

## Whitebreasted Cuckooshrike

### Witborskatakoeroe

#### *Coracina pectoralis*

The Whitebreasted Cuckooshrike occurs widely in sub-Saharan Africa. In southern Africa it is found only locally in northeastern Namibia, northern Botswana, and throughout most of Zimbabwe. It is rare in the eastern Transvaal, with records as a vagrant in the northeastern corners of Swaziland and KwaZulu-Natal.

Being an inconspicuous canopy feeder, it tends to be overlooked, which may partly account for the patchy distribution; fragmentation of its primary woodland habitat would produce a similar pattern, however.

**Habitat:** It is typically found in mature miombo woodland. It is nowhere common; in prime habitat in Zimbabwe it has been estimated that one pair may occupy c. 20 ha of woodland but with a rather low reproductive rate (Ginn *et al.* 1989). It also occurs in *Baikiaea* and tall Mopane woodland (Irwin 1981). Breeding birds seem to require extensive and well-developed woodlands, while nonbreeding birds may be found in smaller stands during the winter months, including riparian *Acacia* (Irwin 1981). The vegetation analysis reflects its preference for tall broadleaved woodland.

**Movements:** The models indicate a small degree of seasonality with a peak in Zimbabwe during the winter months; this may be attributed both to winter leaf-fall, when all canopy feeders become more conspicuous, and the fact that it tends to wander more widely at this time. However, within Zimbabwe there is also altitudinal migration with birds descending into the Zambezi and Save river valleys and southwards to the Limpopo Valley during the winter, but it is not known from how far afield they may come (Irwin 1981). There is a vagrant record in June from far out of range along the Molopo River (2523B) (Anon. 1988); this may fit the pattern of movements as an example

of an individual that overshot the normal limits of migration. In the Transvaal it is most frequently recorded in winter but is considered to be resident with local movements during winter (Tarboton *et al.* 1987b), although there may be some movement from Zimbabwe or Mozambique. The scattering of records from northern Botswana and Namibia shows no clear pattern of seasonality.

**Breeding:** The six records from the atlas period, all in Zone 5, are in spring and early summer. This confirms published egg-laying records which span August–December with a marked peak September–October (Irwin 1981).

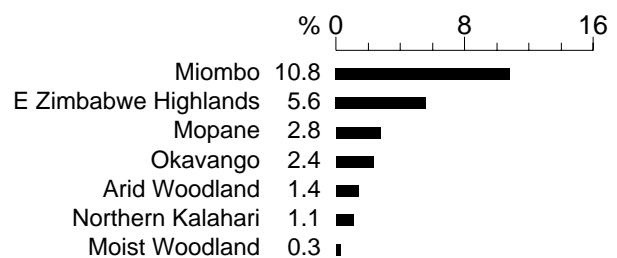
**Interspecific relationships:** It is ecologically well separated from the forest-dwelling Grey Cuckooshrike *C. caesia* (Irwin 1981).

