

Fawn-coloured Lark

Vaalbruinlewerik

Mirafra africanoides

The Fawn-coloured Lark is a resident species with a discontinuous distribution almost entirely confined to habitats on sandy soils. Atlas records show the main centre of distribution in southern Africa to be the northern Cape Province, eastern Namibia and Botswana, with scattered records from the sandveld areas of the western Free State, northern and western Transvaal and Zimbabwe. It is widely, though locally, distributed through the eastern half of Africa to Ethiopia and Somalia. In the Transvaal it may be common but is highly localized (Tarboton *et al.* 1987b). Tarboton (1980) recorded a density of 2.7 birds/100 ha in *Burkea* woodland in the central Transvaal, but it is more abundant in Botswana where an average density of 1 bird/ha was recorded in four woodlands and shrublands in the Kalahari (M. Herremans unpubl. data). It is usually seen singly or in pairs.

The Fawn-coloured Lark is not a highly distinctive species, and confusion between it and other small to medium-sized reddish-winged larks is possible. The white eyebrow is fairly conspicuous and the white stripe below the eye is a useful characteristic, but is difficult to see in the field. The white underparts contrast markedly with the light to dark rufous upperparts in the southern subspecies of the Fawn-coloured Lark. The song, usually conspicuously given from a perch on a bush or tree, and described as 'bustling' by Keith *et al.* (1992), is also a useful field characteristic in the breeding season. In general, the atlas data for this species appear to be comprehensive and reliable.

Habitat: It is particularly common in the Kalahari where it occurs in open *Acacia* savanna, Driedoring *Rhigozum trichotomum* and Trumpet Thorn *Catophractes alexandri* shrubland, and in patches of annual grass. It is also present in broadleaved savanna woodlands and shrublands on granite and dolerite sands where it forages on bare patches or patches with sparse grass cover. In the northcentral Cape Province it is common in grassland with scattered Wild Green-hair Trees *Parkinsonia africana* on red sand-dunes. The vegetation analysis shows that it was most commonly recorded in the three Kalahari vegetation types.

Movements: The models for Zones 1, 2 and 3 show a reduction in reporting rates for the autumn and winter months; these probably reflect reduced conspicuousness during the nonbreeding season. Large-scale immigration of pale Kalahari forms into the hardveld of eastern Botswana has been noted during drought periods (Bishop *et al.* 1992).

Breeding: Records from the atlas period were from December–April. It has an extended breeding season and may nest opportunistically following rains (Maclean 1970c). Egglaying data from Zimbabwe span September–February, mainly November–January (Irwin 1981).

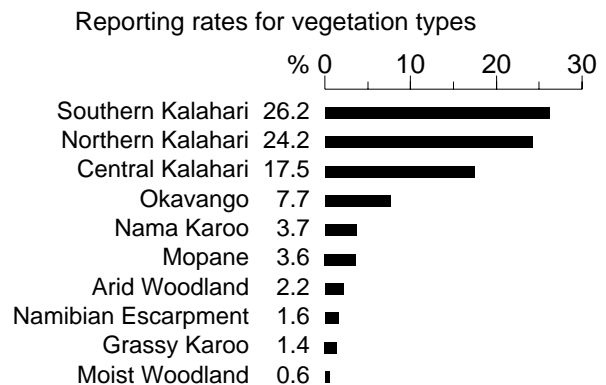
Interspecific relationships: The Fawn-coloured Lark overlaps in habitat with the

