

African Golden Oriole

Afrikaanse Wielewaal

Oriolus auratus

The African Golden Oriole is an intra-African partial migrant occurring widely in sub-Saharan Africa (Maclean 1993b). In southern Africa it is restricted to the mesic broadleaved woodlands of the northern tropical zone. It occurs in the northeastern Transvaal, northeastern and northern Botswana, most of Zimbabwe, the Caprivi Strip, and northern Namibia. There are strongholds in the miombo and in the Okavango biome, and it is generally fairly common (Hines 1985–87; Brown 1990a). In transect-counts in seven woodland habitats in northern Botswana, an average density of 1 bird/11 ha was recorded (unpubl. data).

It is mostly solitary, shy and unobtrusive outside the breeding season (Maclean 1993b), but males are conspicuous at the onset of breeding (Ginn 1989). They occasionally join mixed bird parties (Maclean 1993b) and congregate in trees with soft berries. It is likely to have been overlooked frequently outside the breeding season, and it might occasionally also have been confused with other orioles.

Habitat: It prefers tall, well-developed broadleaved, deciduous woodland and semi-evergreen riverine galleries. It is particularly found in miombo (Irwin 1981), swamp-fringing gallery woodland in the Okavango biome, tall Mopane and *Baikiaea* woodland. The high reporting rates in the Northern Kalahari biome are mostly due to stands of tall broadleaved woodland (Mopane, *Combretum imberbe*, *Terminalia prunioides*) occurring as a mosaic in this biome, particularly to the south and west of the Okavango, where the African Golden Oriole is common (Brewster

1991). It avoids open *Acacia* savanna, but occurs in closed woodlands mixed with tall *Acacias*, such as *A. erioloba*, west and south of the Okavango, *A. nigrescens* in swamp fringing woodland in the Okavango biome, *A. galpinii* in riverine woodlands in the Limpopo River drainage, and *A. albida* in the Zambezi River valley (pers. obs).

Movements: It is almost entirely migratory in the west of the range (Zone 1), but only partially so in the northeast (Zone 5), where it regularly winters in miombo and in the lowlands of Zimbabwe. Despite frequent wintering, many also leave in the dry season. It may be that birds wintering in Zimbabwe are residents from the local population, while migratory birds in the west all move towards Central Africa. In the west, most birds arrive on the breeding grounds from November onwards, when the habitat is restored to full foliage, and departure is in May (Brewster 1991). There is significant northward passage through Zimbabwe in late April and early May (Irwin 1981).

Breeding: The only breeding records in the atlas data were from Zimbabwe, and confirm breeding there in early spring and summer, August–January, but mainly September–November (Irwin 1981). Breeding in the western part of the range, where the species is migratory, must be later, in mid- or late summer; a single record from Botswana is in March (Skinner 1995).

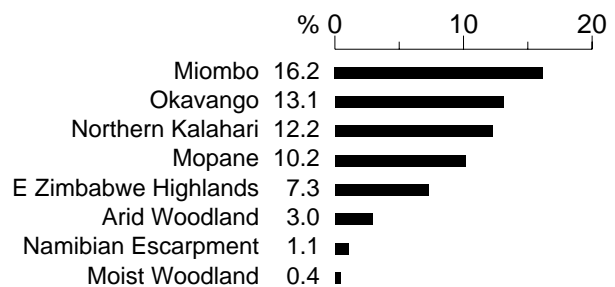
Interspecific relationships: The African Golden Oriole is more restricted to tall broadleaved woodlands in tropical areas than the European Golden Oriole *O. oriolus*, and it outnumbered the latter in this habitat (Hines 1985–87; Brown 1990a). The African Golden Oriole also overlaps widely with the Blackheaded Oriole *O. larvatus*, and outnumbered the latter in tall woodlands of the northern Kalahari. All three oriole species can occasionally be found alongside each other, but interactions, exclusions or specializations still remain to be documented (cf. text for European Golden Oriole).

