

Striped Kingfisher

Gestrepte Visvanger

Halcyon chelicuti

This is the smallest of the African assemblage of *Halcyon* kingfishers. It has a wide continental range to the south of the Sahara, outside of the equatorial rainforest belt. In southern Africa it occurs mainly in the north and east, south to c. 26°S in general, but to c. 28°S on the mid-Orange River and the Tugela River mouth (2931AB). It is absent above 1400 m in Zimbabwe (Irwin 1981). There is a large gap in the distribution across central Botswana.

The Striped and Brownhooded *H. albiventris* Kingfishers should be seen as constituting a species pair in an African context (Snow 1978; Fry 1980; Fry *et al.* 1988). Fry also drew attention to similarity between *H. chelicuti* of Africa and the Redbacked Kingfisher *Todirhamphus pyrrhopygia* of Australia.

It is locally common and conspicuous because of its loud duetting calls which are usually answered by neighbouring pairs, making the area erupt into a chorus. It is occasionally confused with the much larger Brownhooded Kingfisher, but the atlas data can be considered comprehensive and reliable.

Habitat: It occurs in relatively open woodlands, both broadleaved and *Acacia*, under mesic and arid conditions. Locally it may favour high riparian trees (e.g. it is abundant in the Okavango riparian woodland), but it is not especially associated with river systems. In Zimbabwe it inhabits miombo, *Baikiaea* and Mopane woodlands, where it is generally common; as a result of a proliferation of dead and dying trees in the Lake Kariba basin, it is numerous there (Irwin 1981). It was found to be absent from *Acacia* woodland in a study area in the Transvaal (Tarboton *et al.* 1987b), but it has a stronghold in southern Botswana in a broad band of well-developed arid *Acacia* woodland. (This probably extends beyond the border into a part of Hereroland in Namibia for which there are relatively few atlas data.) It is virtually absent from more open country to the north in the Kalahari, and from the tall but fairly dense deciduous *Terminalia prunioides* woodlands in the northern Kalahari, before another stronghold

is reached in the broadleaved *Baikiaea*, Mopane and Okavango fringing woodlands in northern Botswana and the Caprivi. Reporting rates were also surprisingly low in the miombo-like tall woodlands in eastern Botswana and the riverine woodlands along the upper Limpopo drainage. In Namibia, Zimbabwe and South Africa its distribution is less dramatically but also markedly discontinuous, indicating specialization in particular habitats, the exact nature of which is presently unclear.

Movements: The models do not indicate seasonal movements and it is not usually considered to be migratory (Fry *et al.* 1992). However, study of specimens from South African localities revealed that birds of the arid west and interior may undertake a seasonal movement to eastern low country during the dry winter months (Clancey 1992b). There is other evidence for irregular movements: during the 1992–93 drought in the Kalahari, it became abundant on transmission lines along roads in the eastern hardveld of Botswana (M.H. pers. obs.), an area where few records originated during the atlas period.

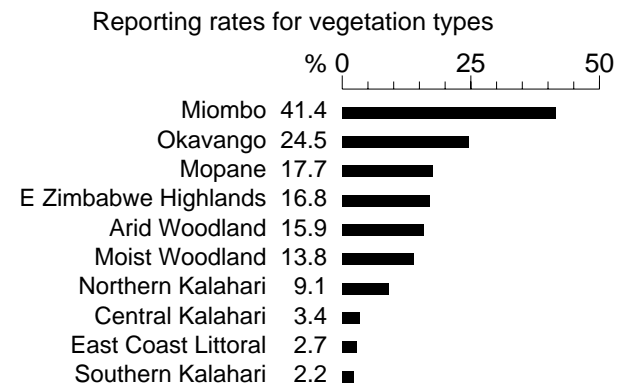
Breeding: It breeds in spring and summer in southern Africa, mainly September–October in Zimbabwe, and October–December in the Transvaal and Namibia, with some breeding as late as January–February (Irwin 1981; Tarboton *et al.* 1987b; Maclean 1993b; Brown & Clinning in press). The atlas breeding records confirm this pattern.

