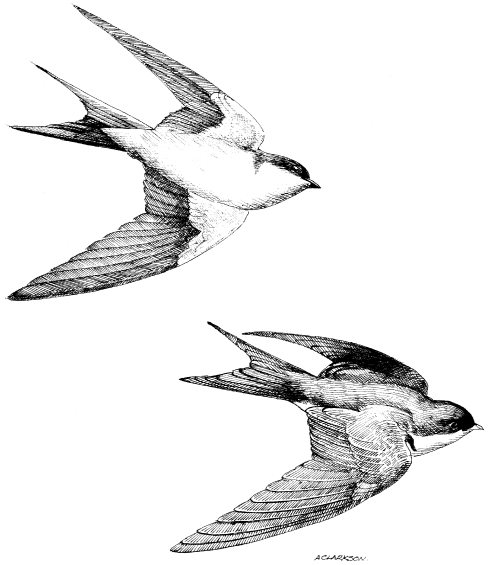


Pearlbreasted Swallow

Pêrelborsswael

Hirundo dimidiata

The Pearlbreasted Swallow is concentrated in five fairly discrete areas of southern Africa: the southern Cape Province, central Transvaal, northeastern Zimbabwe, the Okavango and central Namibia. The scattering of records in the Free State and adjacent northern Cape Province may represent, at least in part, southern birds recorded on passage. The breeding population found in Zimbabwe is a different subspecies (*H. d. marwitzi*) to that found in Namibia and South Africa (*H. d. dimidiata*). Outside southern Africa this swallow occurs patchily in Angola, Zaire, Zambia, Malawi and southwestern Tanzania (Turner & Rose 1989). Tarboton (1980) found a density of 4 birds/10 ha in central Transvaal broadleaved woodland. This small swallow is relatively inconspicuous and easily overlooked amongst other similar Hirundinidae.

Habitat: This species occurs in a wide range of habitats. In Zimbabwe the local race inhabits clearings and woodland edges in miombo (Irwin 1981). In the Transvaal it breeds in broadleaved woodlands, avoiding *Acacia* woodlands, while in winter it is frequently found around wetland sites and open areas (Tarboton 1980b; Tarboton *et al.* 1987b). Its occurrence in the Okavango in the winter is also associated with wetland habitats. In Namibia it occurs in semi-arid regions during the summer. In the southwestern Cape Province it is found in intensive cereal-farming regions during the breeding season. This species is frequently seen near human habitation, especially in drier areas (Turner & Rose 1989).

Movements: In the southern Cape Province (Zones 4 and 8) it is a summer-breeding migrant and this also appears to be largely the case in Namibia (Zone 2). Although it occurs throughout the year in Zimbabwe, the Transvaal and the Okavango region, it is more common in the winter, at least in the last two of these regions, as revealed by reporting rates. Presumably this increase is due to an influx of birds from the southern Cape Province and possibly Namibia into these areas, but the details of the migration of this species are obscure. A winter influx into Zimbabwe (Irwin 1981; Tree 1986c) and northern Botswana (Herremans 1994d; Penry 1994) has been suggested.

Breeding: In the southern Cape Province (Zones 4 and 8) breeding occurs August–April with a peak October–December. In the Transvaal (Zone 6) breeding occurs August–March, with an August–October peak. Tarboton *et al.* (1987b) reported a September–March egglaying season in this province, with a September–December peak. Breeding in Zimbabwe (Zone 5) spanned September–May, with no clear peak. Irwin (1981) reported an August–February egglaying period in Zimbabwe, with a peak August–October. This species therefore appears to breed later with increasing latitude. There are no breeding records known from Botswana (Skinner 1995a). Nests have been reported from the interior of mud huts, in wells, Aardvark *Orycteropus afer* holes, buildings and bridges in Zimbabwe, in Aardvark and Porcupine *Hystrix africaeaustralis* burrows in the Transvaal, and from barns and other farm buildings in the southwestern Cape Province (Irwin 1981; Tarboton *et al*. 1987b; Hockey *et al.* 1989). This possible specialization on buildings in the southern Cape Province may explain the relatively high breeding reporting rates for the species in this region.

