

Black Cuckooshrike

Swartkatakoeroe

Campephaga flava

This partial migrant occurs mainly in the mesic east, extending westwards into northern Botswana and northeastern Namibia and along the southern coast as far as the south-western Cape Province. It occurs northwards into East Africa. It is not a particularly common bird anywhere within its range and, although it is a skulker, the low reporting rate and patchy distribution appropriately reflect its generally localized status. Tarboton *et al.* (1987b) reported a density of *c.* 1 pair/30 ha in broadleaved woodland at Nylsvley (2428C) where it was reported as fairly common to common.

The male has two colour forms: one has a variable amount of yellow on its lesser wing coverts, noticeable as a yellow patch in the carpal area; the other is an all-black bird. Especially in the drier woodland areas where all-black males predominate, there is a possibility of confusion with the Fork-tailed *Dicrurus adsimilis* and Square-tailed *D. ludwigii* Drongos and the Black Flycatcher *Melaenornis pammelaina* (Skead 1966b).

Habitat: It typically occurs in the canopy of moist woodlands, becoming sparser in drier regions, but occurring in both broadleaved and *Acacia* woodland. Highest reporting rates were from Zimbabwe, where it is found in miombo woodland but also in riverine-fringe vegetation and on the edges of montane forests. It is frequent in the riparian woodlands of the Okavango; in the eastern Transvaal, Swaziland and northern KwaZulu-Natal it occurs in both moist and arid woodlands. In the valley bushveld of the eastern Cape Province it remains widespread, though less common, as far as the Alexandria District (3326C).

Movements: It was only relatively recently realized that it has seasonal movements over much of its range; the extent of

these movements appears to vary from year to year, apparently in response to the rainfall of the previous summer and resulting veld conditions. In years of high and prolonged rainfall, a larger proportion overwinter on the interior plateau than in drought or low-rainfall years. In general, movements are more pronounced in drier woodlands than in coastal regions. Autumn movements appear to be eastwards, probably into Mozambique, but also into the major valley systems such as the Zambezi (Irwin 1981) where, once again, the extent of overwintering is dependent on the intensity of the rainfall in the previous summer. Dry-season concentrations are marked where vegetation is sufficiently dense and in clearings of lowland evergreen forest such as those in eastern Zimbabwe (Irwin 1981). The seasonal distribution maps and model for Zone 5 show that, although the first birds return to Zimbabwe from mid-September, most arrive in November, as suggested by Irwin (1981). Further south in the Transvaal and adjacent southeastern Botswana, a more gradual increase in reporting rate is evident September–November (Tarboton *et al.* 1987b; Herremans 1994d). In the interior, reporting rates remain high until April when there is a general exodus, especially in the Transvaal. But in Zimbabwe the decrease is more gradual, continuing through winter, so that minimum reporting rates are July–August in most areas. Further west in the Okavango, where the rains start later (Taljaard 1986), lowest numbers occur July–October. In Namibia, apart from the Caprivi Strip, there is erratic occurrence with the majority of records coming from November–April. Along the southern coast (Zones 4 and 8), there is little indication of seasonality, but Skead's (1966b) comment that it 'is not a consistent occupant of any one place' aptly describes its status as a wanderer in this region.

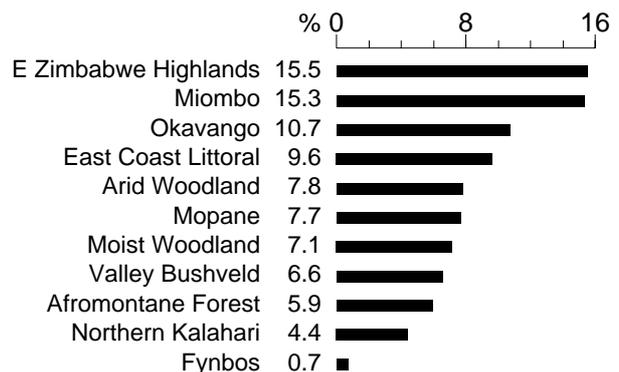
Breeding: In Zimbabwe and the Transvaal (Zones 5 and 6), breeding activity was recorded from October with a peak November–December, tailing off to April. Irwin's (1981) earliest egg-laying records in Zimbabwe were in September, with a peak November–December. In the Transvaal, peak egg-laying is also November–December, but in October in KwaZulu-Natal (Dean 1971; Tarboton *et al.* 1987b).