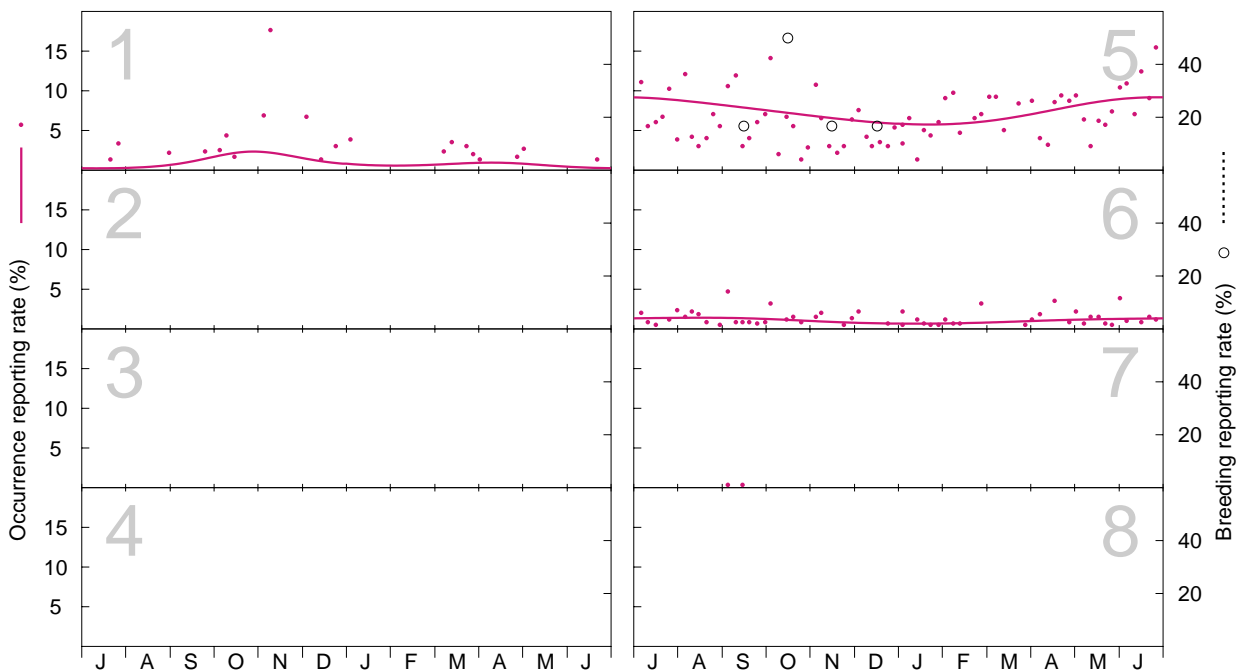
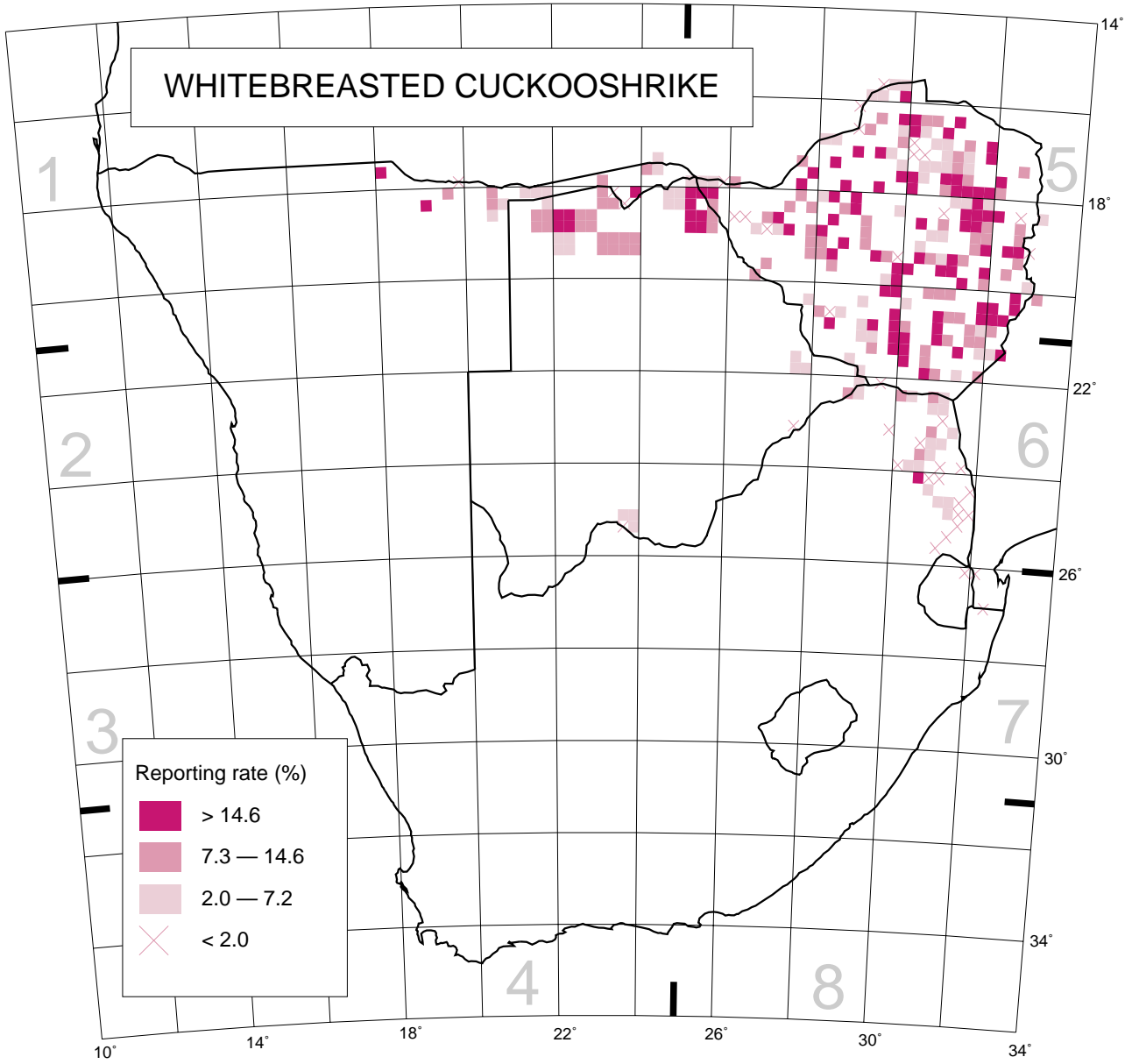
**Historical distribution and conservation:** The historical distribution is not known to differ from that shown here. The Whitebreasted Cuckooshrike is uncommon in the region and is sensitive to woodland clearing. It is listed as 'rare' in South Africa (Brooke 1984b).

A.J. Tree

Recorded in 314 grid cells, 6.9%  
Total number of records: 1215  
Mean reporting rate for range: 8.5%

#### Reporting rates for vegetation types





Models of seasonality for Zones. Number of records (top to bottom, left to right):  
 Occurrence: 29, 0, 0, 0, 651, 121, 2, 0; Breeding: 0, 0, 0, 0, 6, 0, 0, 0.