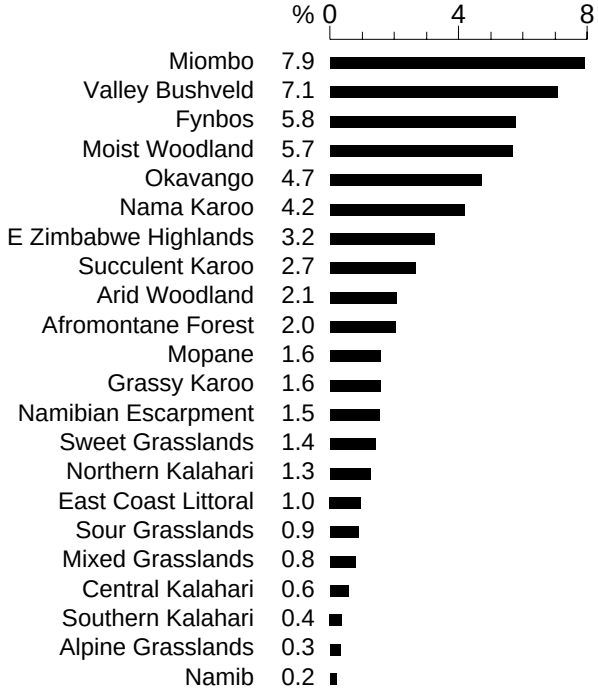
Interspecific relationships: It is possible that in many areas this small species is not as successful at colonizing man-made structures for breeding as other Hirundinidae in its range, owing to displacement by these larger species. Turner & Rose (1989), however, implied that it may be less tolerant of human disturbance, as it seems to prefer isolated and disused buildings.

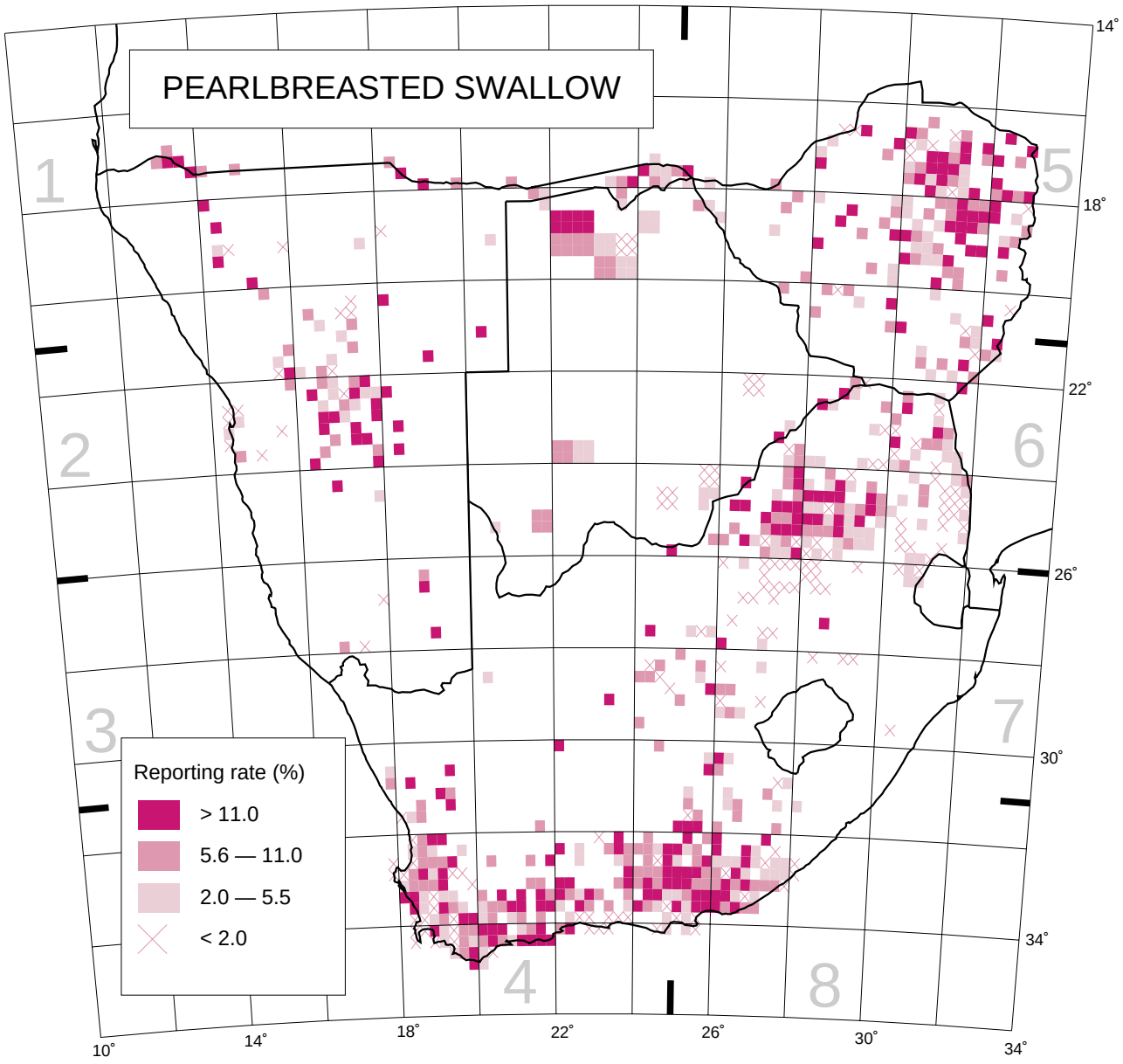
Historical distribution and conservation: It has increased in the southwestern Cape Province owing to its widespread use of buildings for breeding (Tree 1986c; Hockey *et al.* 1989) and it occurs widely in agriculturally transformed regions there. In Zimbabwe it may have decreased in numbers (Irwin 1981).

