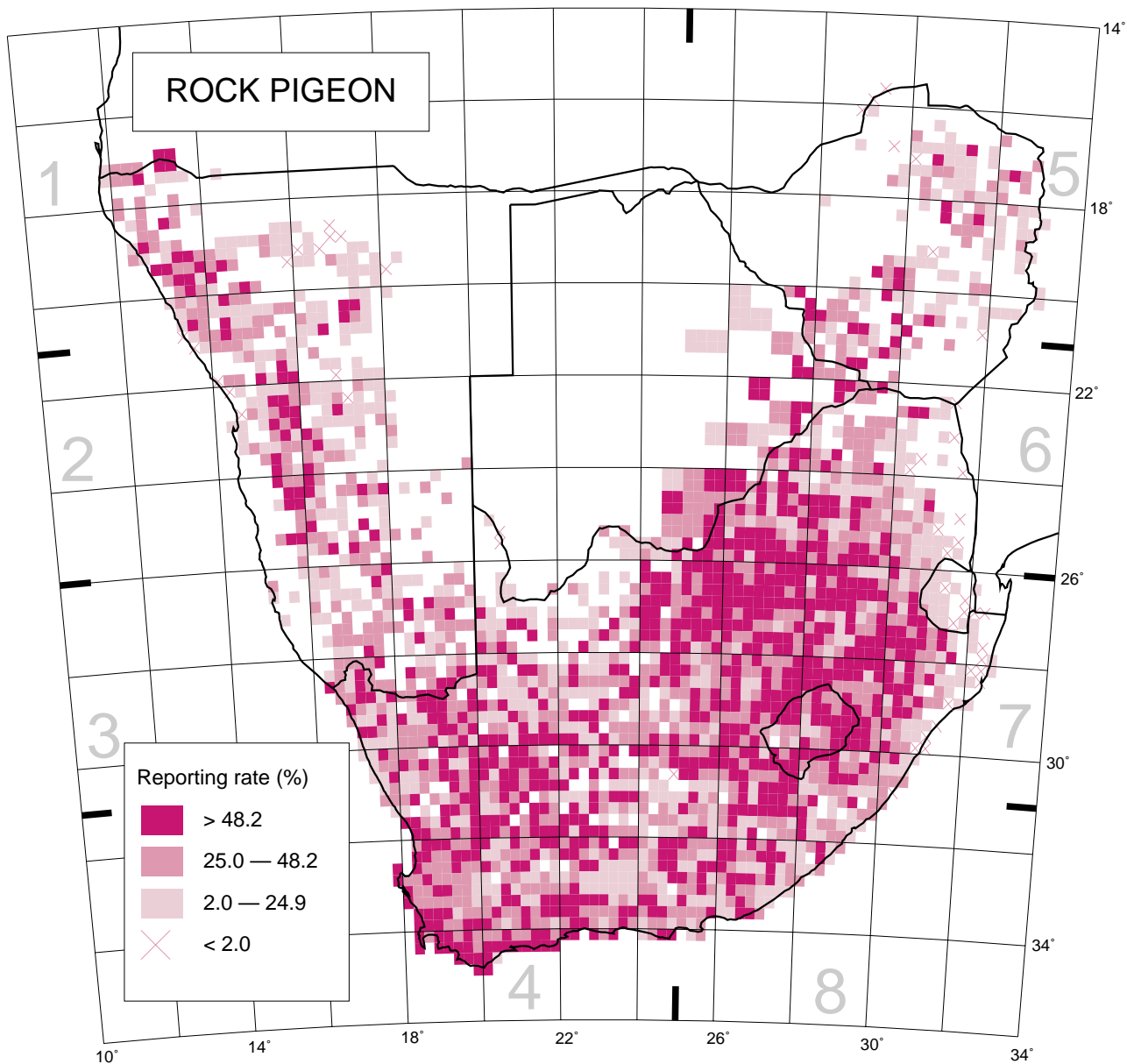
**Historical distribution and conservation:** It has benefited from agricultural and building activities (Ginn *et al.* 1989; Hockey *et al.* 1989), and must have increased significantly in numbers and range. This association with man had already begun by the beginning of the 20th century when nesting on outbuildings and significant damage to grain crops were reported (Haagner & Ivy 1908). Stark & Sclater (1906) did not know of it in Zimbabwe, and yet listed several reports of the far less conspicuous Green Pigeon *Treron calva* there. Recent expansions into the drier savanna areas are documented from the edge of its range in Botswana (Penry 1994) and can happen rapidly, even far from rocky areas, such as in the newly built Sowa Town (2026A) during the early 1990s (M. Herremans pers. comm.).

B.D. Colahan

Recorded in 2437 grid cells, 53.7%  
Total number of records: 54 226  
Mean reporting rate for range: 42.4%

#### Reporting rates for vegetation types





Models of seasonality for Zones. Number of records (top to bottom, left to right):  
 Occurrence: 211, 414, 1560, 3437, 818, 2332, 7317, 1330; Breeding: 2, 18, 197, 592, 78, 373, 1058, 207.