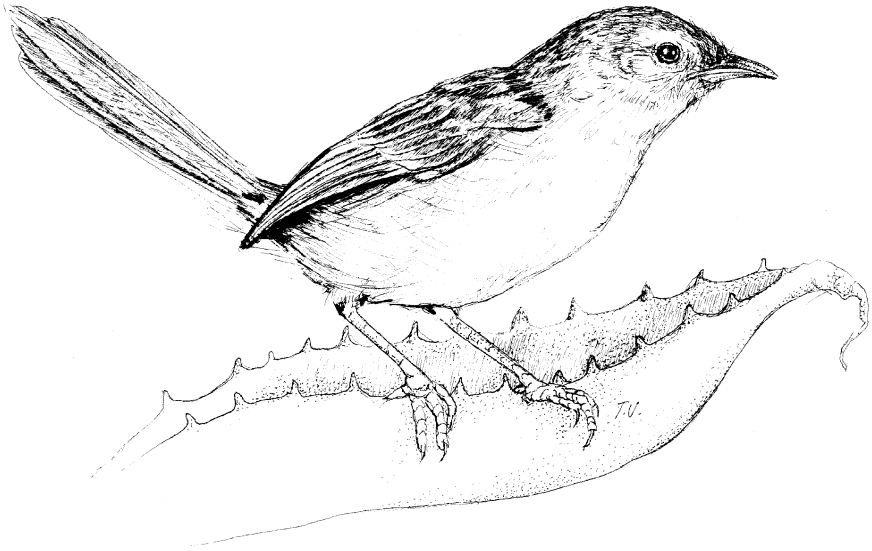


Lazy Cisticola

Luitinktinkie

Cisticola aberrans

The Lazy Cisticola is widely distributed in southcentral Africa and fairly common in the moist eastern and northern areas of southern Africa. Beyond southern Africa, it occurs in Zambia, Malawi, Mozambique and Tanzania. In South Africa it is widespread from the eastern Cape Province through KwaZulu-Natal, to the eastern Free State and the Transvaal. It is common in Swaziland and widely distributed in Zimbabwe. It occurs sparsely in eastern Botswana. It does not occur above 1350 m in Zimbabwe (Irwin 1981) but is recorded up to 2440 m in the Drakensberg range (Little & Bainbridge 1992).

It occurs in pairs or family groups, and is unobtrusive, foraging low down in vegetation or on the ground, usually being detected by its call. It is readily misidentified for the Tawnyflanked Prinia *Prinia subflava*, which has similar calls, appearance and behaviour, and occurs in the same habitats. The ranges of these species overlap considerably. In the eastern Transvaal the local races of Wailing *C. lais* and Lazy Cisticolas are so similar that misidentification may have occurred. Elsewhere in southern Africa, the relatively plain back should preclude confusion with other 'longtailed' cisticolas.

The taxonomy of the Lazy Cisticola has been problematic. There are three taxa in the region (Clancey 1980b): *C. a. minor* occurs in the lowlands from the eastern Cape Province through KwaZulu-Natal and eastern Swaziland to Mozambique, and the nominate race occurs in the uplands. In Zimbabwe, the form *nyika* occurs in a different habitat type and has a different call to populations south of the Limpopo River, and may be a separate species.

Habitat: It usually occurs on rocky slopes with grass, dense scrub and occasional trees and thickets, sometimes also along valley bottoms and in gullies. It also occurs in rank grass, shrubs and bracken on damp ground, sometimes on the edges of forests. In Zimbabwe it occurs mainly on rocky outcrops within miombo (*Brachystegia*) woodland (Irwin 1981).

Movements: It is resident. Modelled reporting rates show very little seasonal change, presumably because it is vocal throughout the year. Unlike other cisticolas, the male does not have an aerial display or occupy exposed call-sites during the breeding season. It is not known to show local movements in southern Africa (Irwin 1981; Tarboton *et al.* 1987b; Johnson & Maclean 1994).

Breeding: Atlas records were all during the wet summer months, October–April. Egglaying has been recorded October–February in KwaZulu-Natal (Dean 1971), October–March in the Transvaal and Botswana (Tarboton *et al.* 1987b; Skinner 1995a), and September–April (mainly October–December) in Zimbabwe (Irwin 1981).

