

## Neddicky

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#### *Cisticola fulvicapilla*

The Neddicky is widely distributed in southern and south-central Africa, and with its centre of abundance in South Africa. It also occurs in Mozambique, Angola, Zambia, Tanzania and marginally in Zaire. It is largely absent from the dry west and the Kalahari in Botswana.

Eight subspecies have been described for the region (Clancey 1980b; Clancey *et al.* 1987); the ranges appear to be continuous on the present map. Irwin (1981) considered the variation between three taxa in Zimbabwe to be clinal. It is sometimes considered to be conspecific with the Tabora Cisticola *C. angusticauda*, with which it hybridizes over a narrow zone in Zambia (Dowsett & Dowsett-Lemaire 1980), but is usually accepted as a separate species (Sibley & Monroe 1990).

It is a relatively conspicuous cisticola which occurs singly or in pairs; it feeds low down in the vegetation or on the ground and the male frequently calls from an exposed perch. It could be confused with the Shortwinged Cisticola *C. brachyptera*, but within the atlas region it overlaps only marginally with this species in eastern Zimbabwe. The southern birds with grey underparts are not easily confused with other species, but northern birds with white underparts are more similar to other cisticolas, though the plain back and short tail should prevent confusion. The atlas data are considered to be accurate.

**Habitat:** South of 22°S it occurs in dune scrub, in scrub and rank grass on hill slopes, on the edges of woodlands and plantations, in secondary growth and in thornveld savanna. In the southwestern Cape Province it occupies mainly montane fynbos with scattered proteas and rocky outcrops (Hockey *et al.* 1989). Further north it occurs in the understorey of woodlands, including miombo (*Brachystegia*). It is tolerant of alien vegetation and may occur in gardens and the edges of cultivation. It seems to avoid dense grasslands, where it cannot feed at ground-level, and arid savannas, such as most of the Kalahari.

It occurs from sea-level to altitudes in excess of 2000 m in South Africa and Lesotho, although it clearly becomes less abundant above 1500–2000 m (Little & Bainbridge 1992; Bonde 1993). It seldom occurs above 1500 m in Zimbabwe (Irwin 1981). At Nylsvley (2428DA) it occurred at densities of 1 pair/5 ha and 1 pair/10 ha in *Acacia* and

broadleaved woodlands respectively (Tarboton *et al.* 1987b).

Its reporting rate was highest in Valley Bushveld, but it occurs commonly in many other vegetation types which meet its specific habitat requirements.

**Movements:** It is sedentary. The models show small to distinct summer increases in reporting rates in the southern and southeastern Zones, but virtually no changes in the northern and northeastern Zones, and it is not known to migrate altitudinally. Calling may be more seasonal in the southern populations.

**Breeding:** During the atlas period, breeding was reported October–March in most regions despite the regional differences in the seasonality of rainfall. Only in the southwestern Cape Province (Zone 4) was there significant breeding during September. Previous egg-laying records confirm breeding throughout the wet summer season (October–March) in most of the range, but from September onwards in the southwestern Cape Province. Peak breeding may be earlier in KwaZulu-Natal (October–December) than in the Transvaal (November–January) and Zimbabwe (November–February) (Winterbottom 1968a; Dean 1971; Irwin 1981; Tarboton *et al.* 1987b; Skinner 1995a; Brown & Clinning in press.).

