

Rufouseared Warbler

Rooioorlangstertjie

Malcorus pectoralis

The Rufouseared Warbler is endemic to southern Africa and occurs from the Cape Province and Free State northwards into Namibia and southern Botswana. The centre of abundance is in the Karoo. There is a zone of lower reporting rates in the Orange River valley, just south of 28°S, between the two southern subspecies, *M. p. pectoralis* and *ocularius* (Clancey 1980b); the northern race *etoshae* has a well-isolated population in Etosha, which has been linked with populations as far south as Windhoek (2217BA) (Clancey 1980b). In contrast, the species is absent from the Makgadikgadi, a similar lacustrine depression in northern Botswana, although it is present in its old tributaries, such as Deception Valley (2123). Penry (1994) showed more records from the central Kalahari in Botswana than does the present map.

It occurs singly, in pairs or family groups, and can be difficult to locate in its habitat as it feeds low down or on the ground in shrubby vegetation, and bounds or scurries away at ground-level to disappear between bushes when disturbed. Males may perch conspicuously and call from the top of a shrub. If seen clearly, it is difficult to misidentify. Atlas records are likely to be accurate. Once regarded as a *Prinia*, it is now generally accepted as being the only species in the genus *Malcorus* (Maclean 1974).

Habitat: It occurs in low scattered scrub on open plains, edges of pans and edges of woodland, and in scrub in sparse grassland, also in scrub along dry watercourses and on dry mountain slopes. The scrub plants *Rhigozum trichotomum* and *Diospyros lycioides* are important in the southwestern Transvaal (Tarboton *et al.* 1987b) and *Grewia* and *Catophractes* in Botswana (Penry 1994). It was most frequently reported from the Grassy Karoo and Nama Karoo vegetation types, where it is common. It is also fairly common in the Succulent Karoo, Southern and Central Kalahari.

Movements: There was a small increase in reporting rates in autumn in Zones 3 and 4, but no corresponding decrease in reporting rates to the north and east of these regions. Although scarce, it was recorded in northern Namibia only in autumn and winter during the atlas period, suggesting movement. However, the northern populations are described as a separate subspecies, and Winterbottom (1964a) noted that they were frequently seen in February near Okaukuejo (1915BB) when several collected specimens were in near-breeding condition. Although there is no evidence of local or other movements, opportunistic breeding responses to rainfall suggests that local movements to take advantage of favourable conditions are likely.

Breeding: Breeding was recorded in all months, but mainly September–December. Whilst breeding may follow good rains (Maclean 1970b), breeding in the late winter and early summer period may occur regardless of rainfall (see data in Maclean 1970b), a pattern noted in many insectivorous species in the dry interior.

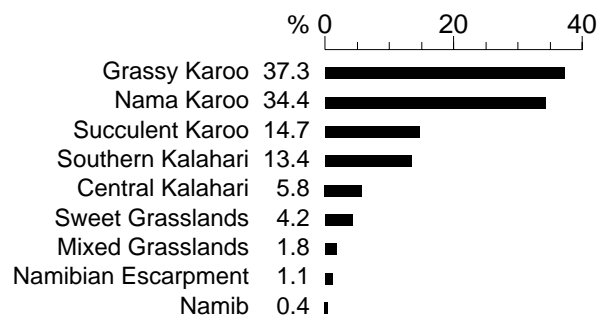
Interspecific relationships: It is often the only longtailed warbler in its habitat, although its range overlaps with the Karoo Prinia *Prinia maculosa*, Black-chested Prinia *P. flavicans* and Greybacked Cisticola *Cisticola subruficapilla* which prefer taller vegetation. It often feeds in association with the Black-chested Prinia but obtains more food at ground-level than that species (Ginn *et al.* 1989d).

