

# Natal Nightjar

Natale Naguil

*Caprimulgus natalensis*

The Natal Nightjar is widespread but local in Africa south of the Sahara. Clancey (1980b) recognized two races from southern Africa with disjunct distributions: *C. n. natalensis* occurs very patchily along the eastern littoral from KwaZulu-Natal to southern Mozambique, and *carpi* occurs in the Okavango Delta, the Kwando-Linyanti, Chobe and Zambezi floodplains in the eastern Caprivi, east to Kazungula (1725CD) in extreme northwestern Zimbabwe. It is probably more widespread in lowland Mozambique than records indicate (Clancey 1971c).

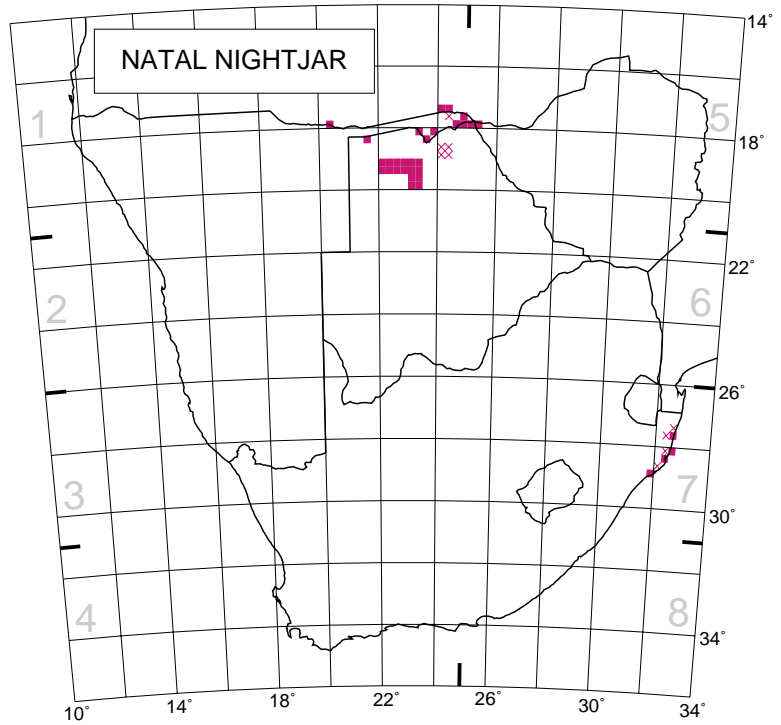
It is difficult to identify by sight alone, but its characteristic monotonous call of ‘chop-chop-chop-chop’ at the rate of about four notes per second and its marsh-edge habitat are diagnostic. It is easily overlooked when not calling and therefore almost certainly under-recorded. It may be fairly common locally in suitable swamp-edge habitat.

In KwaZulu-Natal it is confined to moist coastal grassland with clumps of bush (Cyrus & Robson 1980) or palms (Clancey 1964b), occasionally in eucalypt plantations (A.J. Tree *in litt.*). Elsewhere it favours marshy floodplains and rank grass near wetlands (Clancey 1971c; Jackson 1978; Irwin 1981; Penry 1994). It forages over other types of habitat at night.

It is generally believed to be resident. The concentration of records August–November in Zone 1 is probably the result of increased vocalization at this time (Randall 1988a); breeding occurs during these months (Maclean 1993b).

