

Striped Cuckoo

Gestreepte Nuwejaarsvoël

Clamator levaillantii

The Striped Cuckoo has a wide range in the savanna and forest regions of tropical Africa, both north and south of the equator (Fry *et al.* 1988). It is a summer-breeding visitor to southern Africa and occurs in the tropical woodlands north of 26°S, but extends beyond this into lowland Swaziland (Parker 1994). In arid areas there are scattered records in northcentral Namibia and in a broad band through the better-wooded southern parts of the central Kalahari in Botswana. There are a few records south of the main range in arid woodlands in the northern Cape Province and in the KwaZulu-Natal midlands. The species is more common in some years than in others and a density of 1 calling male/150 ha of broadleaved woodland has been recorded in the Transvaal (Tarboton *et al.* 1987b).

It usually occurs singly or in pairs. It is inconspicuous when not calling (Maclean 1993b), but is not difficult to identify, apart from possible confusion with the Jacobin Cuckoo *C. jacobinus* (Rowan 1983). The atlas data probably reliably depict the spatial distribution, but under-represent the species' relative abundance.

Habitat: It 'frequents quite dense, closed, humid woodland, scrub and woody growth along streams' (Fry *et al.* 1988), and also gardens around human habitation (Rowan 1983). The vegetation analysis shows that it prefers well-developed woodland, both broadleaved and *Acacia*. It was recorded most frequently in Miombo and Okavango, but it also frequents Mopane, Arid and Moist Woodlands and Northern Kalahari.

Movements: Arrival is from mid-September onwards in Zimbabwe (Irwin 1981), but later, from mid- or late October onwards, in the Transvaal (Tarboton *et al.* 1987b), and perhaps even later in the drier west in southern Botswana (Herremans 1994d). This is confirmed by the seasonality analysis; peak reporting rates were in late November or early December in Zones 1, 5 and 6.

Departure is earlier in the west (Zone 1) than in the east (Zone 5) by nearly two months, and it is about a month earlier in Zone 6 than in Zone 5. The period of residency therefore decreases with latitude, but increases with longitude. After wet years with prolonged breeding, birds may be seen until June or even July, but overwintering is very rare. The main nonbreeding grounds of southern African birds may be north of the equator (Rowan 1983; Fry *et al.* 1988).

During a massive outbreak of army worms (Noctuidae) in northern Botswana in early 1995, Striped Cuckoos became abundant in most of the Chobe and Okavango region; this irruption of cuckoos apparently comprised mainly non-breeding visitors (M.H. pers. obs.).

Breeding: It is a brood parasite whose prime hosts are *Turdoides* babblers (Fry *et al.* 1988; Maclean 1993b). Egg-laying spans October–May with bimodal peaks, one at the onset and one towards the end of the period, in spring and autumn respectively (Irwin 1981; Tarboton *et al.* 1987b). A prolonged breeding season is also observed in the host species (Fry *et al.* 1988). Breeding records in the atlas tend to be late, because they refer mostly to relatively conspicuous fully fledged but dependent young.

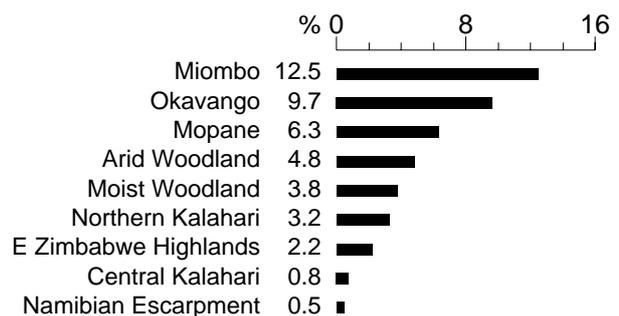
Interspecific relationships: Its distribution and centres of abundance accord best with those of the Arrowmarked Babbler *Turdoides jardineii*, including outliers in the KwaZulu-Natal midlands. The scattered records in the drier parts of the range in southwestern Botswana and central Namibia indicate that the Pied Babbler *T. bicolor* may locally also act as a host. The high reporting rates from the Okavango region suggest that Hartlaub's Babbler *T. hartlaubii* may also be exploited, but this needs confirmation, as the Arrowmarked Babbler is also common in this area.