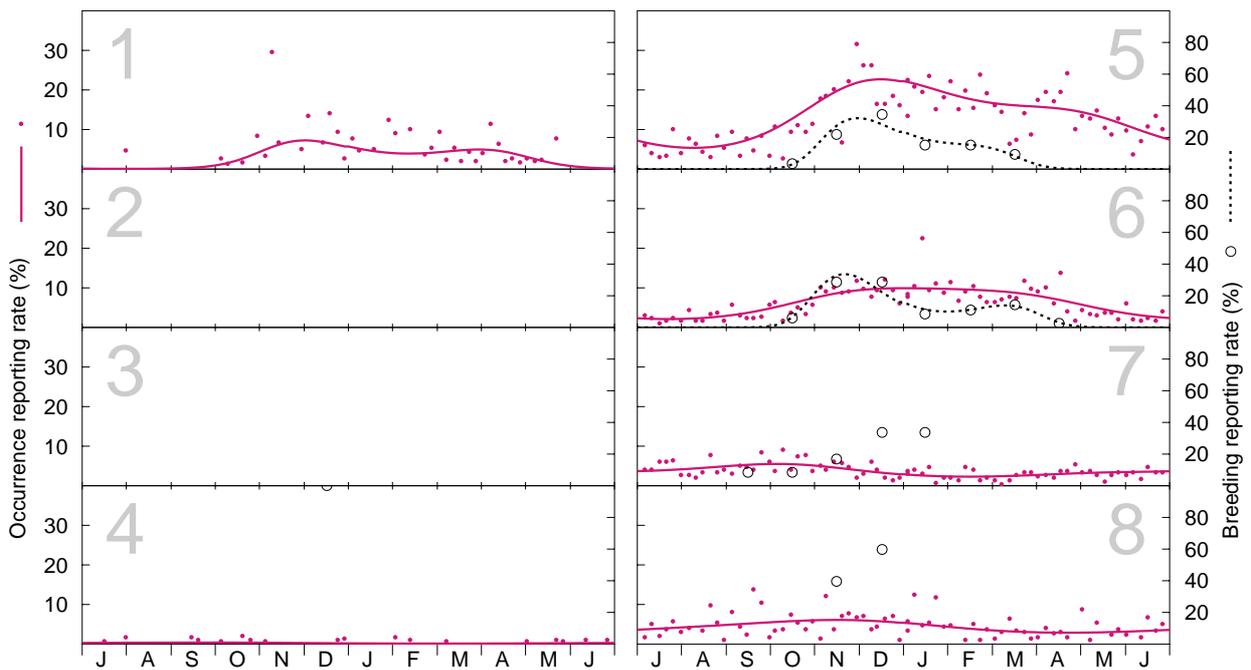
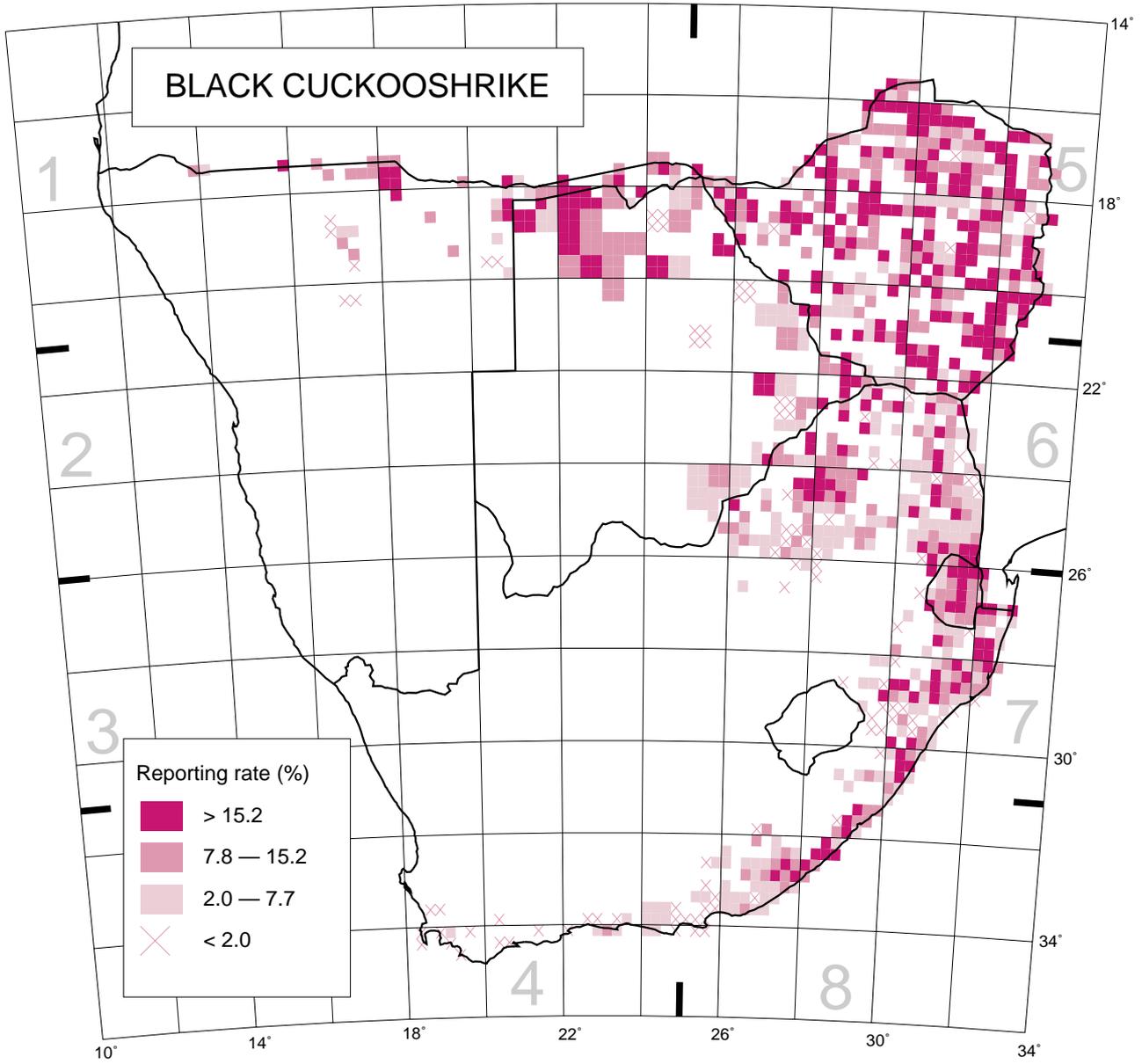
Historical distribution and conservation: There is no indication of any change in the distribution of the Black Cuckooshrike, but there is likely to have been some decline in numbers during the 20th century as a result of widespread destruction of woodland.

