

Knysna Lorie

Knysnalorie

Tauraco corythaix

The Knysna Lorie is one of a complex of species and races which are the focus of ongoing taxonomic debate. Its Afrotropical range is extensive, but dependent in detail on which forms are treated as conspecific (Rowan 1983). This atlas follows Clancey (1980b) in treating the long-crested forms, previously called Reichenow's Lorie *T. reichenowi*, of the coastal dune forests from St Lucia (2832AD) northwards, Livingstone's Lorie *T. livingstonii* of the eastern highlands of Zimbabwe, and Schalow's Lorie *T. schalowi* of the Caprivi and northern Botswana, as races of *T. corythaix*, together with the short-crested races *corythaix* and *phoebus*. Fry *et al.* (1988), on the other hand, united *T. reichenowi* with *T. livingstonii* under the latter name, and considered it, and both short-crested races, as races of the Green Lorie *T. persa* which occurs from central Angola to West Africa.

The map confirms that of Clancey (1980b) and shows disjunct distributions for all taxa, except perhaps between *corythaix* and *reichenowi* in northeastern KwaZulu-Natal.

Knysna Lories are obligate frugivores which spend much of their time in the forest canopy, coming to ground-level mainly to drink. Their brilliant crimson flight feathers are seen to advantage only in flight. Their deep, croaking call is one of the characteristic sounds of mist-wreathed Afromontane forests.

T. c. corythaix and *phoebus* have a rounded crest, but the crest is elongated into a point in the other three races. The white-tipped green crest, white lines above and below the bare red skin surrounding the eye, and orange-red beak, distinguish it from the Purplecrested Lorie *T. porphyreolophus*.

Habitat: It is an indicator species of southern Afromontane forest, occurring from sea-level in the southern Cape Province to escarpments in KwaZulu-Natal – including the Lebombo Mountains – and the Transvaal. The race *reichenowi* frequents the coastal dune forests north of St Lucia and is confined to the littoral, not ranging into the drier woodlands of the Maputo Plain. In the eastern Cape Province, west of the range of the Purplecrested Lorie, the Knysna Lorie is found in smaller forests and kloofs which

would normally be frequented by its congener. The reporting rate for the Eastern Zimbabwe Highlands is misleadingly high because the species is no more abundant there than in Afromontane forests further south. The race *schalowi* occurs in riparian forest. Although it normally keeps to evergreen forest, nests have been recorded from gardens and conifer plantations (Rowan 1983).

Movements: The taxa occurring in evergreen forest are sedentary, but *schalowi*, the race in riparian forest, appears to wander more widely. The lower reporting rates during winter in Zone 8 may be due to reduced calling at this time of the year.

Breeding: Egg-laying is mainly September–January, peaking in November (Rowan 1983). In captivity, nestbuilding to fledging takes eight weeks and post-fledging dependence lasts *c.* 12 weeks; thus successful breeding takes about five months (Jarvis & Currie 1979).

Interspecific relationships: Knysna and Purplecrested Lories overlap from the south coast of KwaZulu-Natal to the limits of the Purplecrested Lorie's range in the eastern Cape Province. Elsewhere the two species are usually separated by habitat preferences, though both occur in the Hlatikulu Forest (2731BD) on the Lebombo Mountains. Both are attracted to fruiting trees where interactions are sometimes peaceful and sometimes not (Rowan 1983).

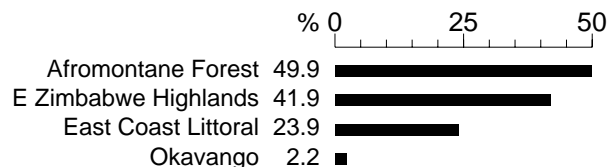
Historical distribution and conservation: The extensive cutting of hardwoods in the KwaZulu-Natal forests during the 19th century must have severely affected populations of this frugivorous bird by removal of food resources. Lories had entirely disappeared from the heavily exploited Town Bush forest near Pietermaritzburg (2930CB) by the 1950s (pers. obs).

