

Barecheeked Babbler

Kaalwangkatlagter

Turdoides gymnogenys

The Barecheeked Babbler is near-endemic to southern Africa, extending into the extreme southwest of Angola (Maclean 1993b). The distribution is centred on the dry, northwestern escarpment, but further east there is a second, almost isolated stronghold in the Mopane belt. The species is considered monotypic (Clancey 1980b). The total Namibian range was estimated from atlas records to be 85 000 km² (Robertson 1993), but sightings further east than the Otavi Mountains (18°E) are best treated with caution because of thin atlas coverage and possible confusion with Pied Babblers *T. bicolor*. Mean densities recorded were 4–6 birds/km², which is equivalent to 1 group/km².

Average group size was 4.5 birds in a 1993 survey (Robertson *et al.* 1995). Despite being conspicuous, it was recorded in this survey in several grid cells where it was not seen during the atlas period. The Pied Babbler, particularly when immature, is superficially similar to the Barecheeked Babbler, and may be confused both in appearance and voice. The present map has been carefully vetted and is thought to be comprehensive and accurate.

Habitat: It prefers dry riverbeds dominated by Mopane woodland, preferably on broken ground, in which habitat it is the commonest babbler.

Movements: Because the entire range is contained within Zone 1, the analysis of seasonality is not able to detect movements. Furthermore, the species is too poorly studied to know whether movements occur, but colour-ringed birds remained year-round in a study area at Hobatere (1914AD), west of Etosha (S. Braine pers. comm.), and it is therefore likely that the species is mainly resident.

Breeding: Six records for Namibia indicate that egg-laying occurs July–January (Brown & Clinning in press.).

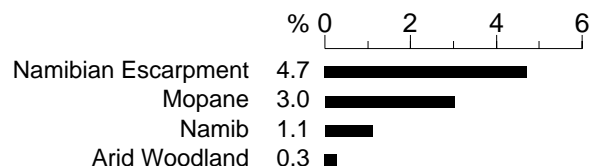
Interspecific relationships: It is sympatric with the Pied Babbler over much of its range, but prefers different habitat: the Barecheeked Babbler chiefly occupies Mopane-dominated habitat and the Pied Babbler *Acacia*-dominated habitat on Kalahari sands.