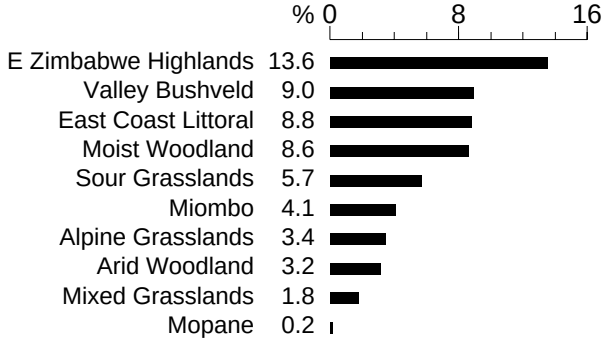
Interspecific relationships: It occupies similar habitats to the Tawnyflanked Prinia and the two species appear to have similar ecological requirements, although the Lazy Cisticola is more closely associated with rocky outcrops. The Lazy Cisticola uses lower vegetation levels than the Rattling Cisticola *C. chiniana*. It may compete with the Wailing Cisticola, both species occurring on moist grassy hillsides, and it is also thought to compete locally with the Redfaced Cisticola *C. erythrops* in Zimbabwe (Irwin 1981).

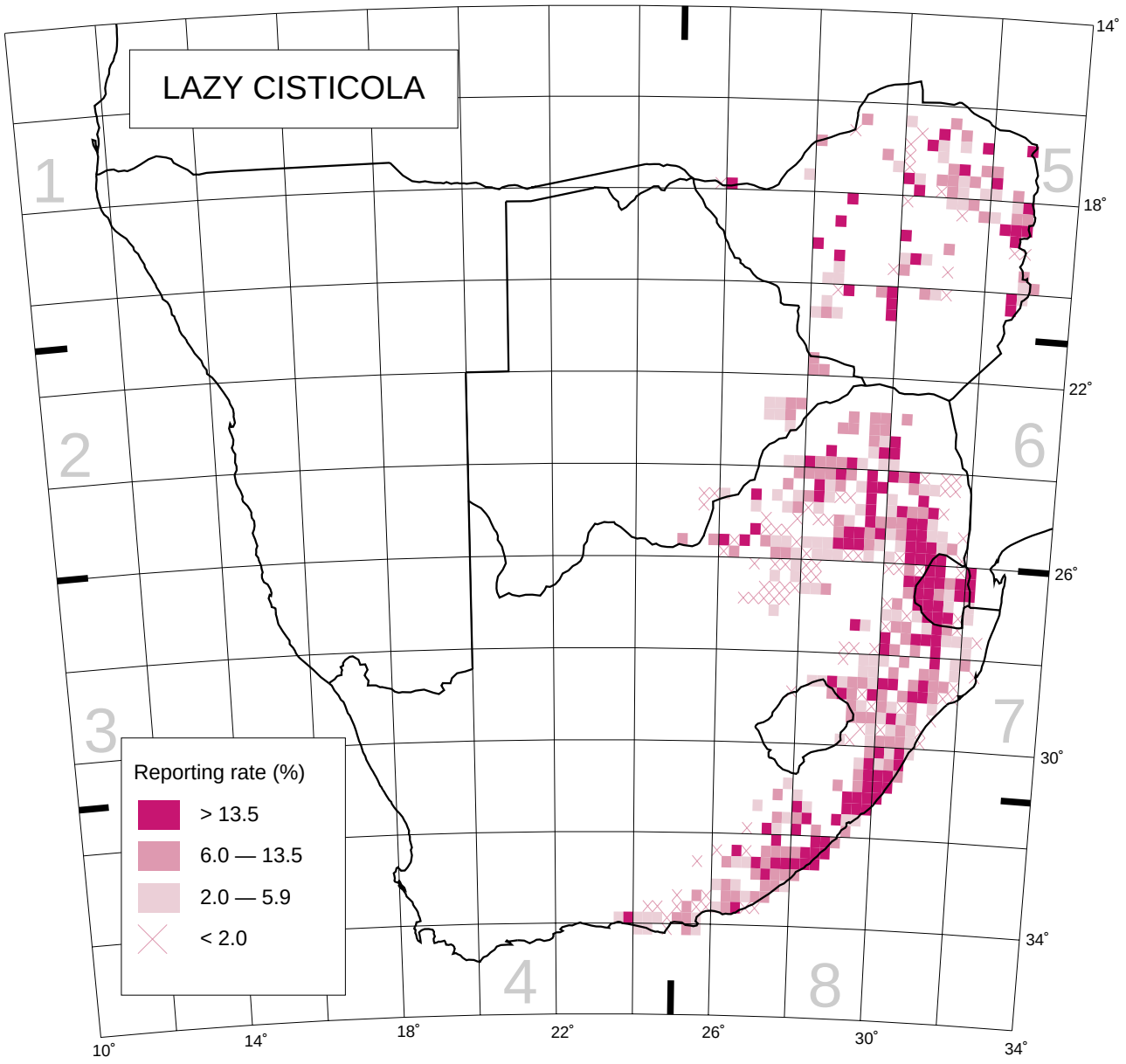
Historical distribution and conservation: Its historical distribution is not known to have differed significantly from that recorded here. The Lazy Cisticola is widely distributed and is not threatened by land-use practices, although its abundance is likely to be reduced by afforestation.