A.J. Tree

Recorded in 968 grid cells, 21.3%
Total number of records: 5910
Mean reporting rate for range: 8.2%

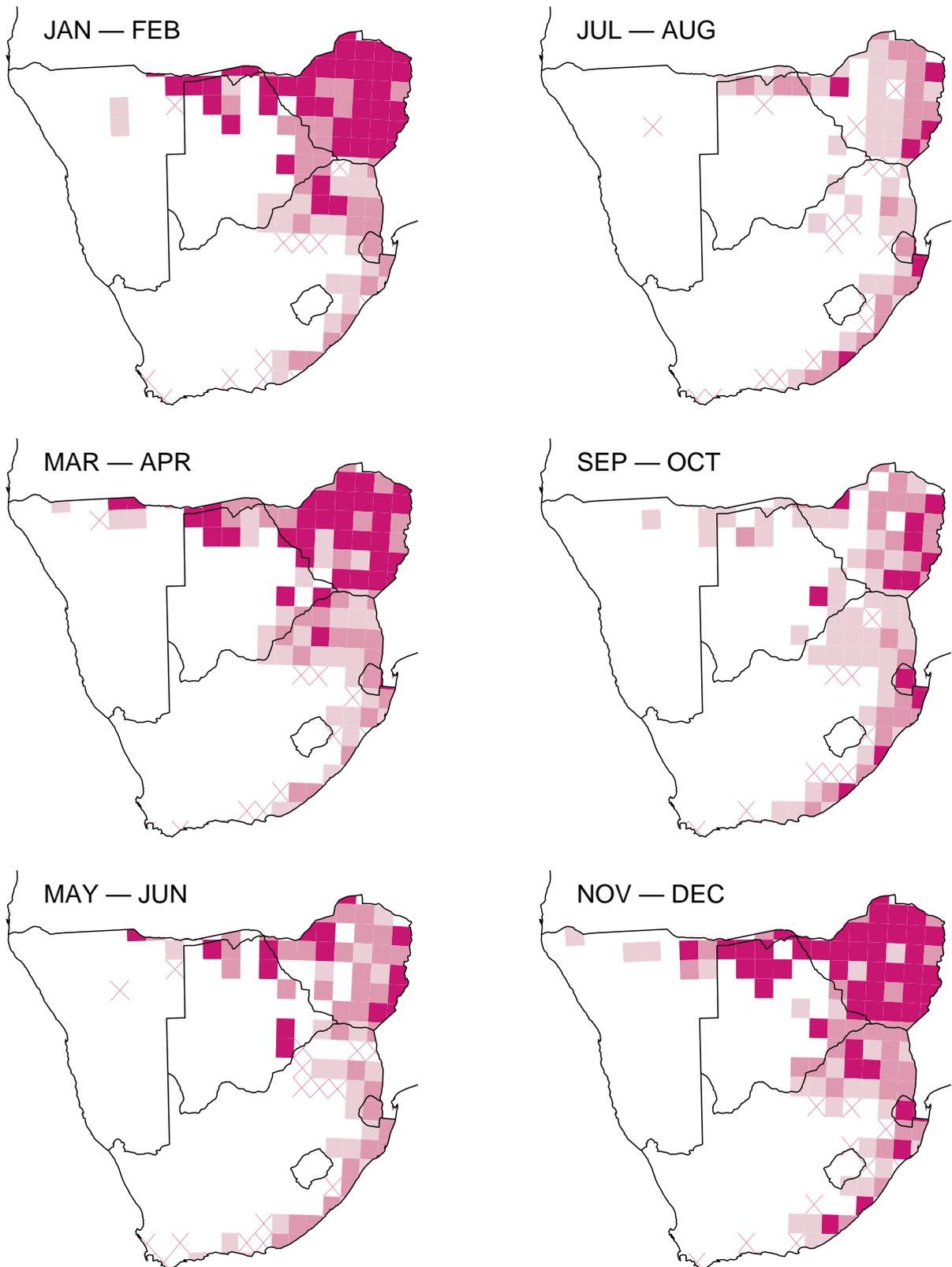
Reporting rates for vegetation types





Models of seasonality for Zones. Number of records (top to bottom, left to right):
 Occurrence: 90, 0, 0, 22, 1176, 720, 719, 240; Breeding: 0, 0, 0, 1, 32, 35, 12, 5.

BLACK CUCKOOSHRIKE



Seasonal distribution maps; one-degree grid.