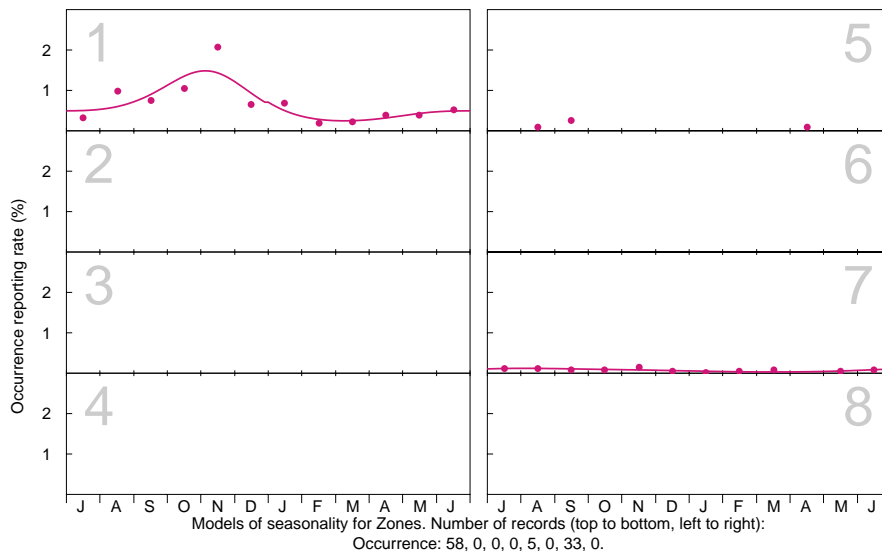
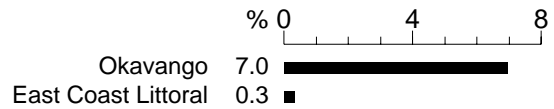
Because of its unique wetland roosting habitat, it is only likely to come into contact with other species of nightjar when foraging at night. Its wetland habitat is vulnerable to burning and drainage, and the Natal Nightjar is regarded as ‘vulnerable’ in South Africa (Brooke 1984b) because of habitat fragmentation. There is no evidence, however, that it was ever more widespread in South Africa. The increase in the number of records from the Okavango Delta (Randall 1988a; Penry 1994), and its relatively recent occurrence at Kazungula (Jackson 1978), probably reflect an increased awareness of the species by observers.

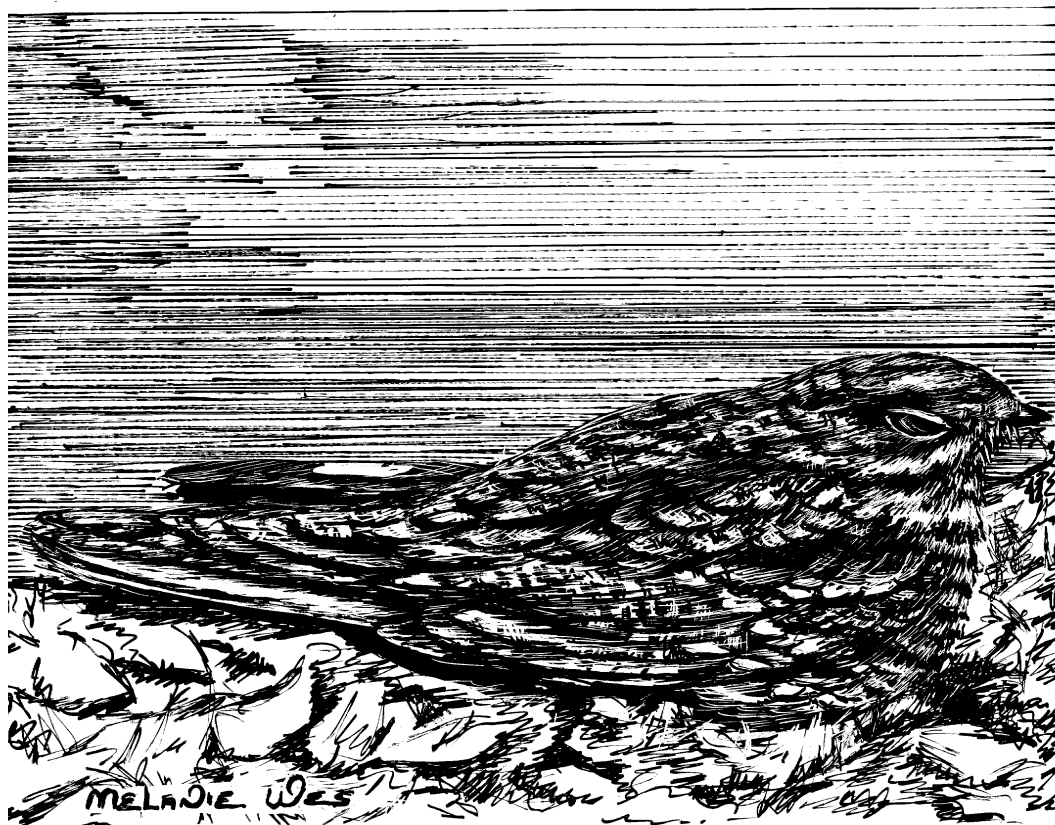
G.L. Maclean



Recorded in 41 grid cells, 0.9%  
 Total number of records: 97  
 Mean reporting rate for range: 4.6%

Reporting rates for vegetation types





*Natal Nightjar*