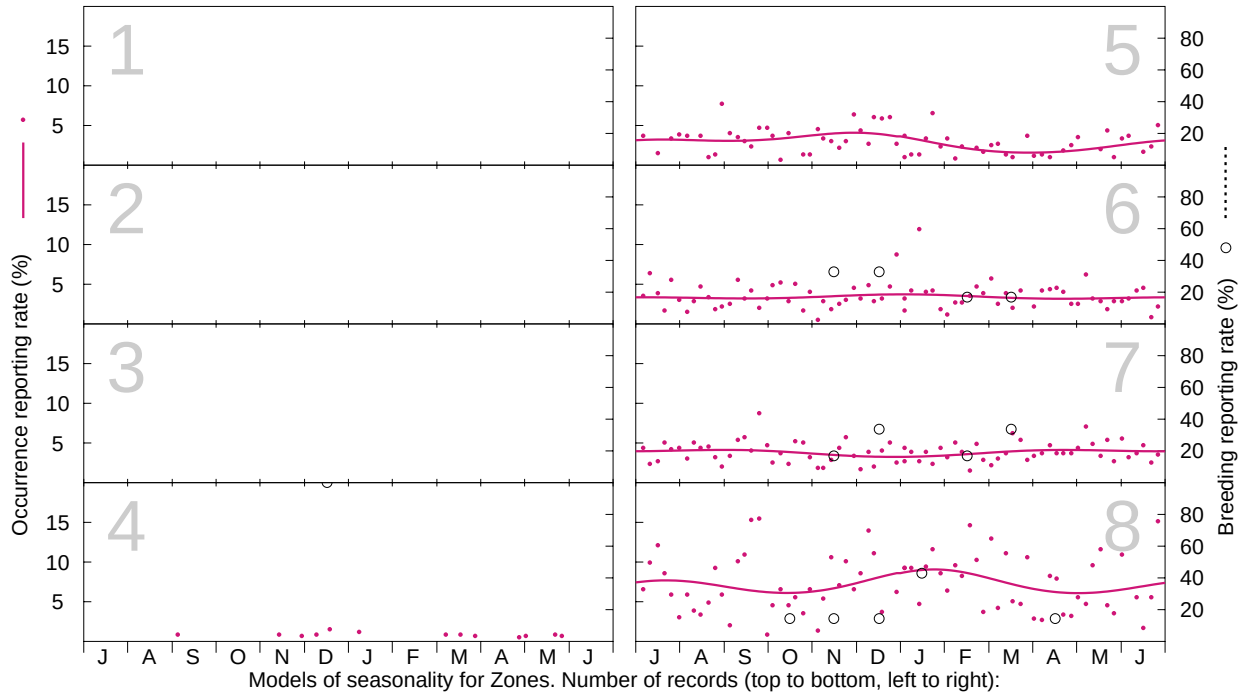
A. Berruti

Recorded in 524 grid cells, 11.5%
Total number of records: 4633
Mean reporting rate for range: 7.9%

Reporting rates for vegetation types







Models of seasonality for Zones. Number of records (top to bottom, left to right):
Occurrence: 0, 0, 0, 14, 250, 385, 745, 394; Breeding: 0, 0, 0, 2, 0, 6, 6, 7.