



Bluemantled Flycatcher

Bloukuifvlieëvanger

Trochocercus cyanomelas

The Bluemantled Flycatcher is found as far north as Somalia and ranges southwards through East Africa into the moist eastern parts of southern Africa, extending along the south coast and reaching the southwestern Cape Province by way of scattered and isolated forest patches west of George (3322CD), from where it was first collected and named. In addition to the nominate race, two other subspecies occur in southern Africa (Clancey 1980b); the subspecific boundaries do not coincide with the breaks in distribution on the map.

It is active, usually encountered in pairs and often joins mixed foraging parties during the dry season. When properly viewed it is easily identified by its white wingbar and habit of fanning its all-black tail; the only similar-looking species is the Whitetailed Flycatcher *T. albonotatus* which is restricted to the forests of the eastern Zimbabwe highlands. Like many forest birds, it tends to be heard more often than seen and its raspy 'chwee-twaw' call is difficult to tell apart from that of the Paradise Flycatcher *Terpsiphone viridis*, although their respective songs are easy to separate. When in forest habitats, birders should avoid identifying one or other species on the basis of the call alone.

Habitat: Its primary requirement is forest, irrespective of type, wet or dry, highland or lowland. It is often found in quite small forest patches, in valley bushveld of the eastern Cape Province (Skead 1967b), in sand forest and riverine forest strips in dry woodlands, and in damp, wooded gorges and kloofs of the southern mountain chain in the winter-rainfall region (Hockey *et al.* 1989). It is more commonly encountered in the undergrowth and midstratum of the forest than in the canopy. Unlike the Dusky Flycatcher *Muscicapa adusta*, it does not frequent forest edges.

Movements: It appears generally to be sedentary, though Maclean (1993b) stated that it may have seasonal movements. The models show the highest reporting rates during winter (when not breeding) in Zones 7 and 8 which, in other species, is indicative of migration to lower altitudes (cf. Berruti *et al.* 1994a). Tarboton *et al.* (1987b) reported small-scale altitudinal movement to the base of the Transvaal escarpment in winter. These reports need further in-

vestigation, particularly as there could be other explanations: increased sightings in the dry season may be due to its joining bird parties where it becomes more conspicuous.

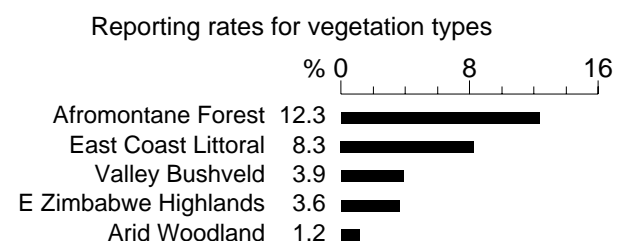
Breeding: Atlas records confirm the summer breeding season (Irwin 1981; Hockey *et al.* 1989; Maclean 1993b). Egg-laying occurs September–December in the eastern Cape Province and October–January in KwaZulu-Natal and in Zimbabwe (Dean 1971; Irwin 1981). The nest is usually placed in the forked stem of a bush or sapling and the male can be extremely bold in its defence, even (at one nest) resorting to in-flight buffeting of the observer between his shoulder blades (pers. obs.)

