

## Sharpbilled Honeyguide

### Skerpbekheuningvoël

*Prodotiscus regulus*

The Sharpbilled Honeyguide has a fragmented distribution in Africa, with small disjunct ranges centred on Cameroon and Ethiopia in the north, and a near continuous distribution from Lake Victoria southwards (Fry *et al.* 1988). It occurs mainly in the mesic east of southern Africa, with many records from southern KwaZulu-Natal and western Swaziland, and isolated records along the southern coast as far west as Somerset West (3418BB) (e.g. Allan 1994; Allan *et al.* 1995a). With the distribution so patchy, it is difficult to judge whether there is a break through the eastern Transvaal between the ranges of the two subspecies recognized in the region (Clancey 1980b).

It is small, drab and readily overlooked; it draws attention only when in aerial display. Confusion with the more common Spotted *Muscicapa striata*, Dusky *M. adusta* and Pallid *Melaenornis pallidus* Flycatchers is possible, and it was probably under-reported.

**Habitat:** It is found in a range of woodland habitats in relatively mesic areas, from fairly open thornveld to forest edges. It has adapted to plantations, especially those of Black Wattle *Acacia mearnsi* in KwaZulu-Natal and eastern Zimbabwe (Friedmann 1955; Tarboton *et al.* 1987b; Fry *et al.* 1988).

**Movements:** It is usually regarded as a resident but may have local movements because population sizes have been noted to vary seasonally at some localities (Friedmann 1955; Irwin 1981; Fry *et al.* 1988; Maclean 1993b). Reporting rates in Zone 7, which includes KwaZulu-Natal, peaked in winter, which is the opposite season to other honeyguides; possibly regular movement takes place within this area so that it becomes more conspicuous outside the breeding season. Irruptive movements are suggested by influxes into KwaZulu-Natal in 1924 and 1986, and the first records in the southwestern Cape Province were in the latter year (Friedmann 1955; Hockey *et al.* 1989).

**Breeding:** Atlas records spanned November–February which indicates breeding in the wet season, in agreement with published sources (Friedmann 1955; Tarboton *et al.* 1987b; Maclean 1993b). There is a scarcity of breeding observations for this species.

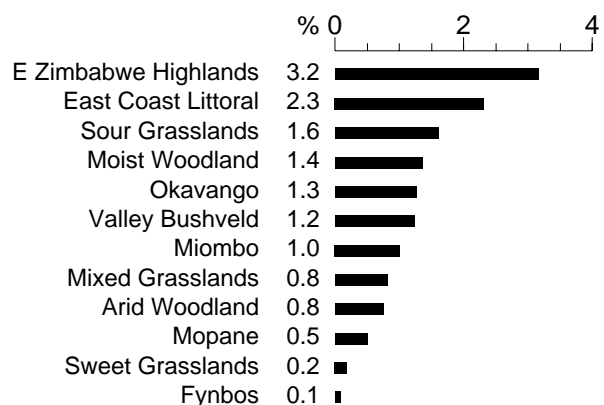
**Interspecific relationships:** Its main brood hosts in southern Africa appear to include the Neddicky *Cisticola fulvicapilla*, Karoo Prinia *Prinia maculosa*, Bleating Warbler *Camaroptera brachyura* and Lazy *Cisticola Cisticola aberrans* (Irwin 1981; Maclean 1993b). All confirmed hosts have spherical nests; other hosts are possible.

**Historical distribution and conservation:** It has expanded its range into areas where trees have been planted, including stands of exotic trees. Although the Sharpbilled Honeyguide is usually regarded as scarce, it appears not to be of conservation concern, but its natural history remains poorly known.