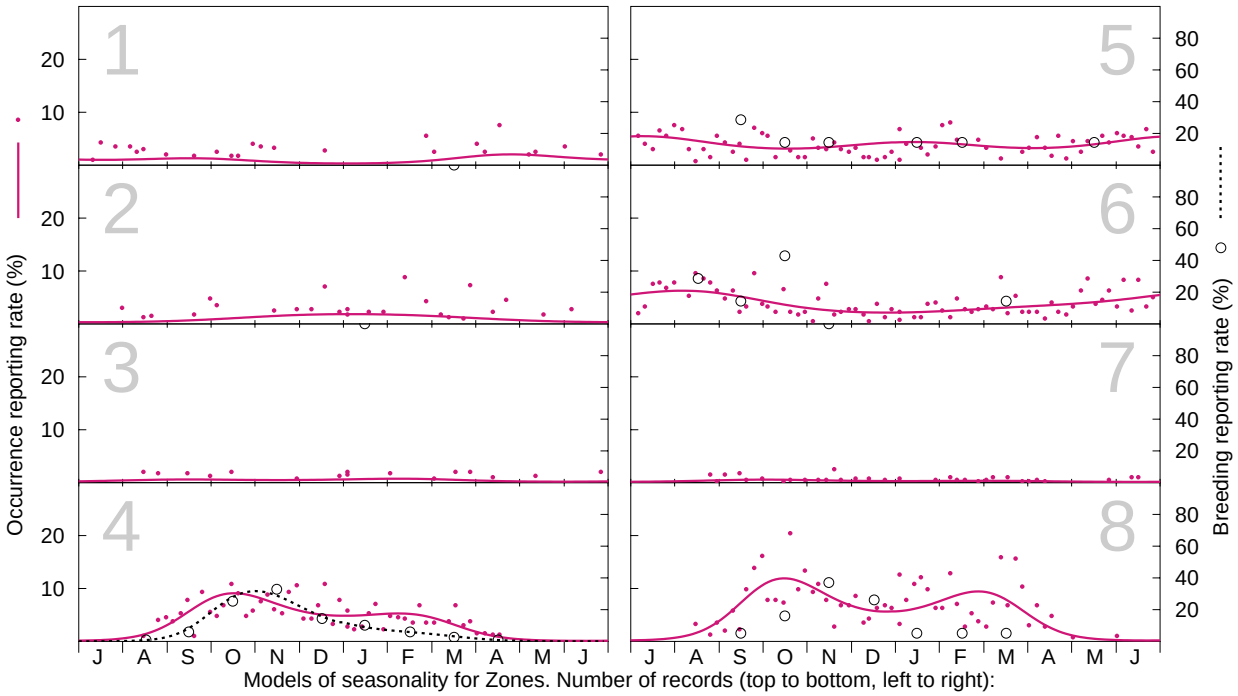
R.A. Earlé

Recorded in 797 grid cells, 17.6%
Total number of records: 4116
Mean reporting rate for range: 5.6%