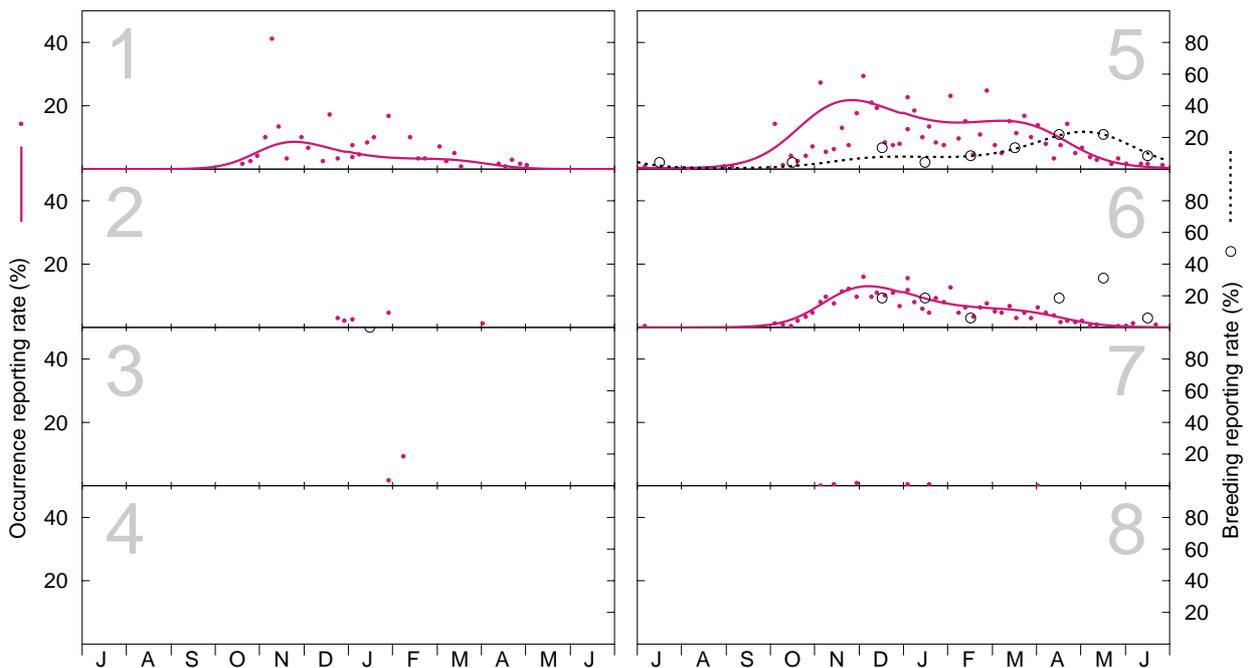
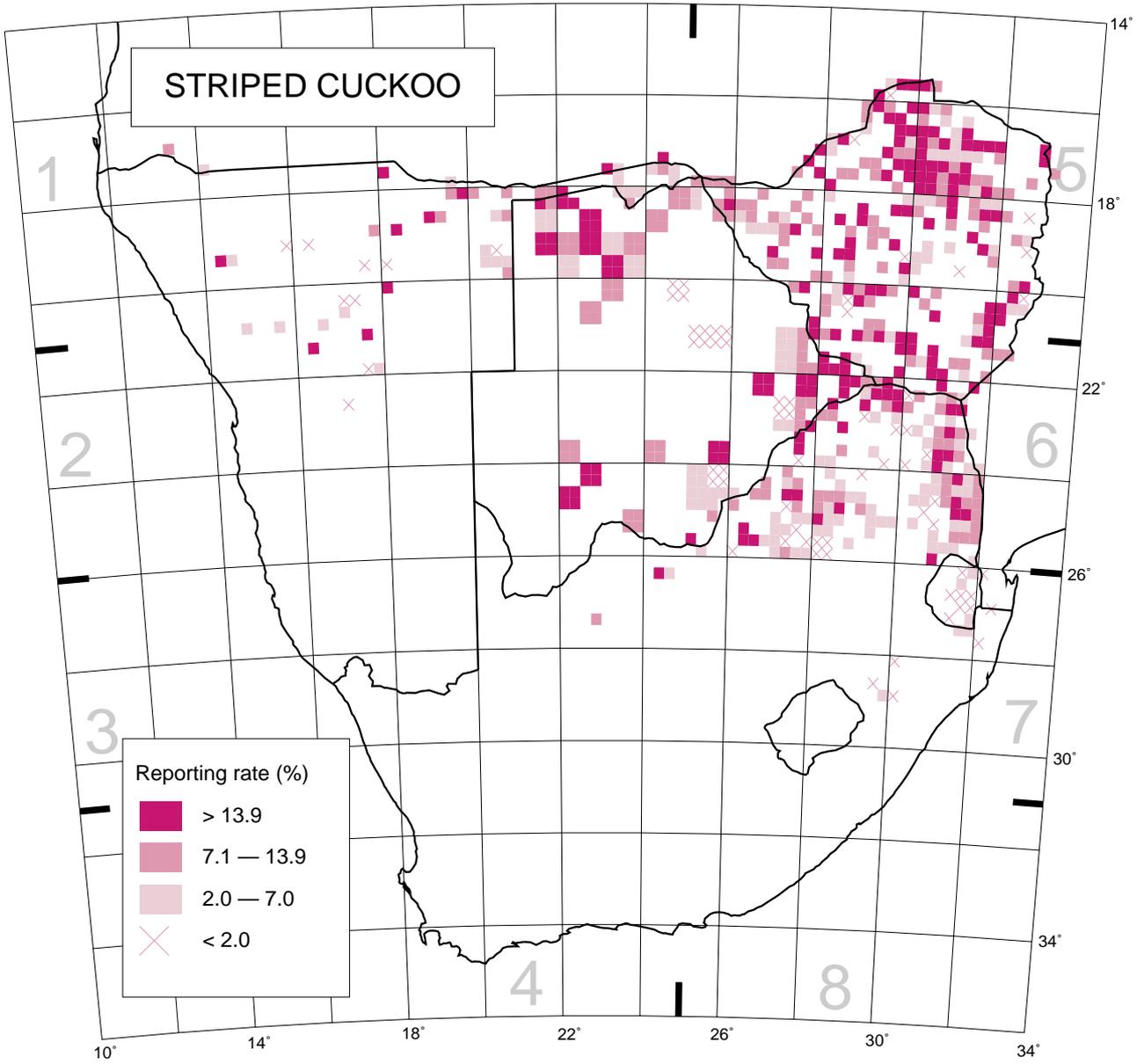
Historical distribution and conservation: The distribution map differs from those of Rowan (1983), Fry *et al.* (1988) and Maclean (1993b), but this is not thought to reflect a change in distribution. The Striped Cuckoo is under no particular threat in the region.

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Recorded in 625 grid cells, 13.8%
Total number of records: 2750
Mean reporting rate for range: 8.2%

Reporting rates for vegetation types





Models of seasonality for Zones. Number of records (top to bottom, left to right):
 Occurrence: 62, 7, 4, 0, 806, 486, 8, 0; Breeding: 0, 0, 1, 0, 23, 16, 0, 0.