

# European Nightjar

## Europese Naguil

### *Caprimulgus europaeus*

The European Nightjar is the only Palearctic migrant among the nightjars occurring in southern African. The breeding range is from Britain eastwards to China and Mongolia, extending to southern Scandinavia in the north and North Africa in the south (Cramp *et al.* 1985; Batten *et al.* 1990). It spends the nonbreeding season in Africa and southern Asia (Maclean 1993b). Five races, covering the entire breeding range, have been reported from southern Africa, but most records probably relate to *C. e. sarudnyi* from central Eurasia (Clancey & Mendelsohn 1979).

Atlas records are scattered across most of the region. The distribution of records is correlated with areas of greatest coverage, although there is a paucity of records from the well-covered southwestern Cape Province where it is a vagrant (Hockey *et al.* 1989). Much of the arid west and Kalahari appears to be avoided, but many of these areas received inadequate coverage to map a scarce and inconspicuous species such as this. It is presumed to be widespread also in Botswana (Penry 1994), but only three specimen records have been accepted (Anon. 1985; Borello 1992b).

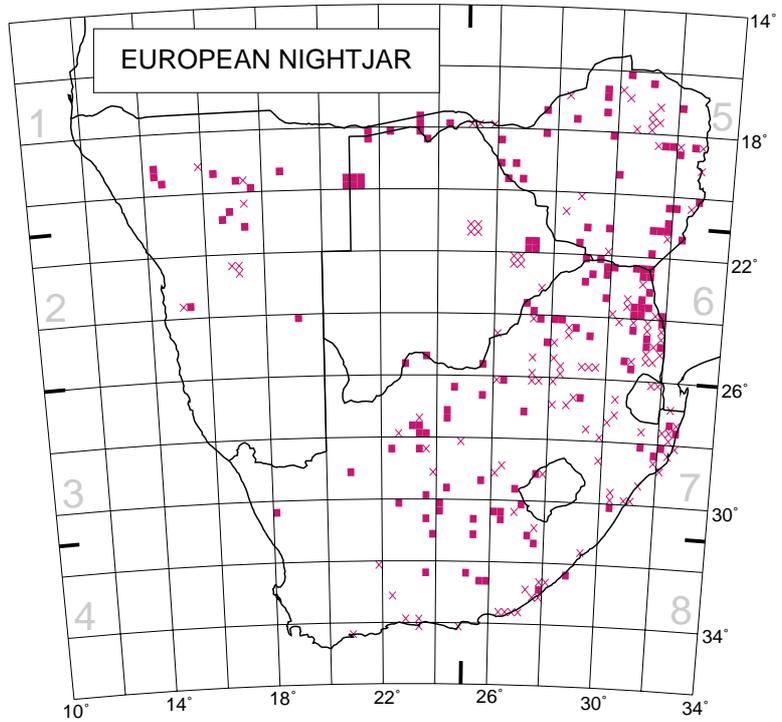
Like other nightjars, it is crepuscular/nocturnal, usually roosting by day on a horizontal branch of a tree, up to 20 m above the ground (Jackson 1978; Fry *et al.* 1988). This lack of diurnal activity and its cryptically marked plumage account for low reporting rates. It is usually silent in its nonbreeding range (Maclean 1993b), making detection even more difficult. Most are recorded when flushed during the day or when seen on roads at night. Many records are of road casualties. Nightjars are frequently misidentified, both in life and as specimens (Irwin 1981).

It occurs in woodland, savanna, tree-lined watercourses, plantations and gardens (Maclean 1993b). It roosts largely in trees; these are therefore an important habitat constituent and it is surprising that the highest reporting rates come from Grassy Karoo, ahead of Mopane, Central Kalahari and other woodland types. The reporting rates from each habitat were below 2%, and the relatively high rate from Grassy Karoo may reflect the relative difficulty of detecting birds in well-wooded habitats.

The first sightings were made in September, but arrival seems to be primarily from late November. Individuals may return to the same roost sites year after year (Maclean 1993b). Most have left by late April.

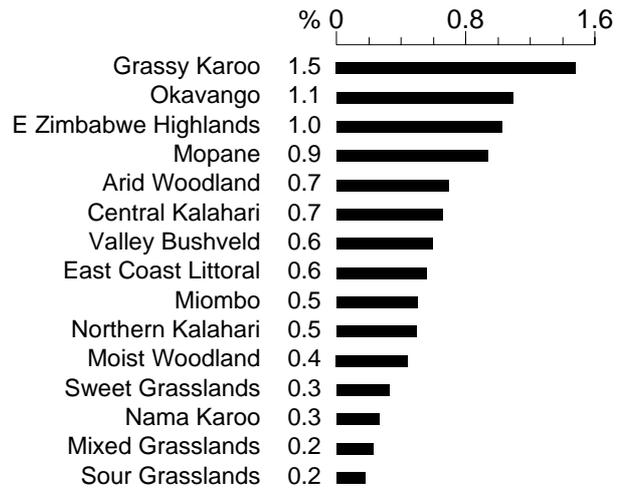
All the countries of northwestern Europe have reported a decline during the 20th century, thought to be due largely to loss and fragmentation of habitat, human disturbance and decrease of insect prey as a result of widespread use of pesticides (Cramp *et al.* 1985). It was included in the Red Data book of endangered British species (Batten *et al.* 1990). However, a 1992 survey in Britain recorded a 74% increase in 'churring' males over 1981 and a small expansion in range. This was attributed to an increase in suitable habitat due to logging and restocking of coniferous plantations (Morris *et al.* 1994). It is not known to be under threat in southern Africa, other than as road casualties in common with other nightjar species.

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Recorded in 270 grid cells, 6.0%  
 Total number of records: 566  
 Mean reporting rate for range: 1.8%

#### Reporting rates for vegetation types



Also marginally in Namibian Escarpment, Alpine Grasslands, Southern Kalahari, Namib, Succulent Karoo and Fynbos.