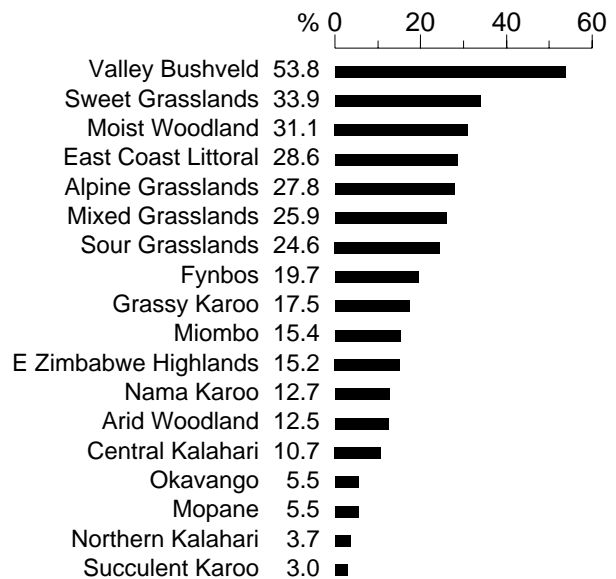
**Interspecific relationships:** It occurs together with several other cisticola and prinia species, with which it may compete to an unknown degree, but may feed more at ground-level than other similar species. The Greybacked Cisticola *C. subruficapilla* may replace the Neddicky in the Karoo and lowland fynbos, but both co-occur extensively in mountain fynbos. To the north and east, it may be replaced ecologically by the Shortwinged Cisticola.

