

Freckled Nightjar

Donkernaguil

Caprimulgus tristigma

The Freckled Nightjar is distributed widely but discontinuously in Africa south of the Sahara. The two races recognized by Clancey (1980b) from southern Africa are separated by a wide gap: *C. t. lentiginosus* occurs scattered in the dry west, throughout the Cape Province and Namibia, while *granosus* is present in the more mesic northeast of the region. Because of its naturally fragmented rocky habitat, it occurs patchily over most of southern Africa, except most of the eastern Cape Province, Lesotho and the sandy regions of the Namib and Kalahari. It is scarce in the central Karoo, and rare in the southwestern Cape Province (Hockey *et al.* 1989). There appears to be a gap in distribution from the western Cape Province to the extreme northeastern corner of the eastern Cape Province (Skead 1967b); from there the race *granosus* is increasingly common from KwaZulu-Natal northward. Although not recorded by Earle & Grobler (1987), it occurs in the eastern Free State. In the Transvaal it is locally common throughout, except in the open grasslands of the southeast (Tarboton *et al.* 1987b). It is scarce in southern Mozambique because of a lack of rocky habitat (Clancey 1971c). It reaches its greatest abundance in Zimbabwe, especially on the granite shield and other rock formations of the east, and the rocky outcrops of the Matobo (2028) and Kariba regions (Jackson 1975, 1978; Irwin 1981). Its distribution in Botswana is confined to suitable rocky places in the southeast and the isolated inselbergs of Tsodilo (1821D) and Gubatsha Hills near Savuti (1824C) in otherwise unsuitable Kalahari sandveld (Penry 1994). It occurs widely but sparsely in Namibia.

It is identified by its uniformly dark coloration, rocky habitat and characteristic two-syllabled 'whip-wheeu' call which is given throughout the year, especially in lower-lying and more tropical regions.

Habitat: It chooses bare rocky outcrops and escarpments with well-wooded slopes. Records away from rocky places in the dry season may be of birds on local migration (Irwin 1981). It shows broad tolerance of rock types, occurring on granite, sandstone, quartzite, schist and dolomite, though lichen-covered rocks may be preferred. It sometimes roosts on buildings, e.g. in Pretoria (2528C) (Tarboton *et al.* 1987b).

Movements: It is probably resident throughout most of its range; there is no significant seasonal variation in atlas reporting rates, although Irwin (1981) suggested local movement in the dry season, reporting its absence from the Matobo Hills

in particularly cold winters. Its occurrence on the isolated inselbergs of northern and western Botswana is determined by the timing of the rains, and the birds usually are absent in the dry season (pers. obs). Similarly, at the edge of its range in southeastern Botswana, *granosus* was commonly found in summer but not recorded in winter by Wilson (1984).

Breeding: As with most nightjars, it breeds in spring and summer (August–December), with a peak in egg-laying September–November (Irwin 1981). Breeding records from Zimbabwe show a double peak (September and November) in the atlas data, but this may be an artefact of a small sample. Egg-laying usually occurs between full moon and last quarter (Jackson 1983).

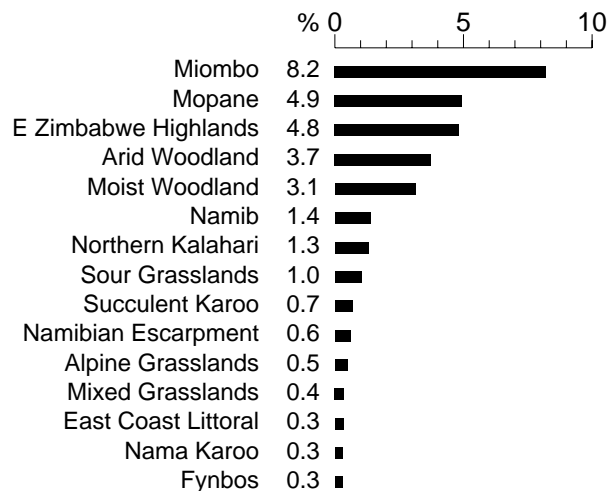
Interspecific relationships: Because of its highly specialized habitat preference, it is likely to encounter other nightjar species only at night while foraging over woodland adjacent to rocky outcrops.

