

## Karoo Robin

### Slangverklikker

*Erythropygia coryphaeus*

The Karoo Robin is aptly named because it occurs in the whole of the Karoo biome and is largely confined to it, being therefore endemic to southern Africa. Its distribution covers most of the Cape Province, excluding the far northern parts, and extends into the western Free State and southern Namibia; it occurs marginally in western Lesotho (Bonde 1993).

Reporting rates indicate that it is relatively uncommon north of, and in areas of deep sand south of the Orange River, and in the very arid Tankwa Karoo (3119, 3219). On the west coast it is clearly more abundant in the coastal strandveld than in the fynbos and succulent Karoo further inland, but the core of its distribution is in the southern Nama Karoo where reporting rates were almost uniformly high.

The distribution map shows areas of lower reporting rates along a possible geographical separation between the nominate race in the southern Nama Karoo and *E. c. cinerea* along the west coast in Succulent Karoo; also between the nominate race and *abbotti* in the northern parts of the Nama Karoo. The fourth race, *eurina* in the east, appears to be continuous with the nominate race (Clancey 1994a).

It is common, conspicuous, noisy and easily identified. Its greyish plumage may have caused some confusion with the Karoo Chat *Cercomela schlegelii*, but the tails of these two species provide easily recognized features in the field.

**Habitat:** It is associated with scrub but spends much of the time on the ground; it is not usually found amongst trees or in very open situations. Preferred scrub is intermediate

in height between the low scrub found on Karoo plains and the much taller scrub found in many watercourses, typically relatively dense and waist-high with some interspersed bare ground, on patches of flat, poorly drained ground. In the fynbos biome it is not found in montane or coastal fynbos but in renosterveld and strandveld which are relatively dry and often have the appropriate structure, particularly the element of bare ground. It can be found in rocky situations but appears not to ascend above the lower slopes of mountains. It has been observed to visit beaches to forage amongst seaweed (Keith *et al.* 1992). Its penetration of grassy regions in the east is limited by the availability of suitable scrub (Earlé & Grobler 1987).

**Movements:** It is believed to be sedentary. The mid-summer decreases in reporting rates apparent in the models are probably linked to a period of post-breeding moult during which time birds behave less conspicuously.

**Breeding:** There is a spring–summer season which appears to be earlier (September–October peak) in the winter-rainfall southwestern Cape Province (Zone 4) than elsewhere. Egg-laying has been recorded August–November with a September–October peak in the winter-rainfall area (Winterbottom 1968a), but August–February with a November peak in Namibia (Brown & Clinning in press).

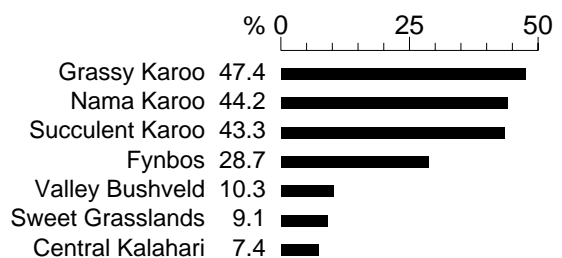
**Interspecific relationships:** The Afrikaans name refers to its habit of loudly scolding potential predators, including snakes. Its range widely overlaps that of the Cape Robin *Cossypha caffra* and marginally that of the Kalahari Robin *E. paena*, but the former is found in taller, moister thickets and the latter on better-drained, sandy substrates in the Kalahari basin, usually in taller scrub. Brood parasitism by the Diederik Cuckoo *Chrysococcyx caprius* has been recorded in the eastern Cape Province (Keith *et al.* 1992).