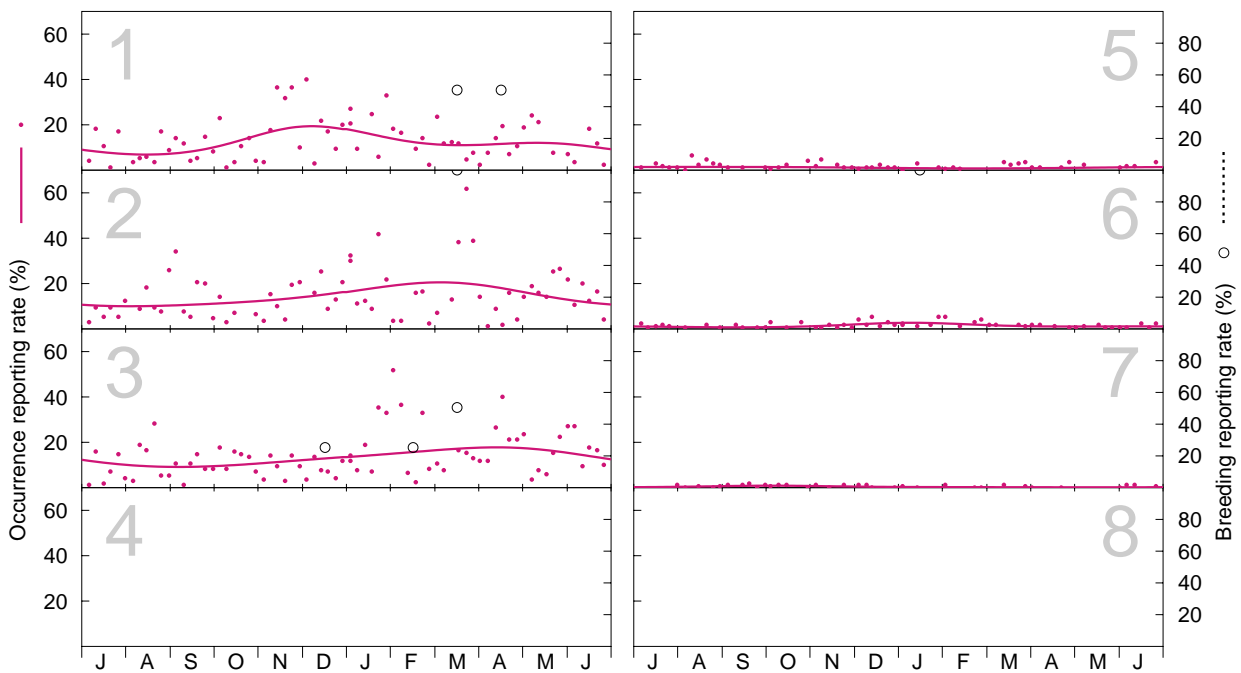
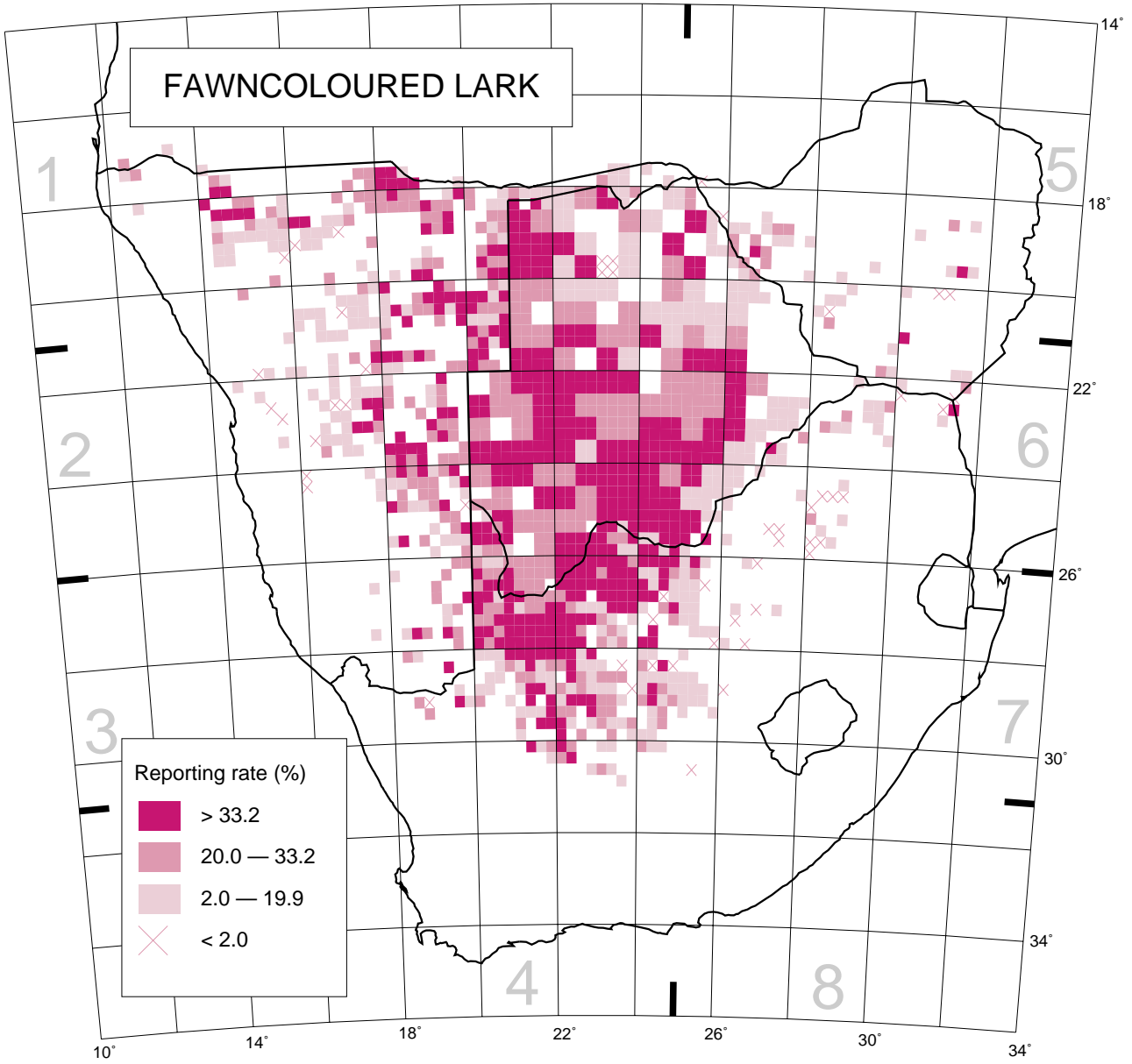
Clapper Lark *M. apiata*, Sabota Lark *M. sabota* and Red Lark *Certhilauda burra* and other larks in parts of its distribution.

Historical distribution and conservation: There is no evidence of any changes in distribution of the Fawn-coloured Lark in southern Africa. It is not considered to be threatened in southern Africa and appears to be adequately protected in nature reserves.

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Recorded in 1407 grid cells, 31.0%
Total number of records: 3181
Mean reporting rate for range: 13.2%





Models of seasonality for Zones. Number of records (top to bottom, left to right):
 Occurrence: 382, 530, 740, 0, 101, 159, 76, 0; Breeding: 2, 1, 4, 0, 0, 1, 0, 0.