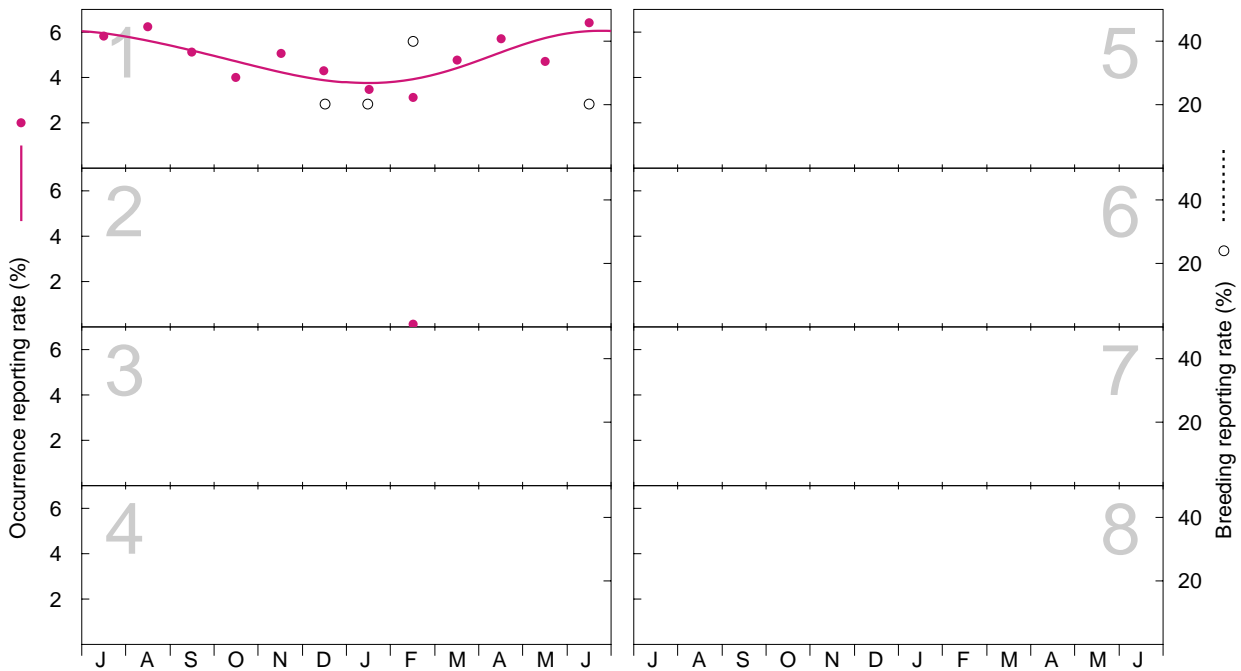
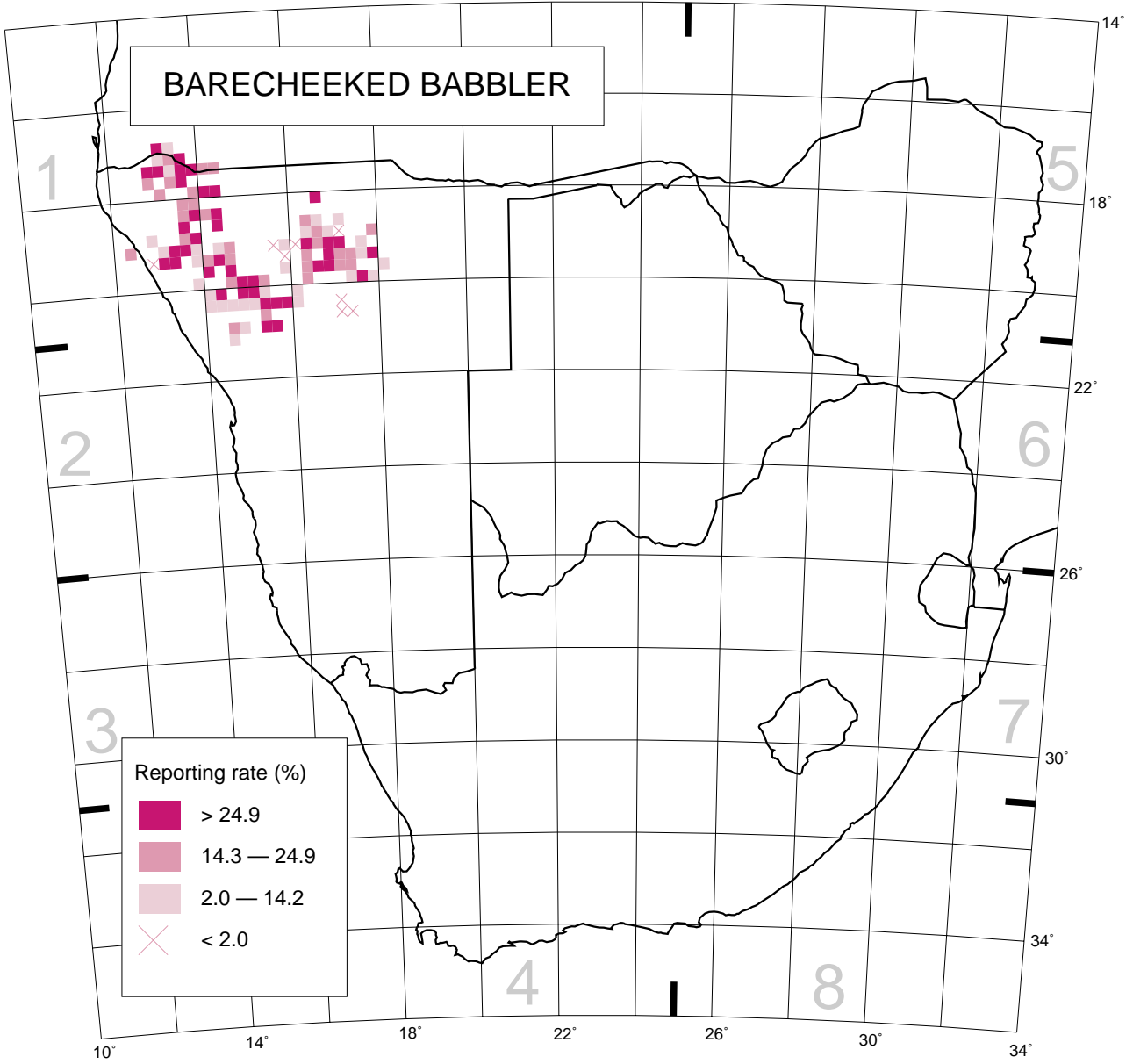
Historical distribution and conservation: Its present range is not known to differ from the historical range. Its rugged escarpment habitat and occurrence within the western parts of the Etosha National Park suggest that the Barecheeked Babbler is not of immediate conservation concern.

R.E. Simmons

Recorded in 110 grid cells, 2.4%
Total number of records: 458
Mean reporting rate for range: 14.7%

Reporting rates for vegetation types





Models of seasonality for Zones. Number of records (top to bottom, left to right):
 Occurrence: 456, 1, 0, 0, 0, 0, 0, 0; Breeding: 5, 0, 0, 0, 0, 0, 0, 0.