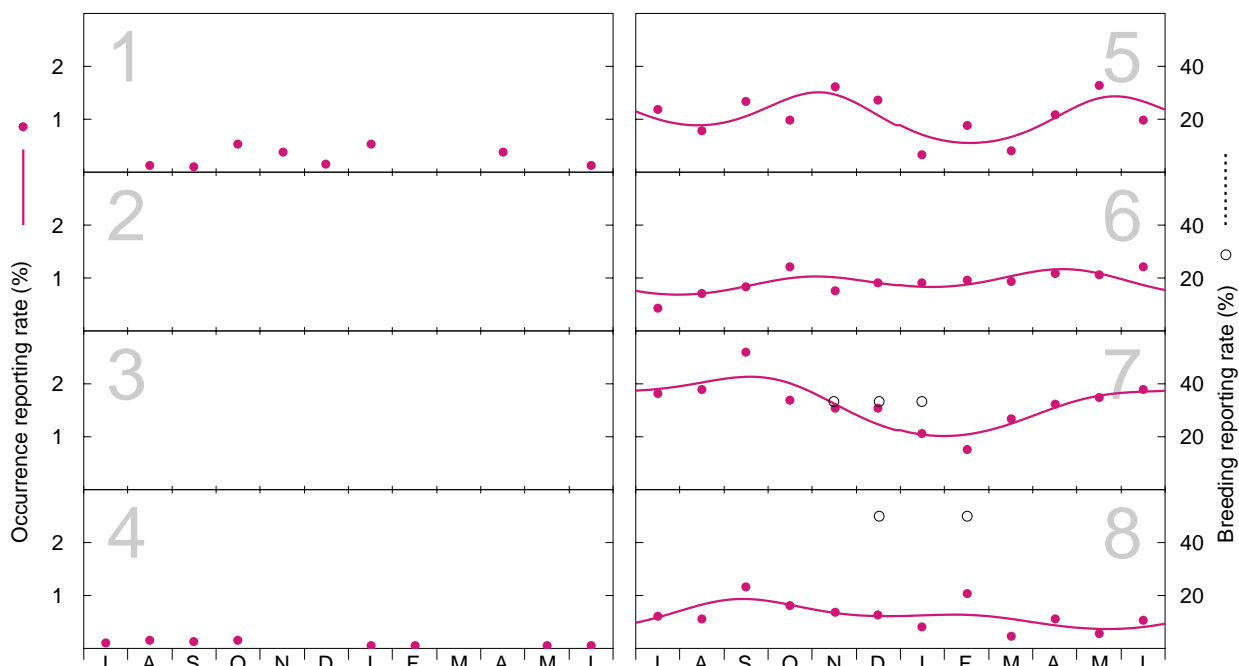
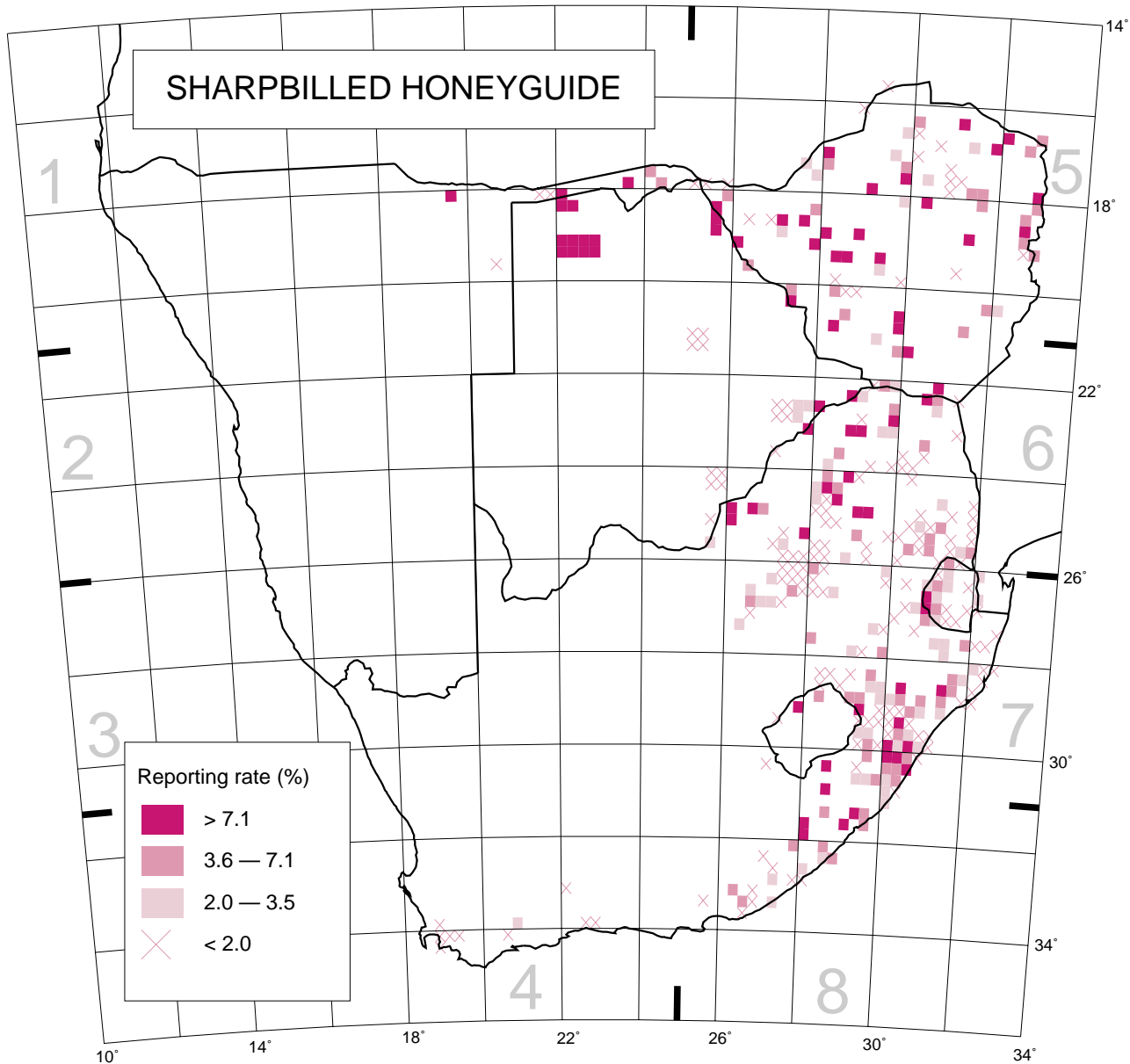
*C.J. Vernon and L.G. Underhill*

Recorded in 378 grid cells, 8.3%  
Total number of records: 1200  
Mean reporting rate for range: 2.4%

#### Reporting rates for vegetation types



Also marginally in Succulent Karoo.



Models of seasonality for Zones. Number of records (top to bottom, left to right):  
 Occurrence: 17, 0, 0, 16, 121, 225, 729, 73; Breeding: 0, 0, 0, 0, 0, 0, 3, 2.