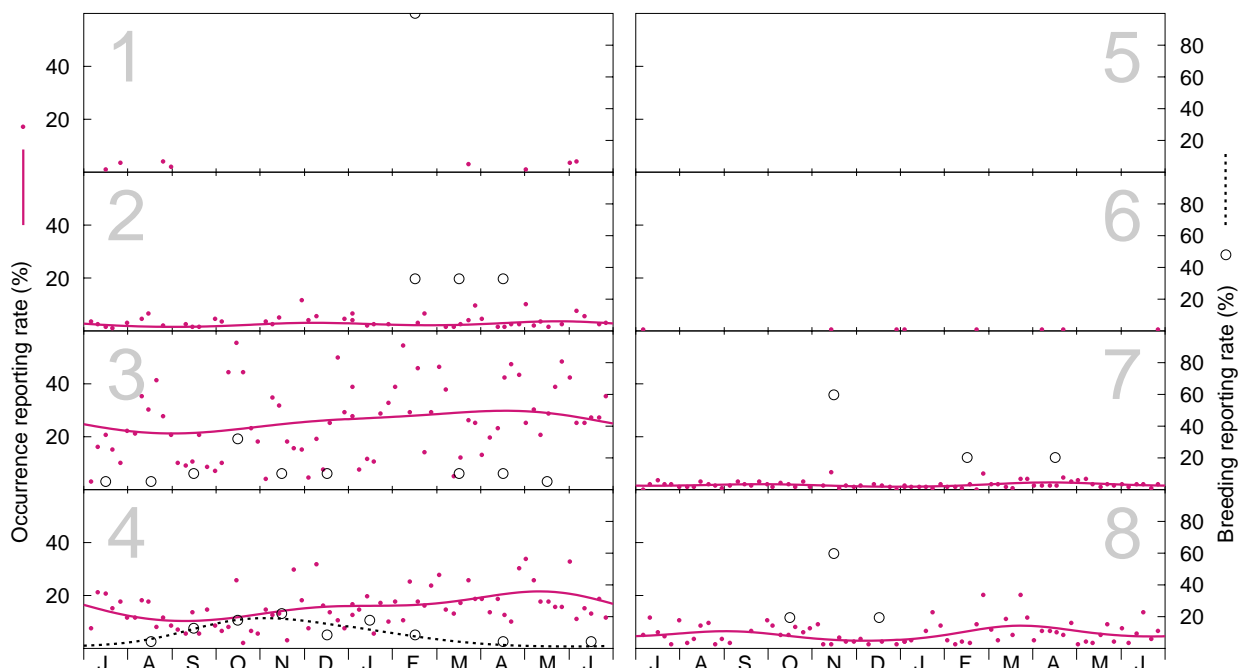
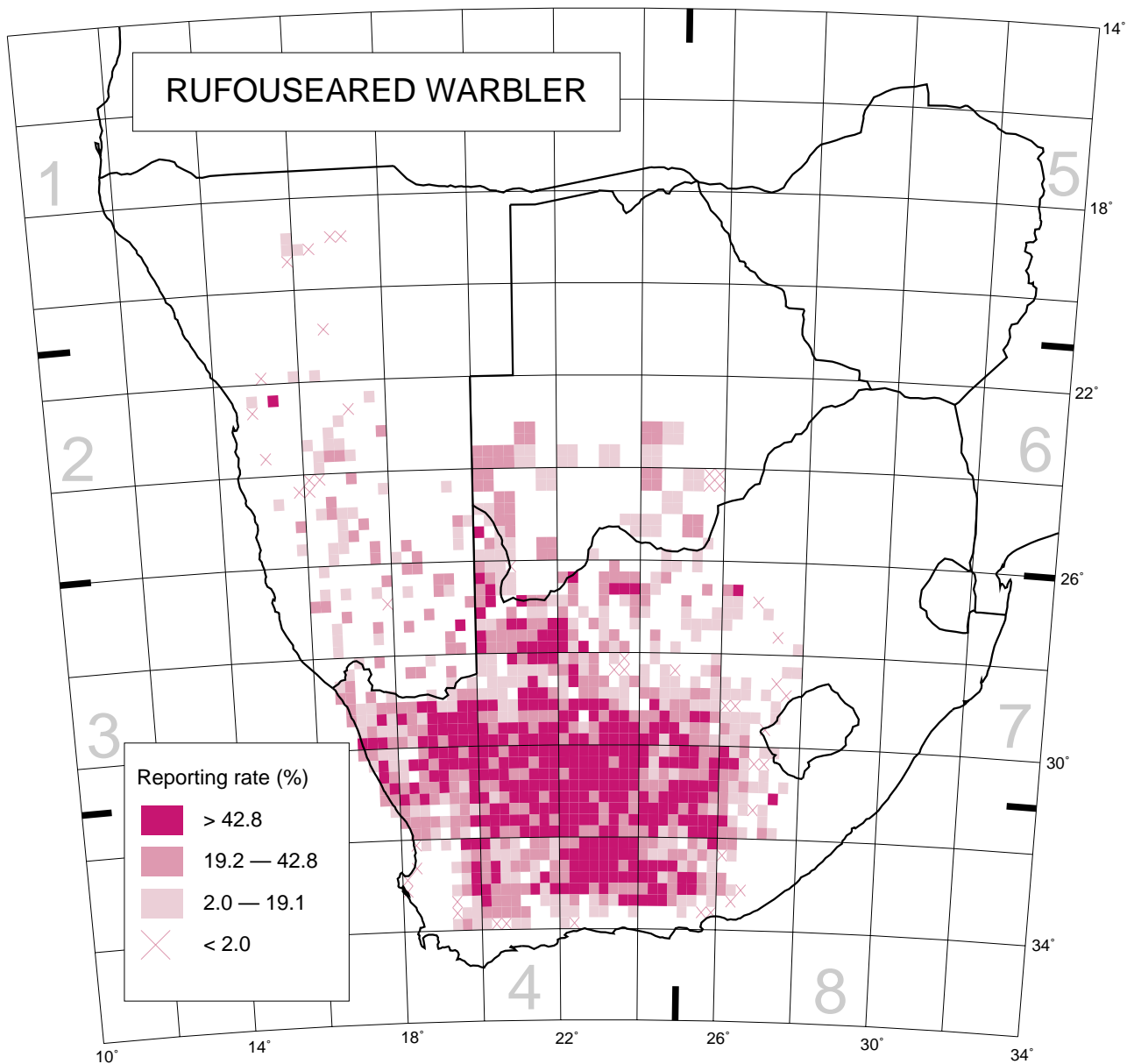
Historical distribution and conservation: Records from the lower slopes of Table Mountain (3318CD) (Stark & Sclater 1901), and a museum specimen from Tulbagh (3319AC) in 1881, suggest that there has been a localized range contraction in the western Cape Province (Winterbottom 1955). The Rufouseared Warbler occurs in semi-arid vegetation which is unsuitable for agriculture and it is unlikely to be impacted by present land-use practices; it is therefore not threatened.

A. Berruti

Recorded in 1044 grid cells, 23.0%
Total number of records: 5576
Mean reporting rate for range: 21.2%

Reporting rates for vegetation types





Models of seasonality for Zones. Number of records (top to bottom, left to right):
 Occurrence: 11, 92, 1430, 1379, 0, 8, 353, 298; Breeding: 1, 3, 19, 23, 0, 0, 5, 5.