



## Crested Barbet

### Kuifkophoutkapper

*Trachyphonus vaillantii*

The Crested Barbet has a fragmented distribution from Tanzania westwards to Angola, and south to South Africa (Fry *et al.* 1988). Its colourful plumage, adaptation to suburban environments and the distinct calls uttered throughout the year make it conspicuous and unlikely to be confused with any other species. In certain parts of KwaZulu-Natal, numbers are regarded as low (Clancey 1964b); a density of 1 pair/9.5 ha was reported for a rural area in the northern Transvaal (Fry *et al.* 1988). The core distribution areas appear to be central and western Transvaal and the Mashonoland plateau.

Clancey (1980b) recognized two subspecies in the region, which have continuous ranges on the present map. Unlike in several other species, the lower reporting rates along the eastern Transvaal escarpment do not coincide with the limits of different subspecies.

**Habitat:** A common resident of savanna, woodland and thickets, it is particularly well represented in broadleaved woodlands (Moist Woodland, Miombo, Okavango and Mopane), but also occurs in mixed woodlands and *Acacia* habitats (Arid Woodland). Occurrence in various grassland biomes is attributed to urban areas, exotic trees (Maclean 1993b) and to tree-lined river systems punctuating these areas. Forests represent marginal habitats, and presence in the Eastern Zimbabwe highlands is restricted to Miombo woodland (Irwin 1981).

**Movements:** The models show limited seasonal variation in reporting rates, which may be attributed to differences in vocal activity, this being more frequent just before breeding when territories are being established or defended, and less so during the post-breeding moult. Recovery data for 42 birds give a mean distance from site of ringing to recapture as 2.8 km, with the greatest distance being 15 km (SAFRING).

Although the models do not indicate any regular movements, individuals may move considerable distances during dry periods (Fry *et al.* 1988).

**Breeding:** Breeding was recorded throughout the year in the atlas period, but egg-laying has been reported in southern Africa only July–April, with a clear peak during spring and early summer, September–December (Irwin 1981; Tarboton *et al.* 1987b; Skinner 1996a). Because it roosts in nest cavities throughout the year, some observers may have attributed visits to such cavities as evidence for breeding. Similarly to published information (Irwin 1981; Tarboton *et al.* 1987b), the atlas models indicate that breeding peaks earlier in Zimbabwe (Zone 5) than in the Transvaal (Zone 6).

**Interspecific relationships:** There may be competition between this species and other hole nesters, including Black-collared *Lybius torquatus* and Pied *Tricholaema leucomelas* Barbets. It dominates Whyte's Barbet *Stactolaema whytii* for nest holes in the suburbs of Harare (1731CC) (A.J. Tree pers. comm.). Although the availability of suitable dead wood for nesting purposes is important, interspecific competition for this resource should not markedly affect the overall abundance of birds; it may however affect their density on a local scale, as found in a suburban environment (Van Zyl 1994a).

It is a host of Greater *Indicator indicator* and Lesser *I. minor* Honeyguides (Maclean 1993b).

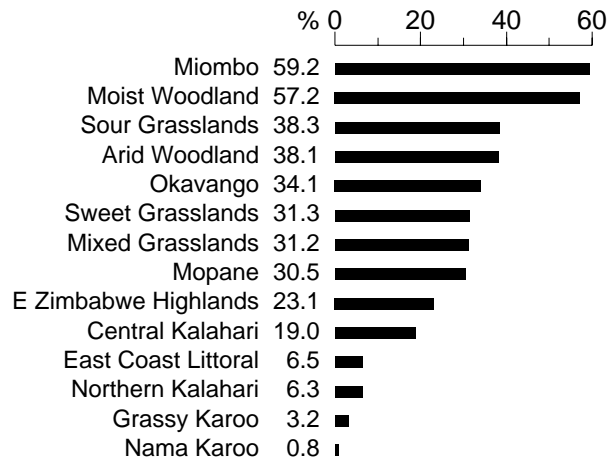
**Historical distribution and conservation:** It has recently expanded its range in the Free State (Herholdt & Earlé 1987). Movement has probably been via riparian corridors along major rivers. This southward extension of range appears to have resulted entirely from the influx of birds from the core distribution areas to the north and northwest, via the Vaal River and its tributaries, and not from the east via KwaZulu-Natal (see Herholdt & Earlé 1987) where there is still a gap in the distribution. Urban areas have probably influenced density and abundance, particularly breeding density (Van Zyl 1994a). The records along the lower Orange River on the southern Namibian border with South Africa constitute a major range extension and it is possible that further extensions may occur in future.