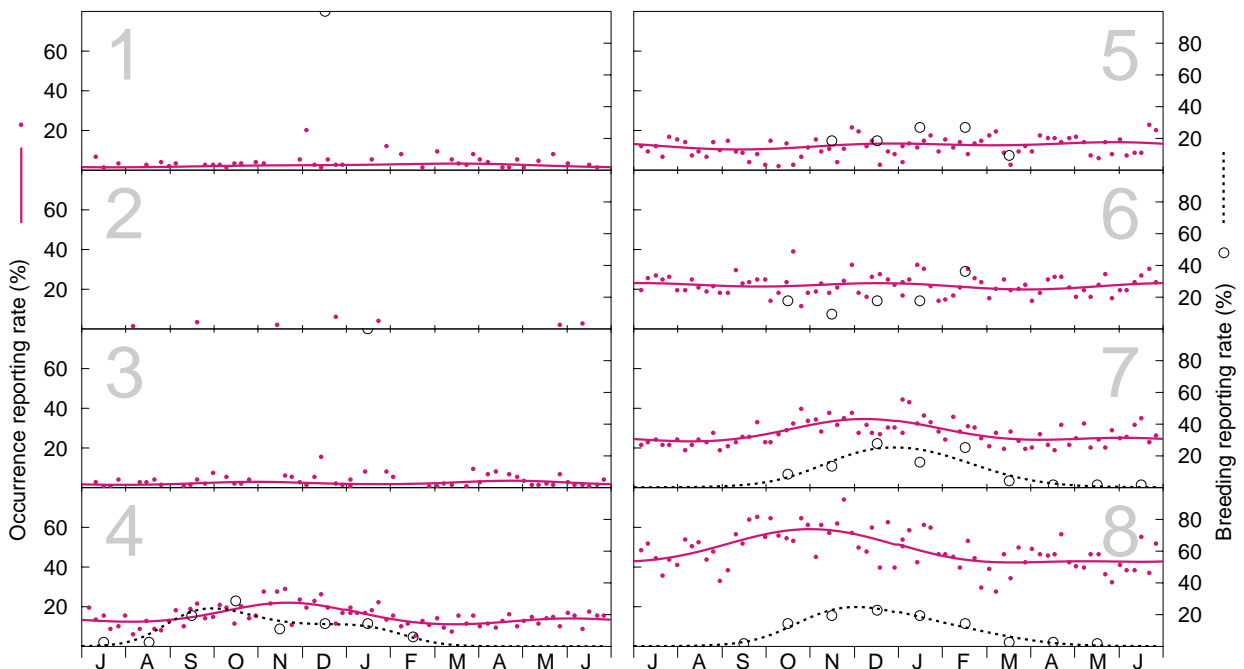
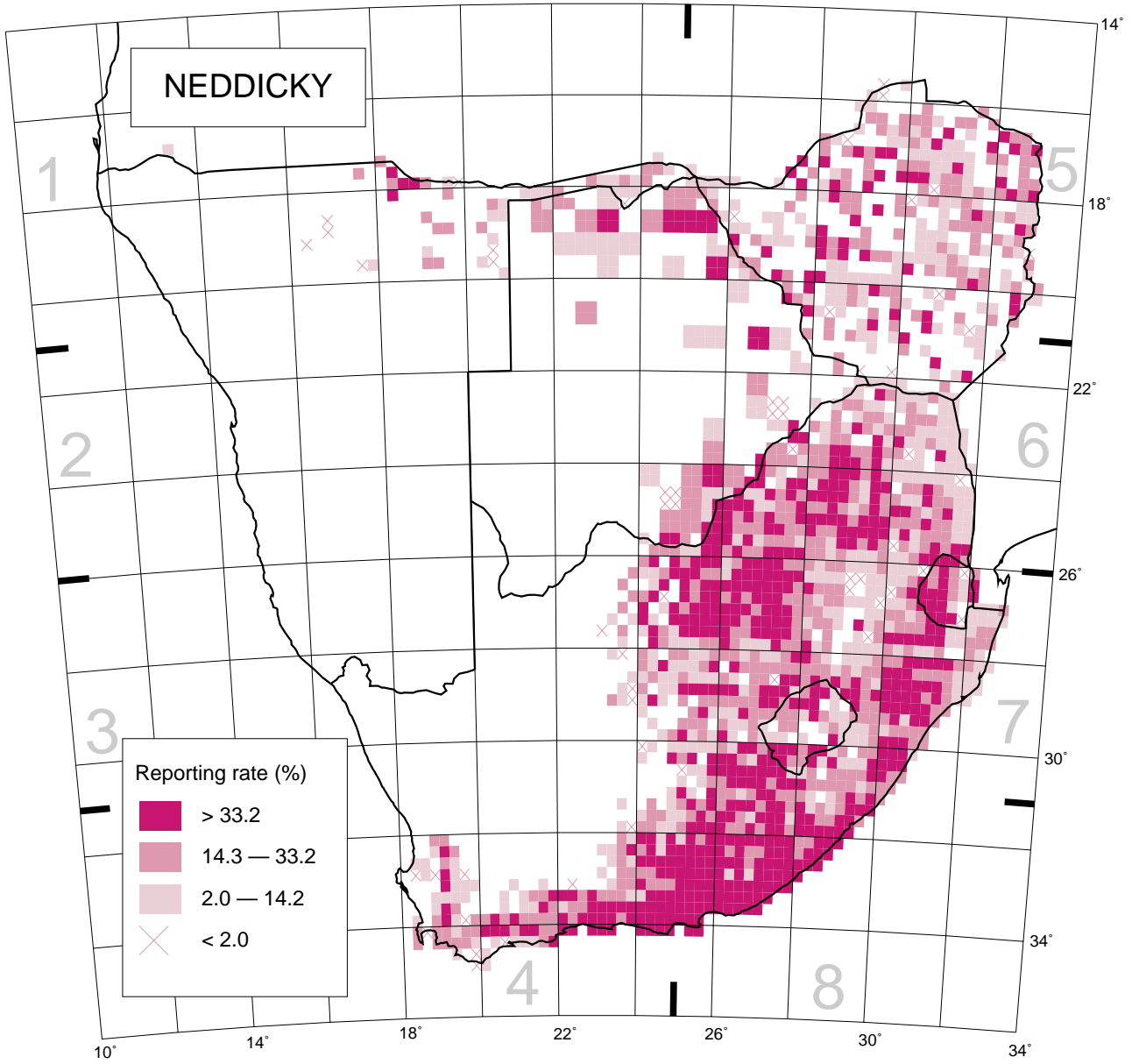
**Historical distribution and conservation:** The historical range is not known to have differed from the present. The Neddicky is not threatened, because it is very widely distributed and common in a wide range of habitats.

A. Berruti

Recorded in 1765 grid cells, 38.9%  
Total number of records: 29 215  
Mean reporting rate for range: 25.6%

#### Reporting rates for vegetation types





Models of seasonality for Zones. Number of records (top to bottom, left to right):  
 Occurrence: 78, 9, 130, 1305, 1087, 2486, 5353, 2661; Breeding: 1, 0, 1, 35, 11, 11, 68, 65.