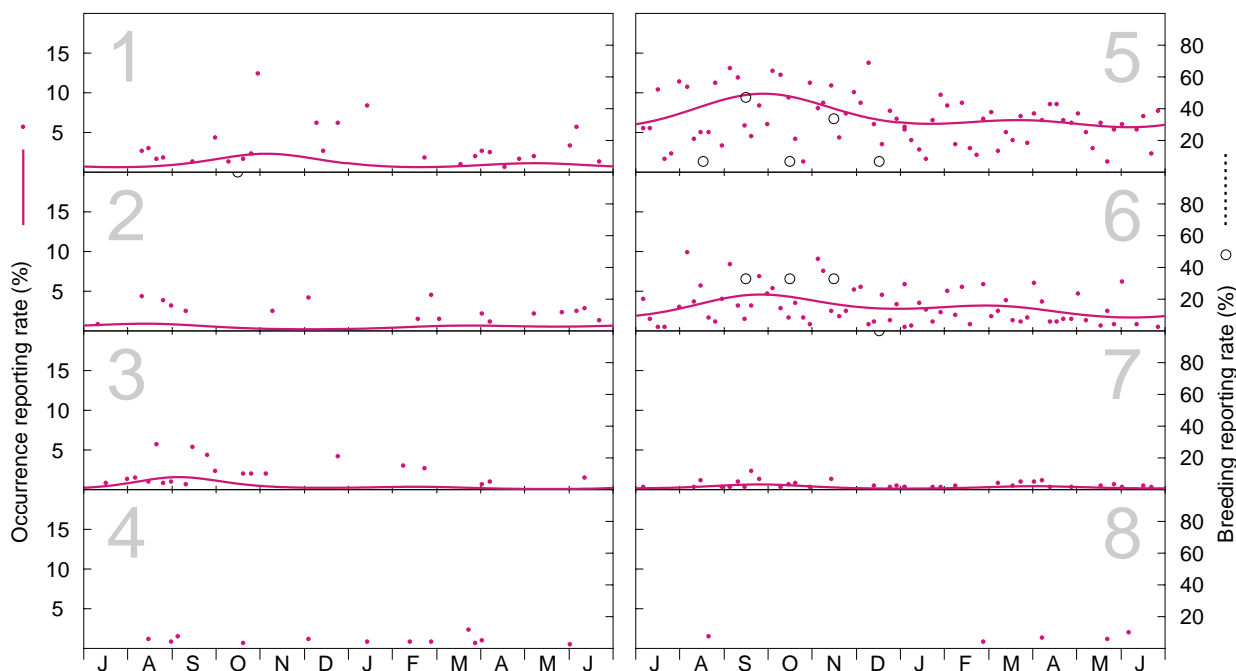
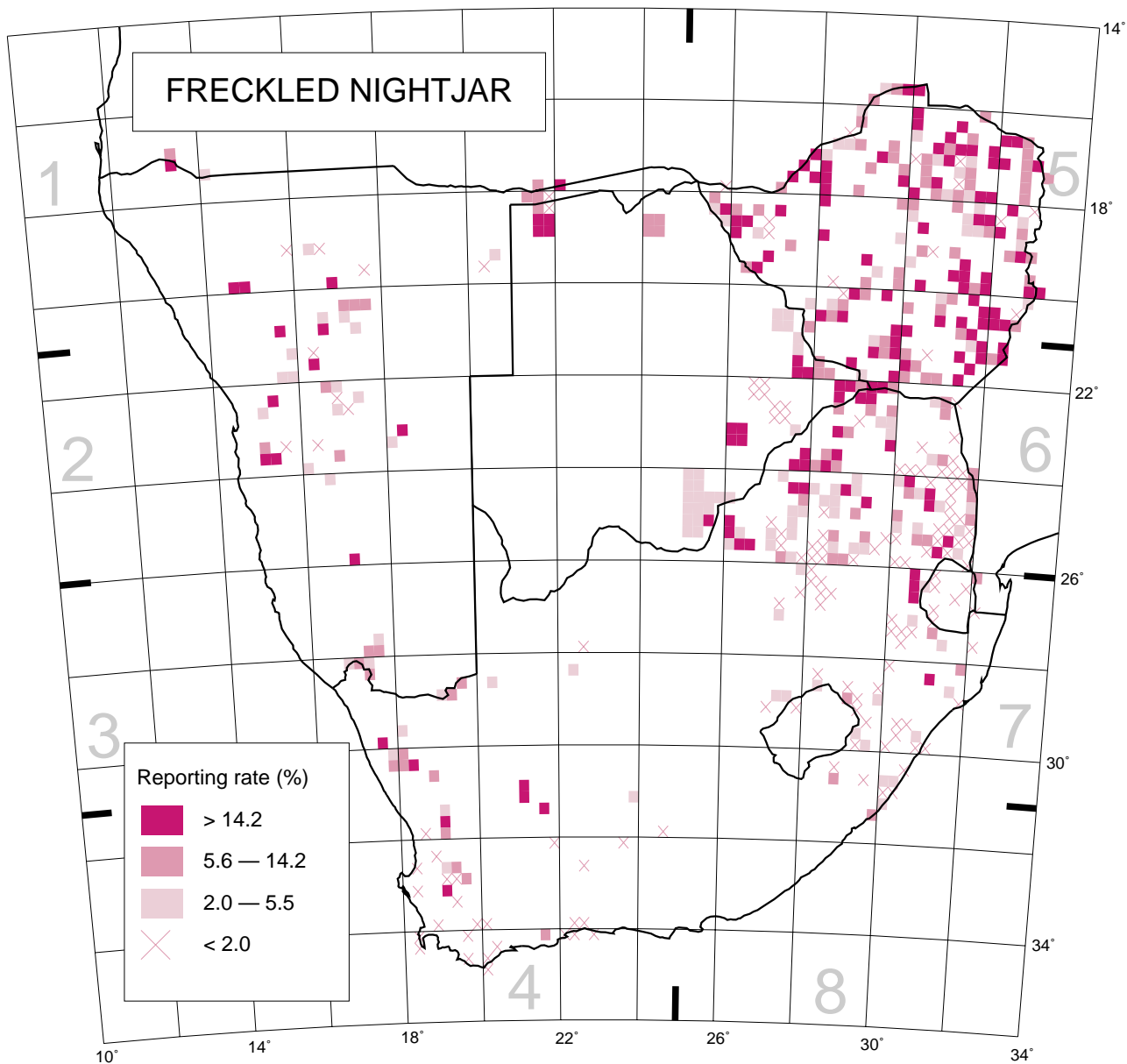
Historical distribution and conservation: The only change likely to have occurred in the distribution is in the species' adaptation to buildings in certain parts of its range, but this must have had only a small and local influence. No special conservation measures are necessary for the Freckled Nightjar because its roosting and breeding habitat is not threatened.

G.L. Maclean

Recorded in 548 grid cells, 12.1%
Total number of records: 2429
Mean reporting rate for range: 4.7%

Reporting rates for vegetation types





Models of seasonality for Zones. Number of records (top to bottom, left to right):
 Occurrence: 36, 21, 27, 16, 634, 340, 62, 5; Breeding: 0, 1, 0, 0, 15, 6, 1, 0.