Reporting rates for vegetation types

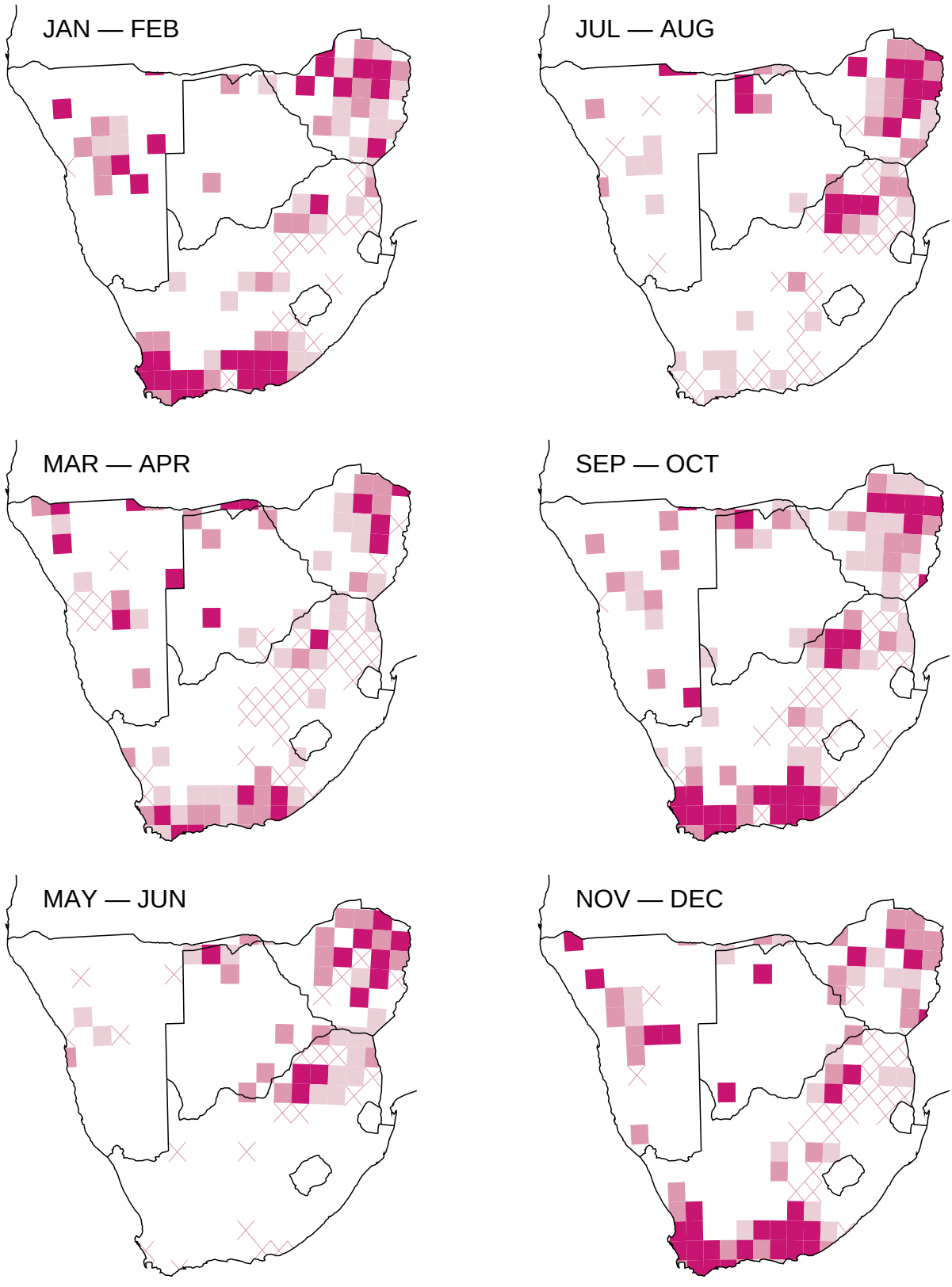






Models of seasonality for Zones. Number of records (top to bottom, left to right):
Occurrence: 40, 35, 25, 307, 349, 438, 64, 296; Breeding: 0, 1, 1, 79, 7, 7, 1, 19.

PEARLBREASTED SWALLOW



Seasonal distribution maps; one-degree grid.