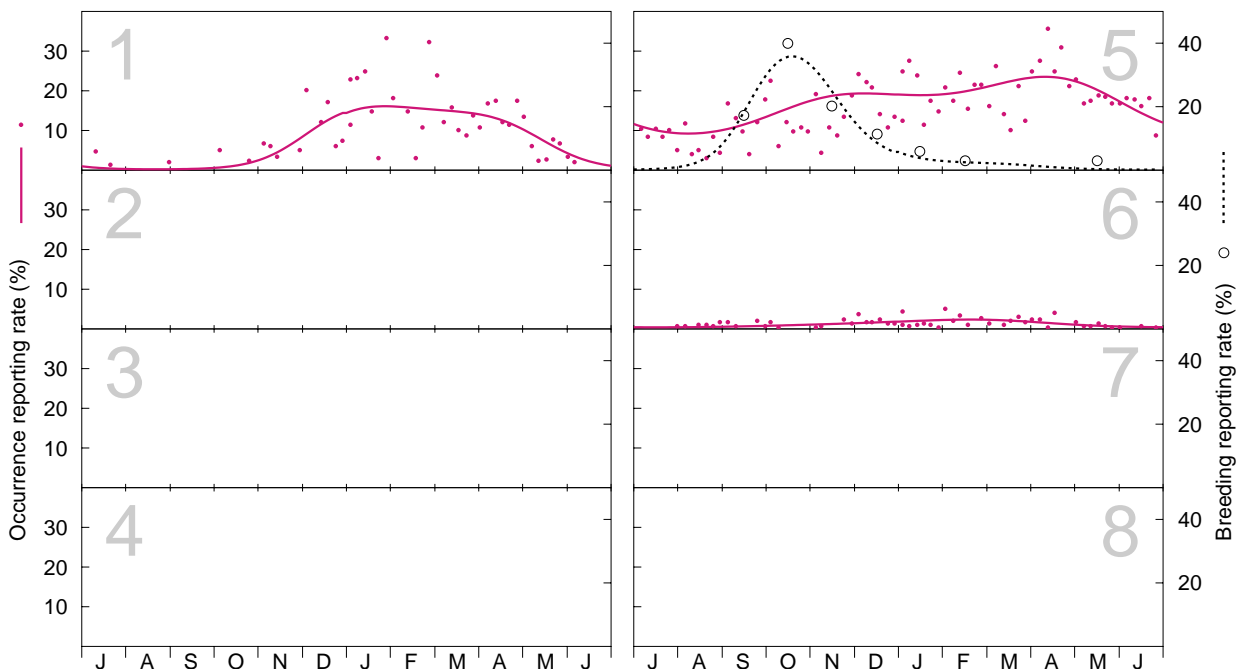
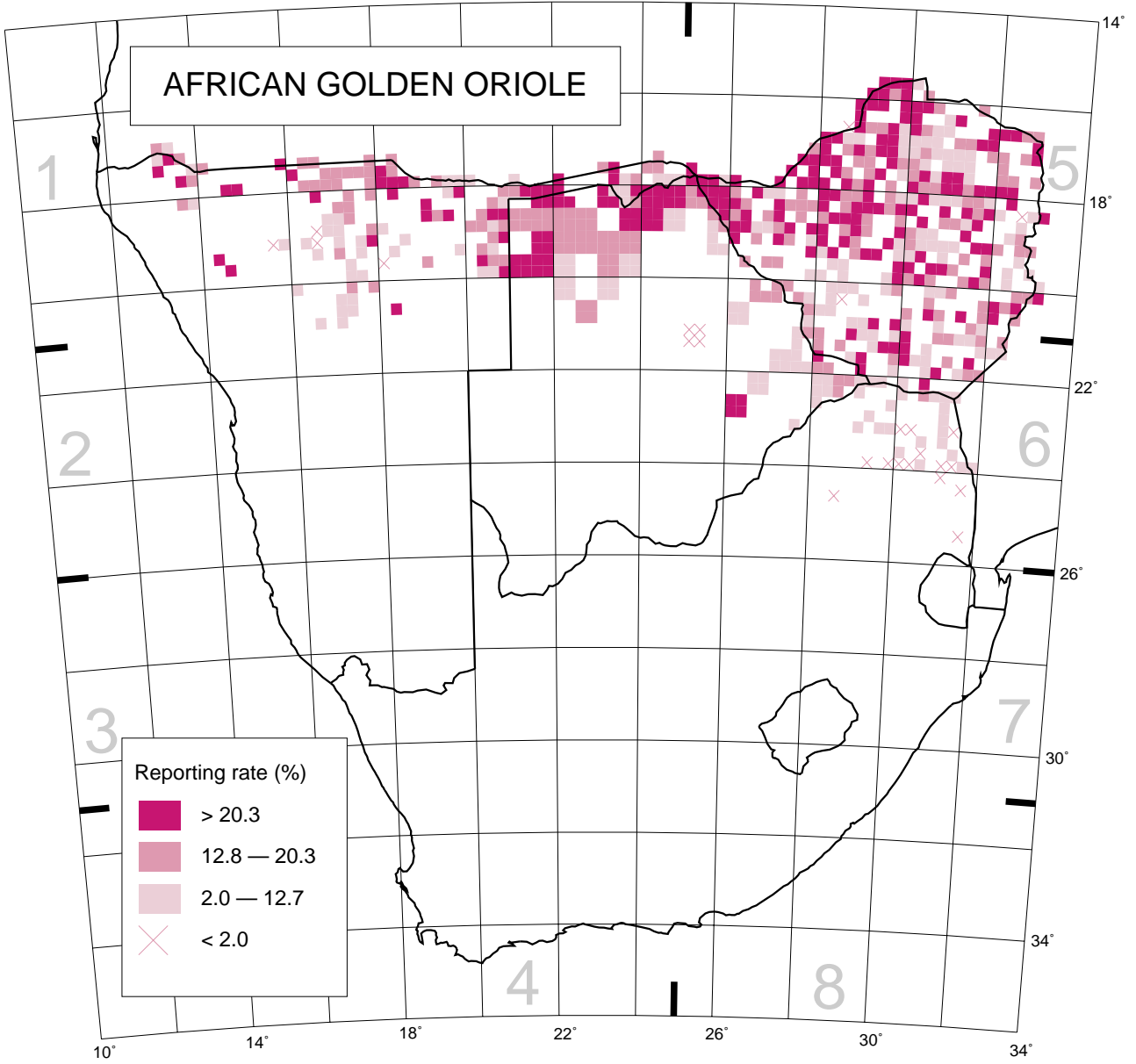
Historical distribution and conservation: The range is not known to have changed significantly, though it is likely to have lost habitat by the clearing of miombo. The African Golden Oriole is common in the region (and beyond), and is not considered to be of immediate conservation concern, though the continued degradation of tall woodland may affect numbers locally.

M. Herremans

Recorded in 666 grid cells, 14.7%
Total number of records: 2767
Mean reporting rate for range: 13.4%

Reporting rates for vegetation types





Models of seasonality for Zones. Number of records (top to bottom, left to right):
 Occurrence: 232, 0, 0, 0, 1463, 139, 0, 0; Breeding: 0, 0, 0, 0, 35, 0, 0, 0.