

Yellow Warbler

Geelsanger

Chloropeta natalensis

This common Afrotropical resident is found from Cameroon to Ethiopia, south to Angola in the west and South Africa in the east (Ginn *et al.* 1989). In southern Africa the Yellow Warbler ranges through the eastern half of Zimbabwe, the eastern Transvaal, Swaziland, KwaZulu-Natal and the eastern Cape Province to just north of East London (3327BB). Atlas data suggest that it occurs further west than previously documented (Maclean 1993b).

It occurs most frequently in three areas: the eastern highlands of Zimbabwe; the southeastern Transvaal and western Swaziland, where it seems to be restricted to the escarpment and is a rare visitor to the lowveld and northern KwaZulu-Natal (Tarboton *et al.* 1987b); and the Drakensberg, southern KwaZulu-Natal and eastern Cape Province. It has been recorded along the western Zambezi River valley and the eastern portion of the Caprivi Strip (Maclean 1993b), but atlas data suggest that these were probably vagrants. There is a distinct gap in its range in the northern midlands region of KwaZulu-Natal where unsuitable habitat, in the form of dry thornveld, dominates in the Tugela River valley (Cyrus & Robson 1980). Most of the

southern African range is occupied by the nominate race, but birds on the Mashonaland plateau in Zimbabwe are considered subspecifically distinct (Clancey 1980b).

It keeps low down in the vegetation and is easily overlooked unless singing. When disturbed it drops down into the vegetation and creeps away (Maclean 1993b).

Habitat: It has a preference for scattered scrub and rank vegetation along streams and gullies, and is often recorded at the edge of evergreen forest or woodland areas surrounding vleis, reedbeds or dams (Cyrus & Robson 1980; Ginn *et al.* 1989; Maclean 1993b). Its primary stronghold is in the moist vleis, rivers and wetland areas of the Eastern Zimbabwe Highlands and Miombo, where it had the highest reporting rates, followed by several other biomes to the south.

Movements: The models reveal no evidence for seasonal movements, and it appears to be resident throughout its range. Reporting rates in the eastern part of the subcontinent peak in summer, during breeding when it is singing and displaying, making it more conspicuous. Although no evidence of movements can be detected in the atlas data, it apparently undergoes post-breeding altitudinal migration, moving to lower altitudes during the winter months (Cyrus & Robson 1980; Irwin 1981; Ginn *et al.* 1989; Johnson & Maclean 1994).

Breeding: Breeding was recorded in the tropical and subtropical areas on the east of the subcontinent. Atlas data showed breeding activity September–April with a peak November–December, which accords with published information (Dean 1971; Irwin 1981; Tarboton *et al.* 1987b).

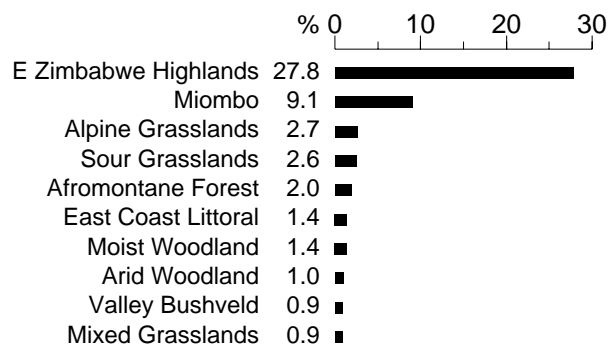
Interspecific relationships: Initially treated by taxonomists as a flycatcher, it has only recently been placed in the warbler family. In habits, appearance and nestbuilding, this species is much like the *Acrocephalus* warblers (Priest 1935; Ginn *et al.* 1989). It may compete with *Acrocephalus* and *Bradypterus* warblers with which it shares its habitat.