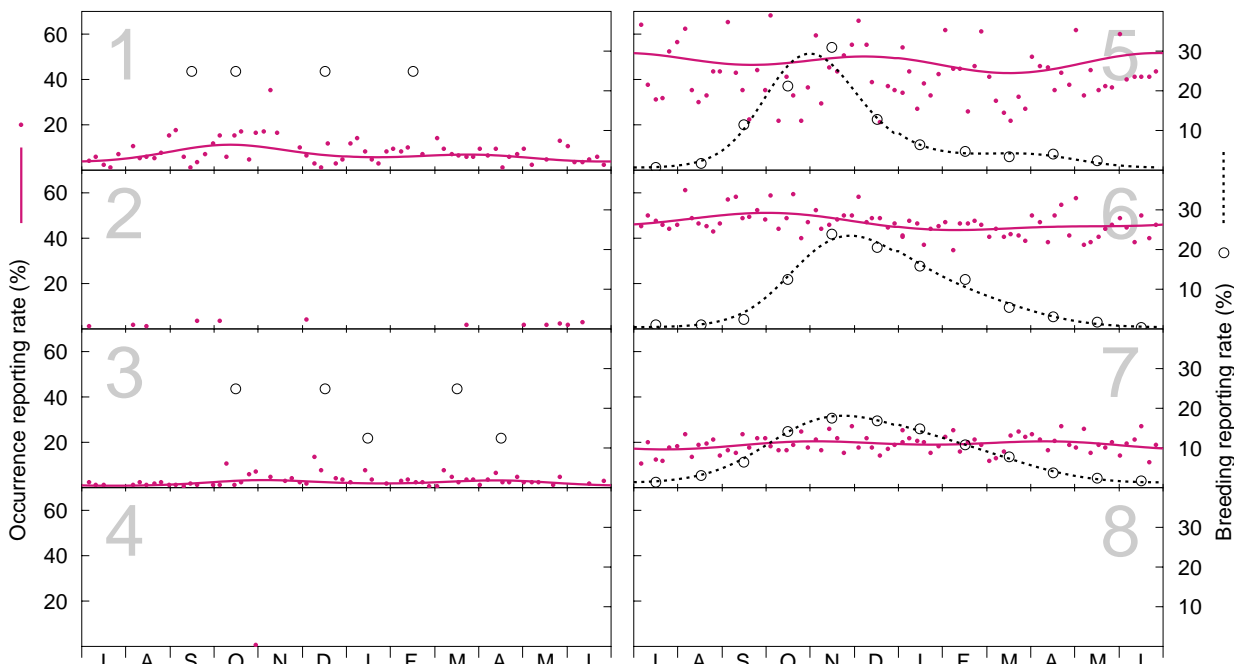
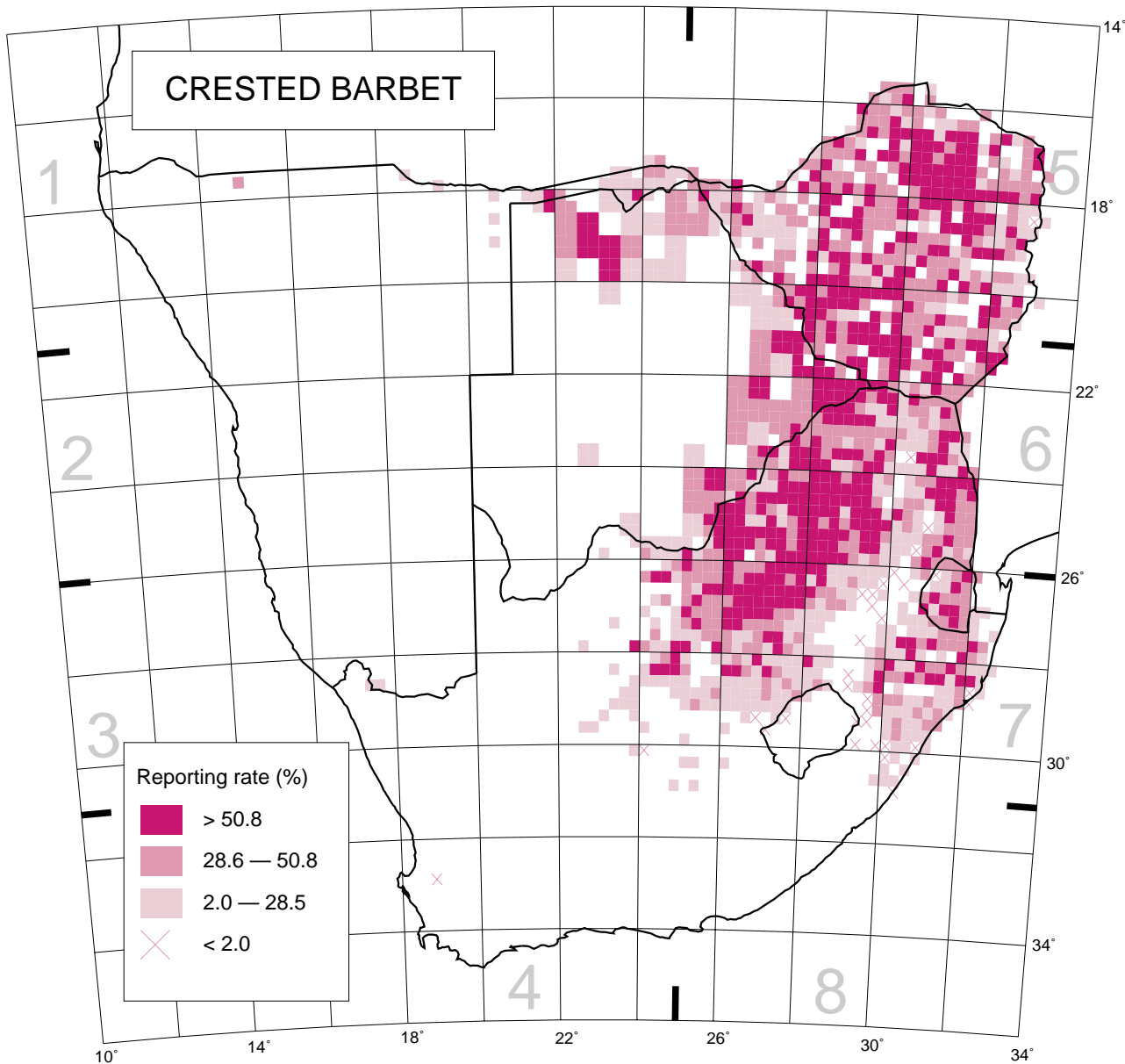
The Crested Barbet is not under threat; localized decreases might, however, be caused by the removal of dead trees required for nesting.

R.J. Nuttall

Recorded in 1440 grid cells, 31.7%  
Total number of records: 34 663  
Mean reporting rate for range: 44.2%

#### Reporting rates for vegetation types





Models of seasonality for Zones. Number of records (top to bottom, left to right):  
 Occurrence: 222, 14, 118, 1, 4161, 5326, 3740, 0; Breeding: 4, 0, 8, 0, 123, 245, 300, 0.