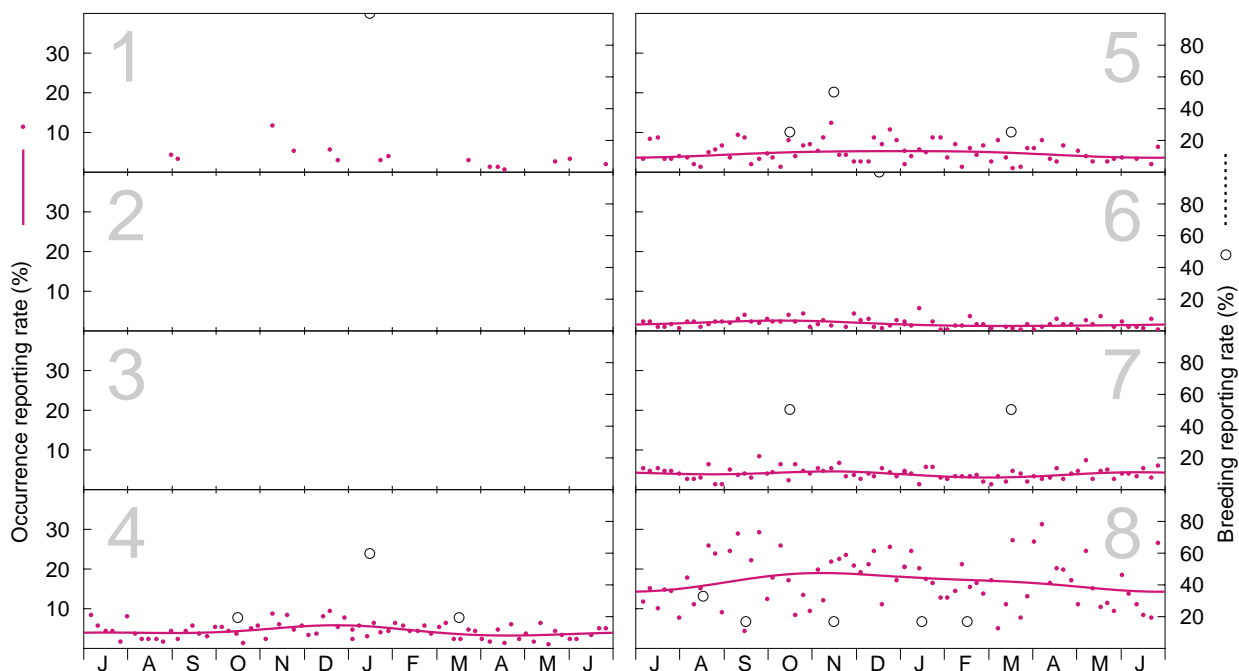
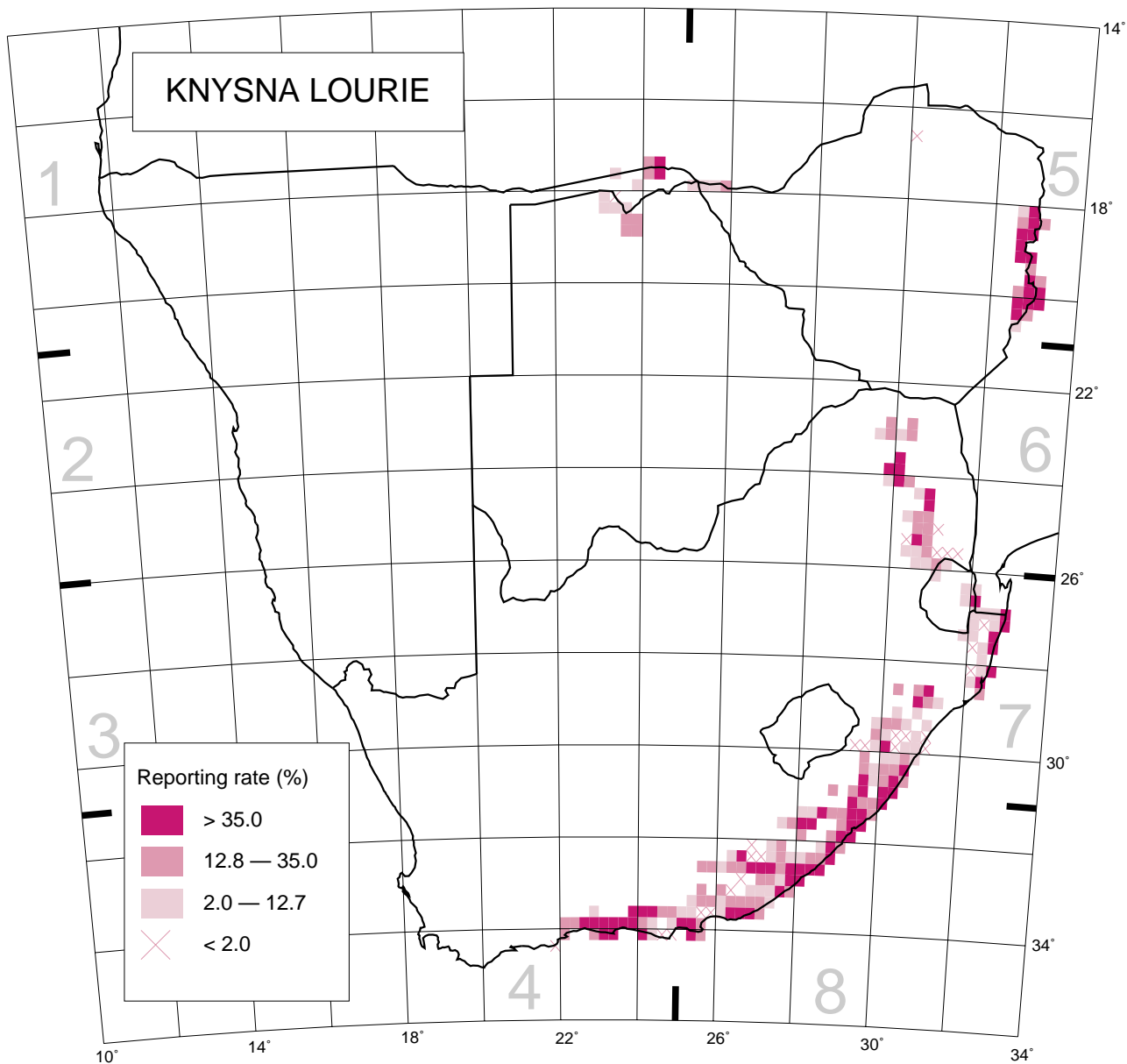
Although the species is widely distributed, some of the populations currently classified as races are ecological entities with limited ranges. Further research on taxonomic issues is therefore of urgent conservation relevance. The race *reichenowi*, for example, has a significant portion of its population confined to northern KwaZulu-Natal dune forests which are under threat of destruction from strip mining. This putative species could well have become extinct as a result of mineral exploitation if dune mining had been permitted on the eastern shores of Lake St Lucia.

T.B. Oatley

Recorded in 263 grid cells, 5.8%
Total number of records: 7759
Mean reporting rate for range: 26.2%

Reporting rates for vegetation types





Models of seasonality for Zones. Number of records (top to bottom, left to right):
 Occurrence: 19, 0, 0, 367, 402, 202, 770, 923; Breeding: 1, 0, 0, 5, 4, 2, 2, 6.