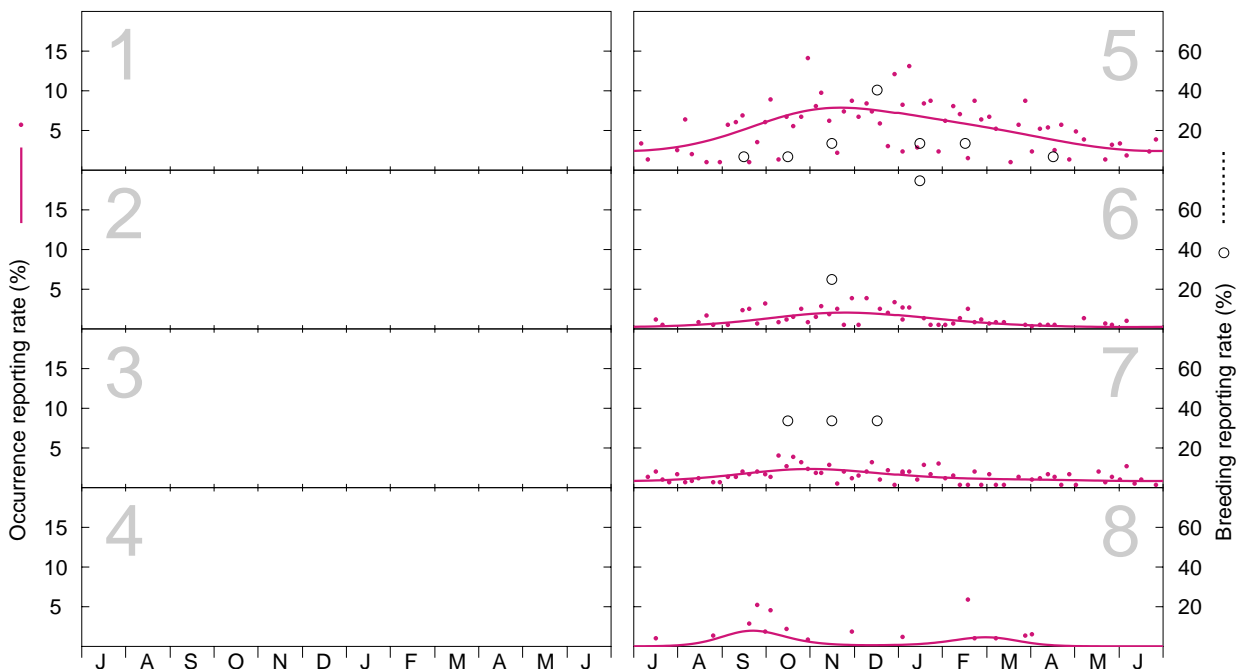
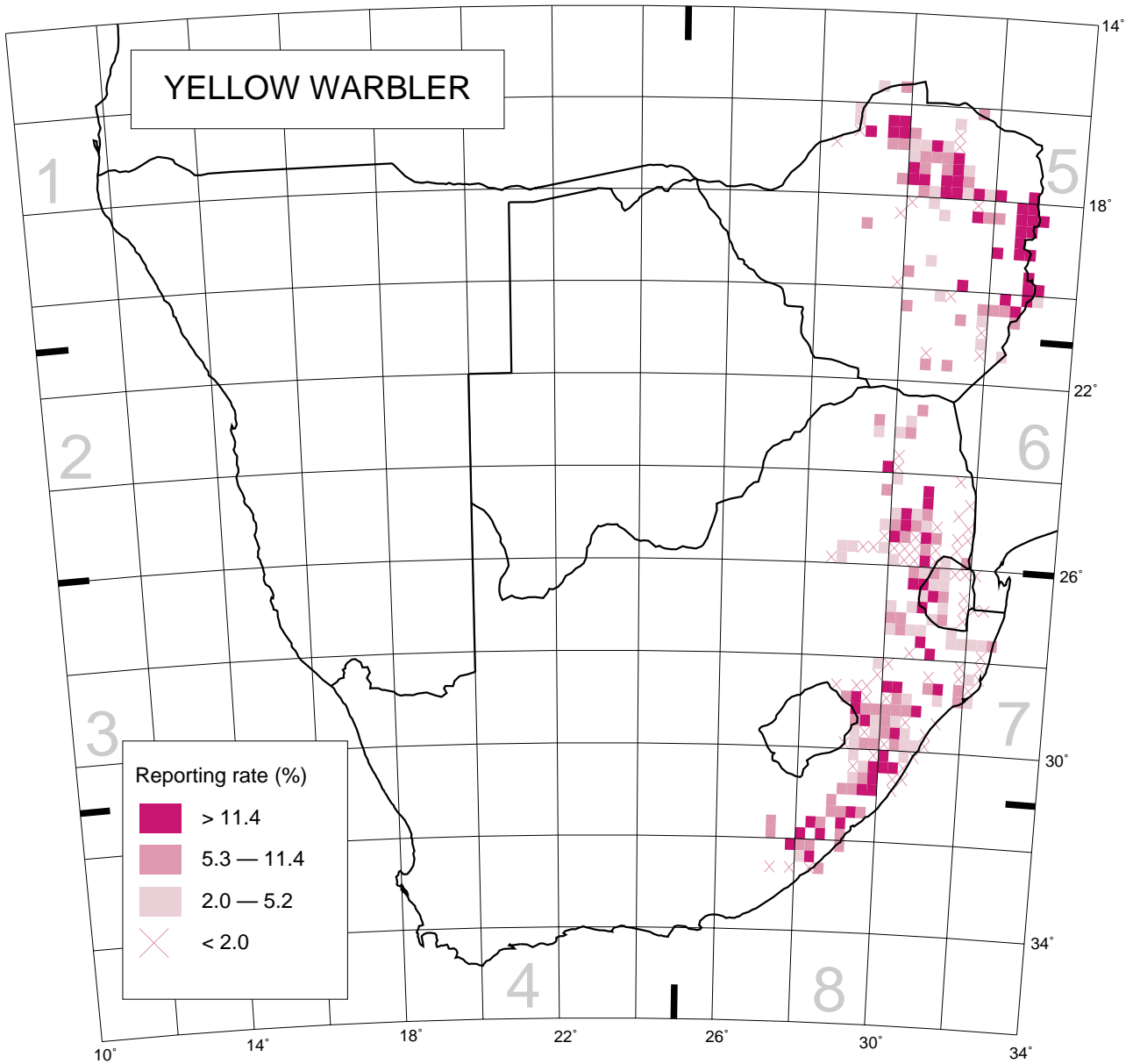
Historical distribution and conservation: There is no evidence to suggest that the present-day distribution is different from the historical one. The Yellow Warbler is widespread in southern and eastern Africa and is not included in the lists of threatened species (Brooke 1984b; Collar *et al.* 1994).

K.N. Barnes

Recorded in 291 grid cells, 6.4%
Total number of records: 1852
Mean reporting rate for range: 6.3%

Reporting rates for vegetation types





Models of seasonality for Zones. Number of records (top to bottom, left to right):
 Occurrence: 0, 0, 0, 0, 436, 107, 273, 30; Breeding: 0, 0, 0, 0, 15, 4, 6, 0.