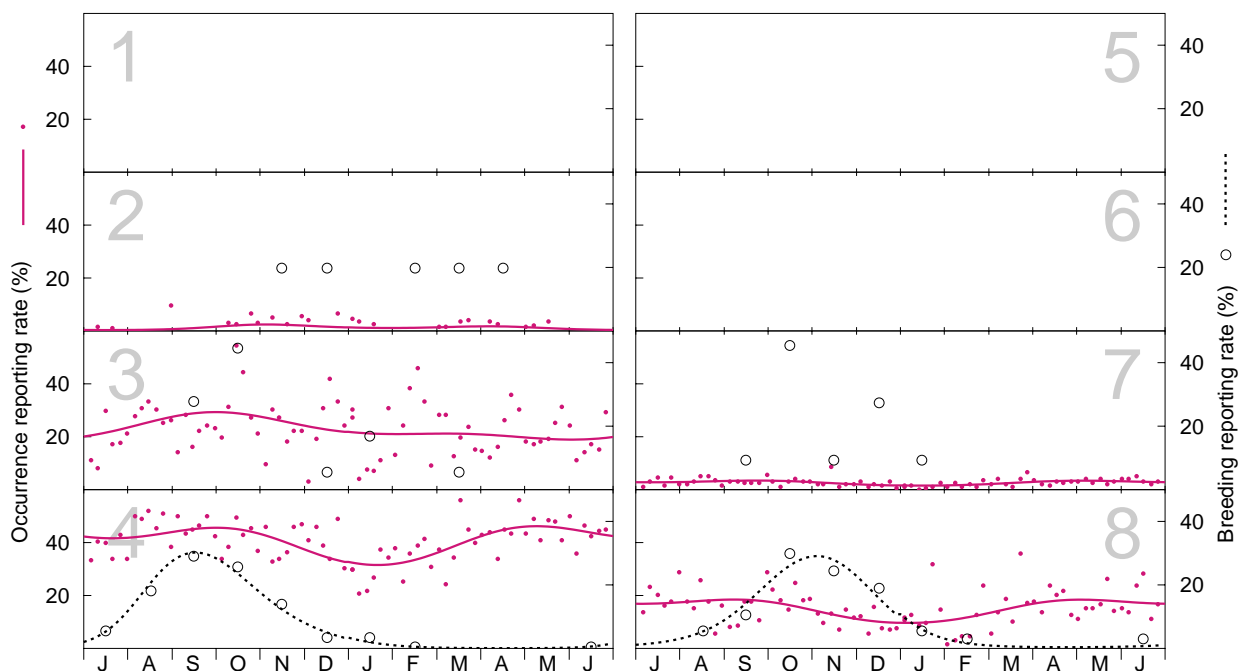
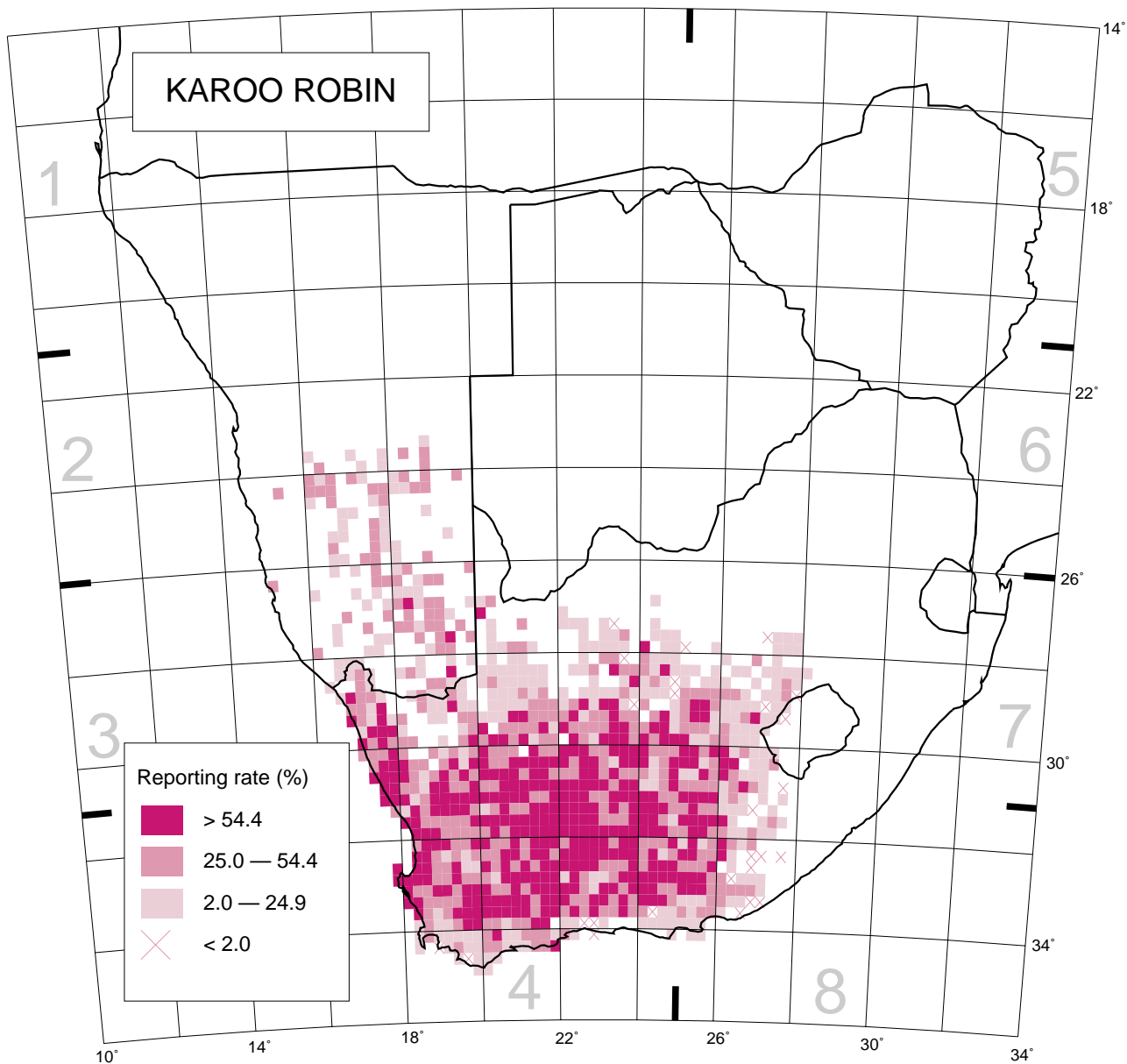
**Historical distribution and conservation:** The large-scale destruction of renosterveld for wheat farming must have caused local extinctions over quite large areas in the southwestern Cape Province. The bulk of the range in the semi-arid Karoo is relatively undisturbed, however, and is likely to remain so for the foreseeable future; the Karoo Robin therefore gives no cause for conservation concern at present.

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Recorded in 1043 grid cells, 23.0%  
Total number of records: 14 231  
Mean reporting rate for range: 32.7%

#### Reporting rates for vegetation types





Models of seasonality for Zones. Number of records (top to bottom, left to right):  
 Occurrence: 0, 43, 1263, 3593, 0, 0, 521, 839; Breeding: 0, 5, 18, 208, 0, 0, 11, 37.