

## Pennantwinged Nightjar

### Wimpelvlernaguil

*Macrodipteryx vexillaria*

This is the most tropical of the southern African nightjars, occurring regularly only from north of the Save River in southern Mozambique (Clancey 1971c), northwards to Zimbabwe, northern Botswana and the Caprivi. The Pennantwinged Nightjar is a breeding migrant in tropical Africa south of the equator as far north as Angola, southern Zaire and southern Tanzania. It migrates to nonbreeding areas north of the equator from northwestern Tanzania, western Uganda and southern Sudan west to Nigeria (Fry *et al.* 1988).

In southern Africa it is widely distributed throughout Zimbabwe, mostly north of 20°30'S, but also in the south-eastern lowveld, mostly below 1600 m, but seldom below 1000 m (Jackson 1975). In Namibia it is confined to Kavango and Caprivi, and in Botswana it is sparse in the mesic north (Penry 1994), although it may occasionally reach further south. It is thinly distributed, but may be locally common in the Transvaal lowveld (Tarboton *et al.* 1987b). It is a vagrant to KwaZulu-Natal and the eastern Cape Province (Skead 1967b). Its abundance is variable from year to year (Tree 1975a).

Identification of breeding males with wing pennants presents no problem, but females are difficult to separate from other nightjars. Females in flight lack any white spots in the wings and tail, resembling the female European Nightjar *Caprimulgus europaeus*, but the wing of the female Pennantwinged Nightjar is boldly and distinctively marked with rufous. The cricket-like trilling song of the male is distinctive among nightjars, but hard to distinguish from the sounds of some insects.

**Habitat:** It occurs in broadleaved woodland, including miombo and Mopane, with light leaf litter, apparently preferring stony hillsides and sandy areas and avoiding *Acacia* savanna (Jackson 1978). It is found in sandveld and mixed woodland but is absent from Mopane in the Transvaal lowveld (Tarboton *et al.* 1987b).

**Movements:** It is a breeding migrant to southern Africa, occurring mostly September–February with few records in the second part of the wet season (Jackson 1975; Taylor 1979; Irwin 1981; Maclean 1993b; Herremans 1994d). Atlas records suggest that a few birds may overwinter, but this needs confirmation.

**Breeding:** It breeds September–November, sometimes as late as December (Maclean 1993b). In Zimbabwe, most do not start laying until the October or November full moon (Jackson 1983), although Irwin (1981) reported *c.* 15% of all breeding records in September.

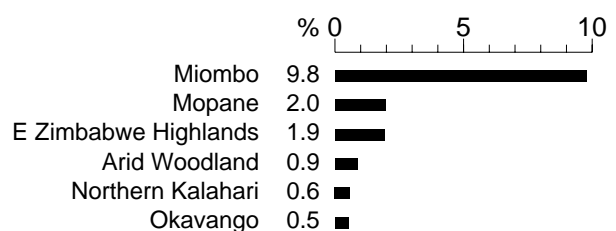
**Interspecific relationships:** It is often found in close proximity to Fierynecked Nightjars *C. pectoralis* in miombo woodland (Jackson 1978). It overlaps in choice of nest site with Rufouscheeked *C. rufigena*, Fierynecked and Mozambique *C. fossii* Nightjars (Colebrook-Robjent 1984).