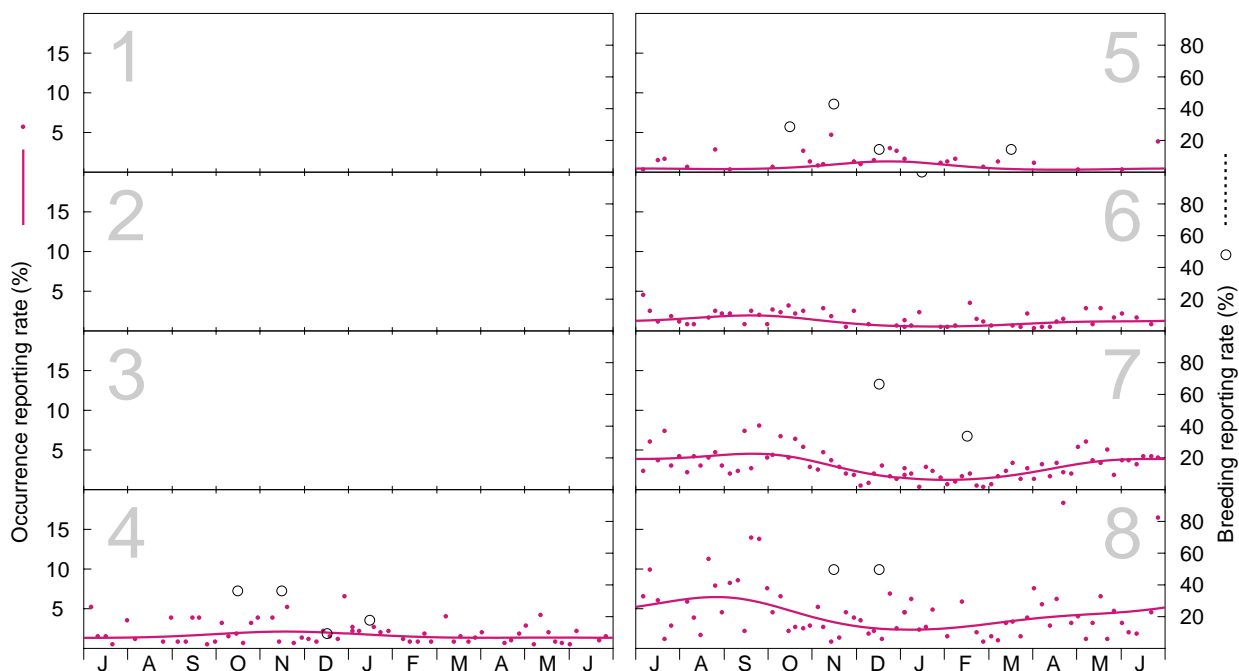
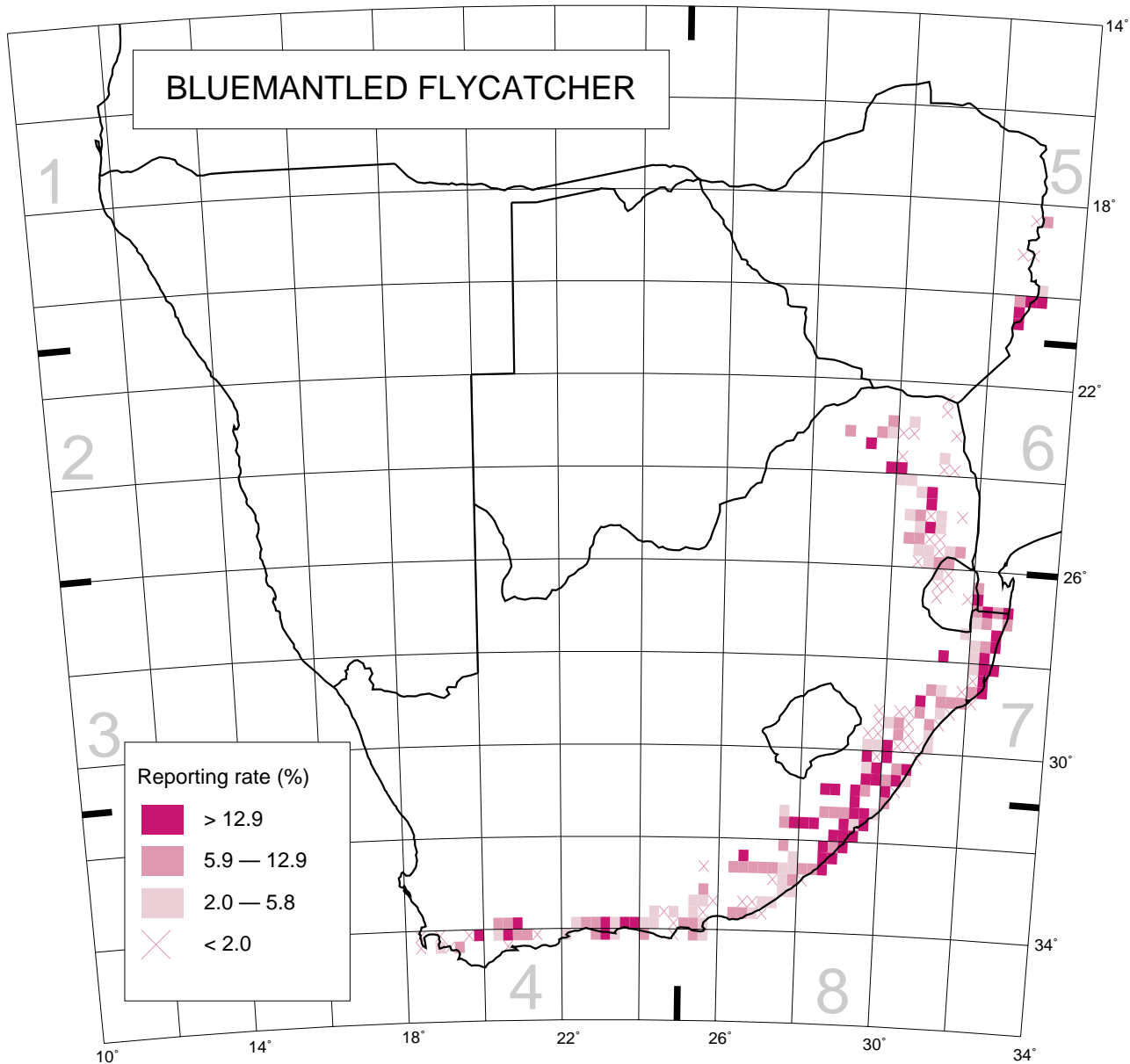
Interspecific relationships: It is intolerant of other species in the vicinity of its nest, but consorts well with members of mixed foraging flocks.

Historical distribution and conservation: It easily escapes attention and is often unremarked in the more general literature. Its ability to exist in even very small patches of forest has probably helped it to survive and extend its range further to the southwest than most other tropical forest passerines. The Bluemantled Flycatcher is not currently considered to be threatened or vulnerable. However, the growing trend towards degradation of some forests through the activities of poor communities, e.g. clearing of the understorey for the planting of crops and the gathering of wood, has a negative impact on this and other forest species.

T.B. Oatley

Recorded in 230 grid cells, 5.1%
Total number of records: 2329
Mean reporting rate for range: 6.8%





Models of seasonality for Zones. Number of records (top to bottom, left to right):
 Occurrence: 0, 0, 0, 138, 53, 133, 585, 231; Breeding: 0, 0, 0, 11, 7, 1, 3, 2.