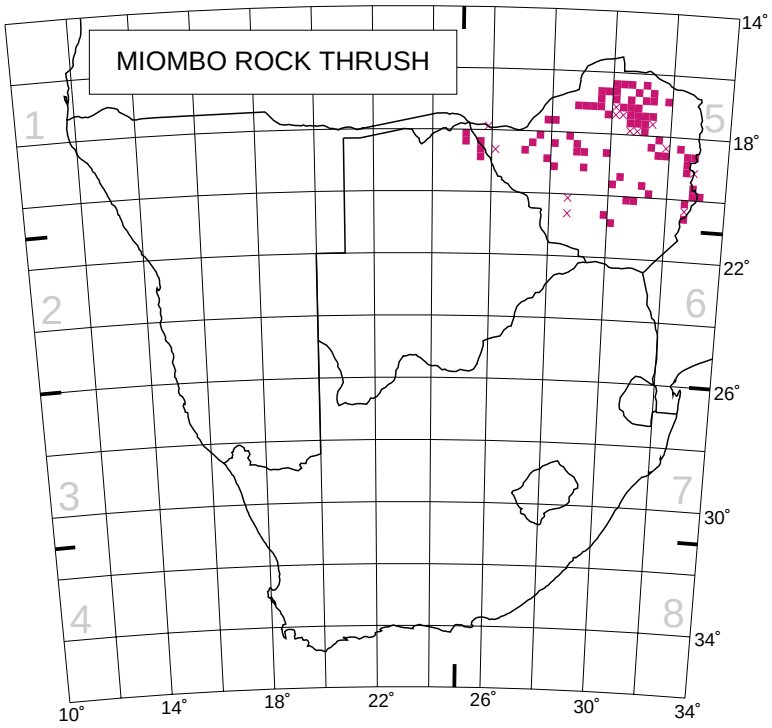
Miombo Rock Thrush

Angolakliplyster

Monticola angolensis



The Miombo Rock Thrush is essentially confined to the miombo woodlands, both the *Brachystegia* of the basal granite shield of the Zimbabwe highveld, and the *Baikiaea* of the Kalahari sandveld in the west. It marginally enters northern Botswana (Bishop 1995), where it also breeds (Skinner 1996b). It extends northwards into Zambia, Zaire, Malawi and Tanzania. The birds occupying miombo woodlands in the eastern highlands of Zimbabwe have been considered sub-specifically distinct from all other birds in the region (Clancey 1980b), though not unequivocally (Irwin 1981).

It is the only rock thrush which is not associated with rocks, but is usually found in relatively open woodlands with large trees. It is nowhere common, and although a very active species when feeding, it is easily overlooked because it retreats at the first sign of disturbance. Its call is not loud, but is distinctive. It is more conspicuous in spring when birds are strongly territorial and calling; this is probably the reason for the hint of seasonality in the model.

It is resident and pairs can be found in the same general areas throughout the year. The chicks of the year remain with their parents for at least 3–6 months after fledging.

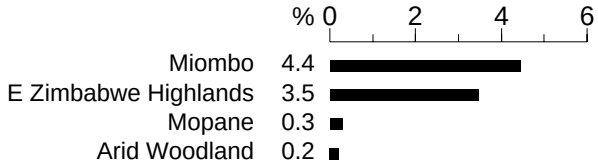
It builds a cup-shaped nest of vegetable material in a comparatively large natural hole in a tree, often in living trees. Good nesting holes are used year after year if the birds are not disturbed. Many, if not most, of these holes are liable to be flooded when the rains start, so the birds usually breed in early spring (August–December) with peak egglaying September–October (Irwin 1981); there was a record of breeding activity in January in the atlas.

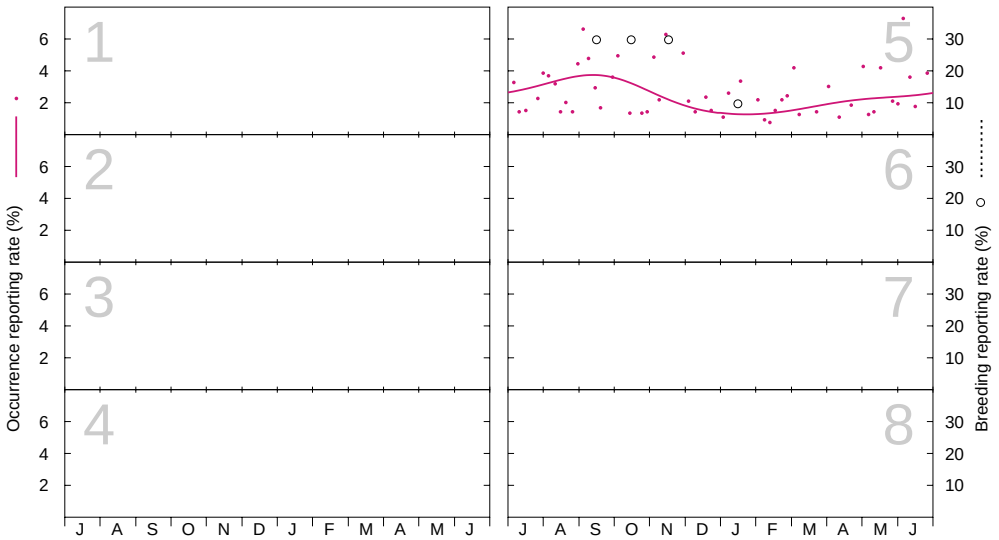
It is striking that it is absent from many areas in the *Brachystegia* woodlands where apparently suitable habitat, similar to that of occupied areas, occurs. The Miombo Rock Thrush has been adversely affected by the clearing of woodland for agriculture, but is not endangered. It is one of the first species to disappear when woodlands are disturbed, especially if nesting trees are removed.

P.J. Ginn

Recorded in 85 grid cells, 1.9%
Total number of records: 338
Mean reporting rate for range: 7.4%

Reporting rates for vegetation types





Models of seasonality for Zones. Number of records (top to bottom, left to right):
Occurrence: 0, 0, 0, 0, 212, 0, 0, 0; Breeding: 0, 0, 0, 0, 10, 0, 0, 0.