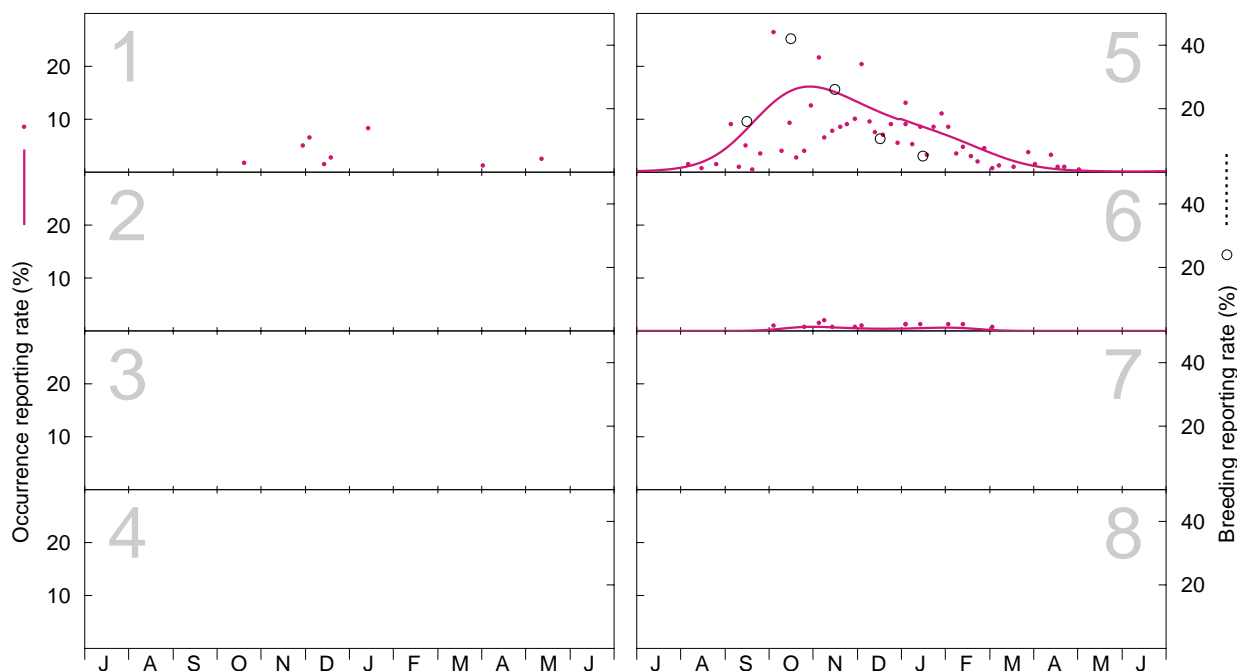
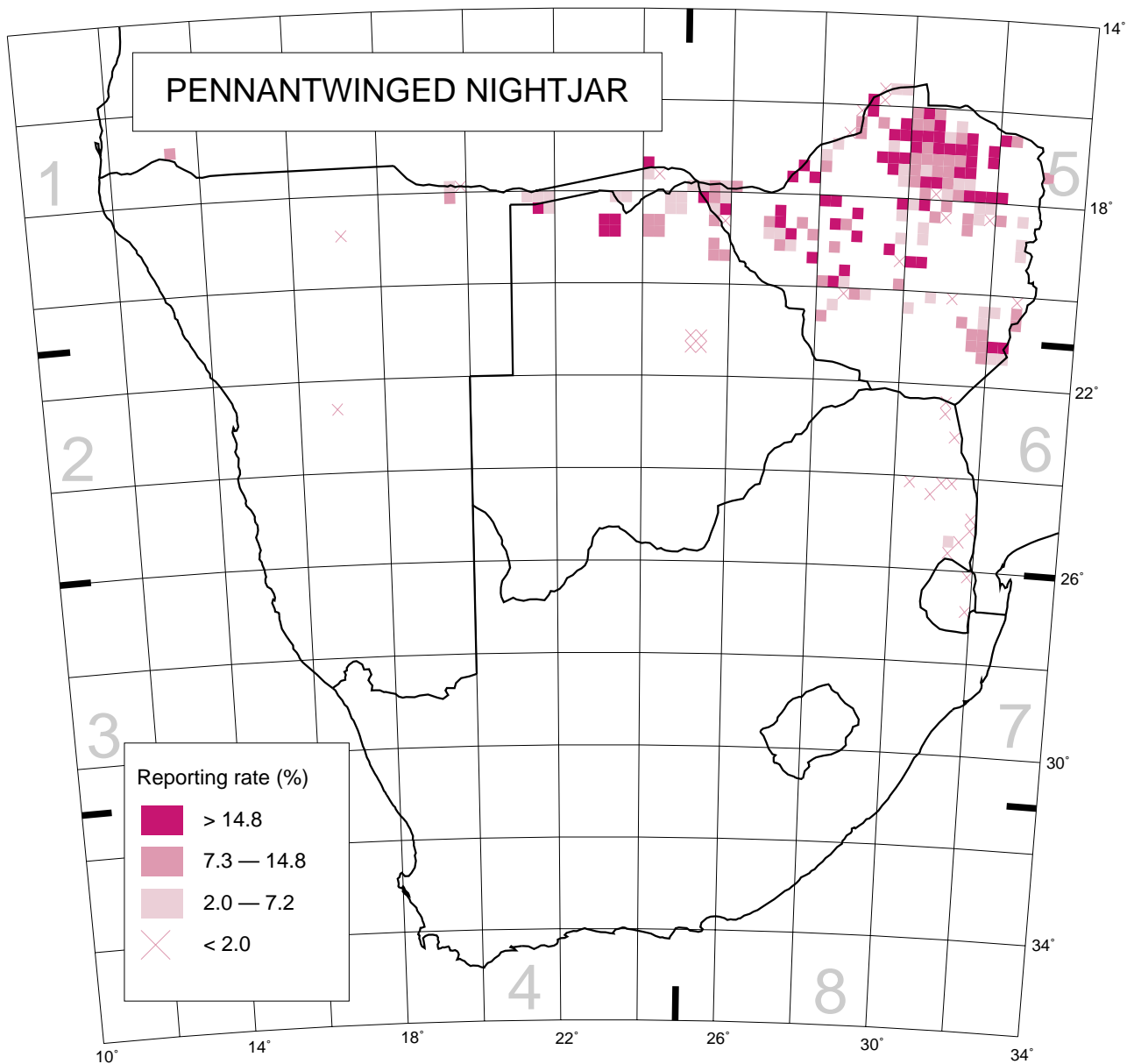
**Historical distribution and conservation:** Its distribution has probably changed little. In Zambia it can be locally the commonest nightjar (Colebrook-Robjent 1984). On the basis of its peripheral occurrence in South Africa, it was included as 'indeterminate' in South Africa (Brooke 1984b). No conservation measures appear to be necessary. It is adaptable and nests in highly modified habitats, such as ploughed fields and newly burnt areas (Colebrook-Robjent 1984).

G.L. Maclean

Recorded in 209 grid cells, 4.6%  
Total number of records: 935  
Mean reporting rate for range: 7.9%

#### Reporting rates for vegetation types





Models of seasonality for Zones. Number of records (top to bottom, left to right):  
 Occurrence: 8, 0, 0, 0, 508, 26, 0, 0; Breeding: 0, 0, 0, 0, 19, 0, 0, 0.