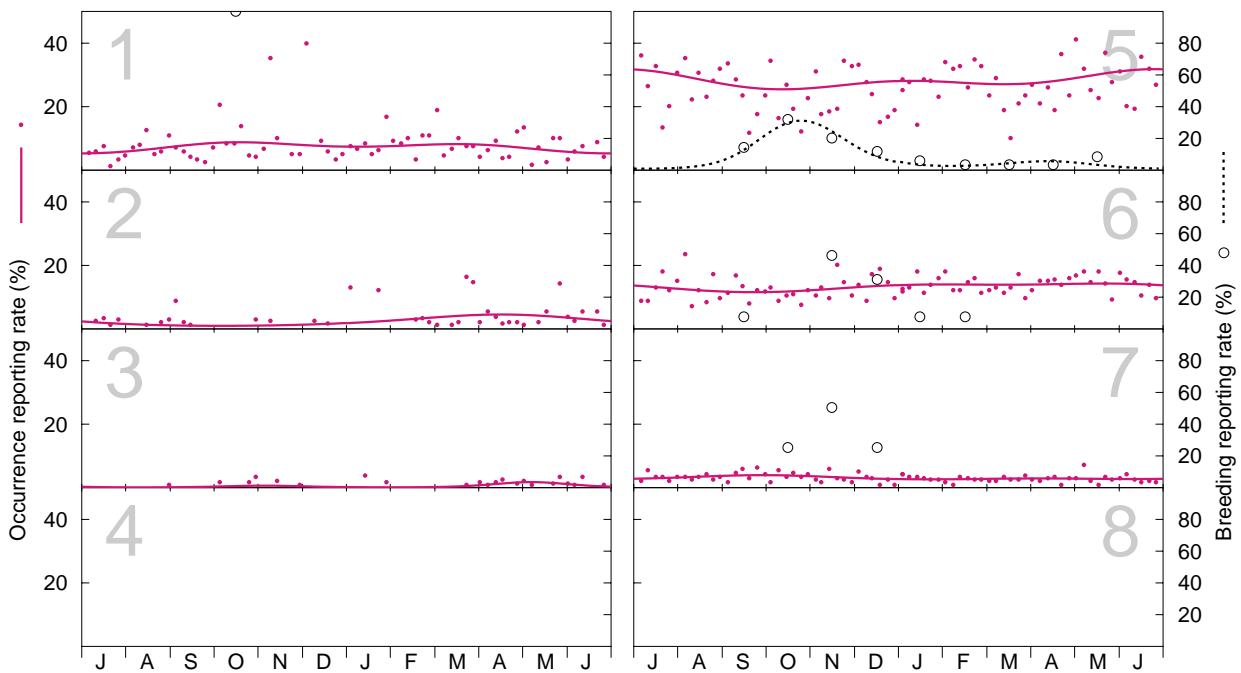
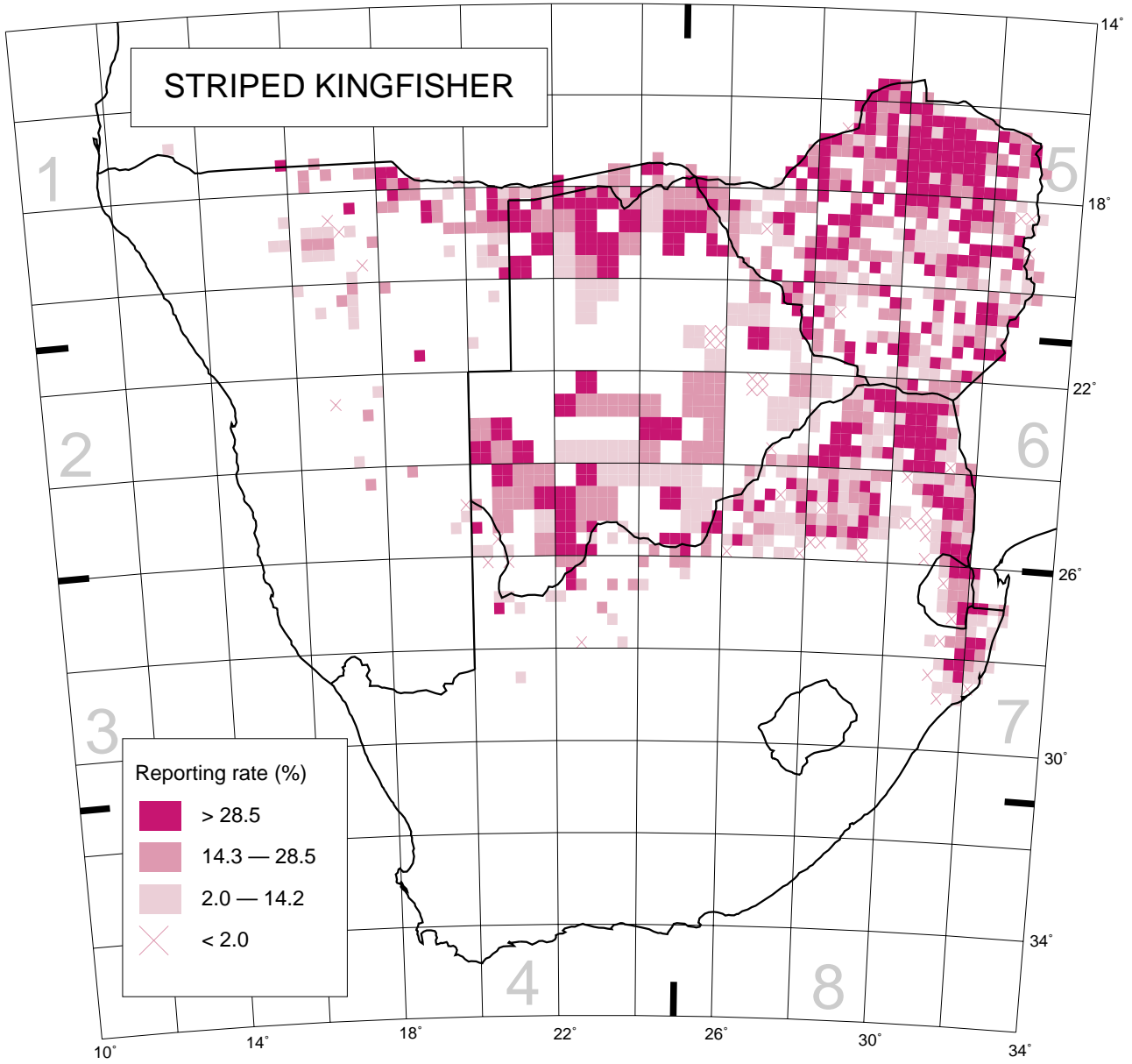
Interspecific relationships: In Kenya it is heavily parasitized by Lesser Honeyguides *Indicator minor*, but this seems uncommon in southern Africa (Irwin 1981; Tarboton *et al.* 1987b; Fry *et al.* 1988). It nests in tree holes, both natural ones and the unused roosting and breeding chambers of other birds. It occasionally uses old swallow nests and may expel the owners (Godwin 1987). It overlaps widely with the Brownhooded Kingfisher in southern Africa and both species commonly occur together in the more mesic east of the region. In the more arid central and western parts of the region, strongholds of the former species occur where the latter is scarce or absent.

Historical distribution and conservation: The Striped Kingfisher is not threatened. Bush degradation seemingly does not affect it as it occurs commonly in and around small-scale cultivated lands in Africa; it avoids large-scale cultivation, however (Bowen 1978).

P.A. Clancey and M. Herremans

Recorded in 1202 grid cells, 26.5%
Total number of records: 9133
Mean reporting rate for range: 22.0%





Models of seasonality for Zones. Number of records (top to bottom, left to right):
 Occurrence: 240, 96, 29, 0, 2456, 1515, 601, 0; Breeding: 3, 0, 0, 0, 35, 13, 4, 0.