

Puffback

Sneebal

Dryoscopus cubla

The Puffback is restricted to Africa south of the equator and within the atlas region it occurs predominantly in the moister eastern half of the continent. It is found in northern Namibia, northern and eastern Botswana, Zimbabwe, the Transvaal, Swaziland, KwaZulu-Natal and the eastern Cape Province. The three subspecies in the region (Clancey 1980b) have continuous ranges.

It is common throughout most of its range and is usually encountered in pairs. A density of 1 pair/42 ha was reported in broadleaved woodland at Nylsvlei (2428DA) (Tarboton *et al.* 1987b), while the size of a typical breeding territory may be 4 ha (Harris & Arnott 1988). Although it spends much of its time creeping about in the canopy of trees, by virtue of its loud, distinctive and frequent calls it is not inconspicuous; in addition, the male has a striking display. It is therefore likely that the map is an accurate representation of its distribution.

Habitat: The vegetation analysis shows that it occurs in all types of indigenous woodland and forest and is more commonly encountered in dense woodland than in forest or sparse woodland. It also occurs commonly in alien Black Wattle *Acacia mearnsii* plantations but is generally

absent from other timber plantations, except where these include some indigenous trees. It is seldom encountered in open *Acacia* savanna, but is common where such habitat has been modified by bush encroachment. It occurs commonly in well-wooded gardens and parks at lower altitudes, but only rarely on the Witwatersrand. The areas with the highest reporting rates in the distribution map seem to correspond with areas with the densest woodland.

Movements: The models do not contradict the belief that it is resident throughout its range (Harris & Arnott 1988). The fact that it was reported more frequently during the summer months is probably due to its vocalizations and breeding displays making it more conspicuous. Four ring recoveries (one adult and three juveniles) have been made, all within 10 km of the ringing site (SAFRING), providing further support for residency.

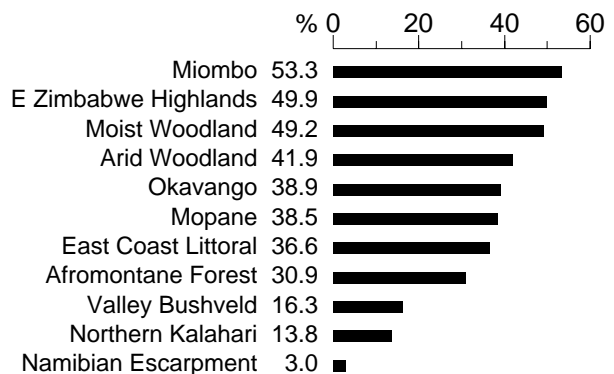
Breeding: The data show that breeding occurs mainly in the summer months and suggest that nesting is later in the drier west than in the east. Breeding has previously been reported October–December in KwaZulu-Natal (Dean 1971), mainly September–January in the Transvaal (Tarboton *et al.* 1987b) and in all months except May with a September–November peak in Zimbabwe (Irwin 1981). The atlas records indicate that the peak is about 1–2 months earlier in Zimbabwe than in the Transvaal, confirming published information (Irwin 1981; Tarboton *et al.* 1987b).

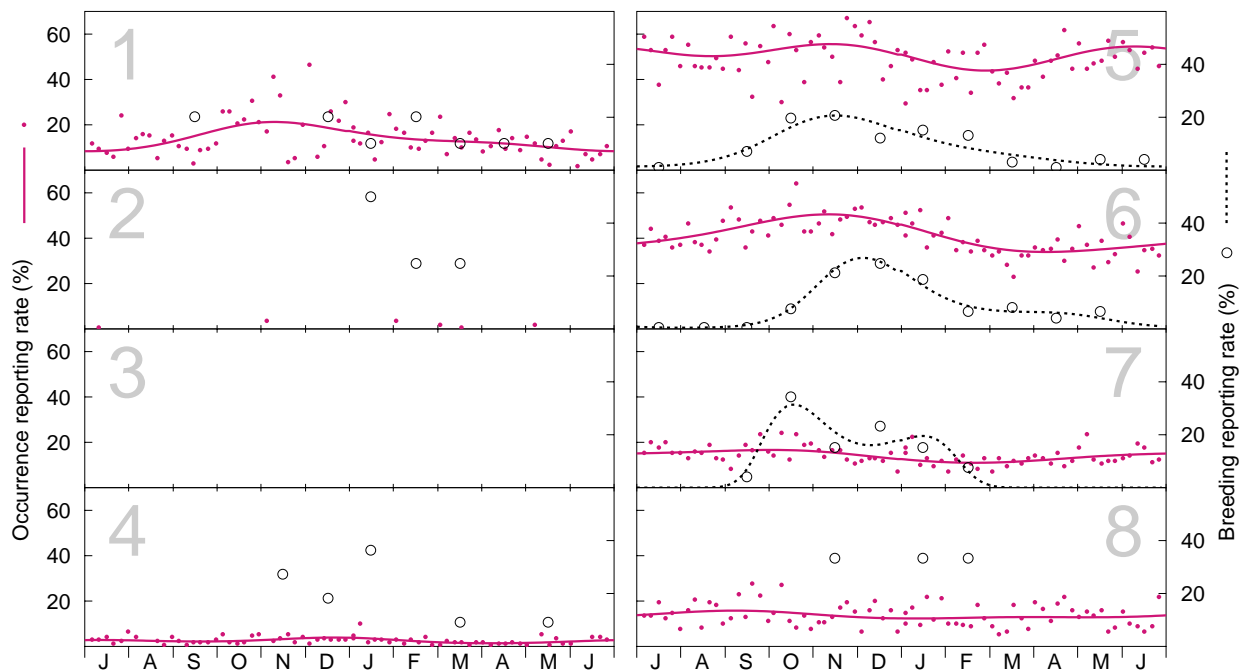
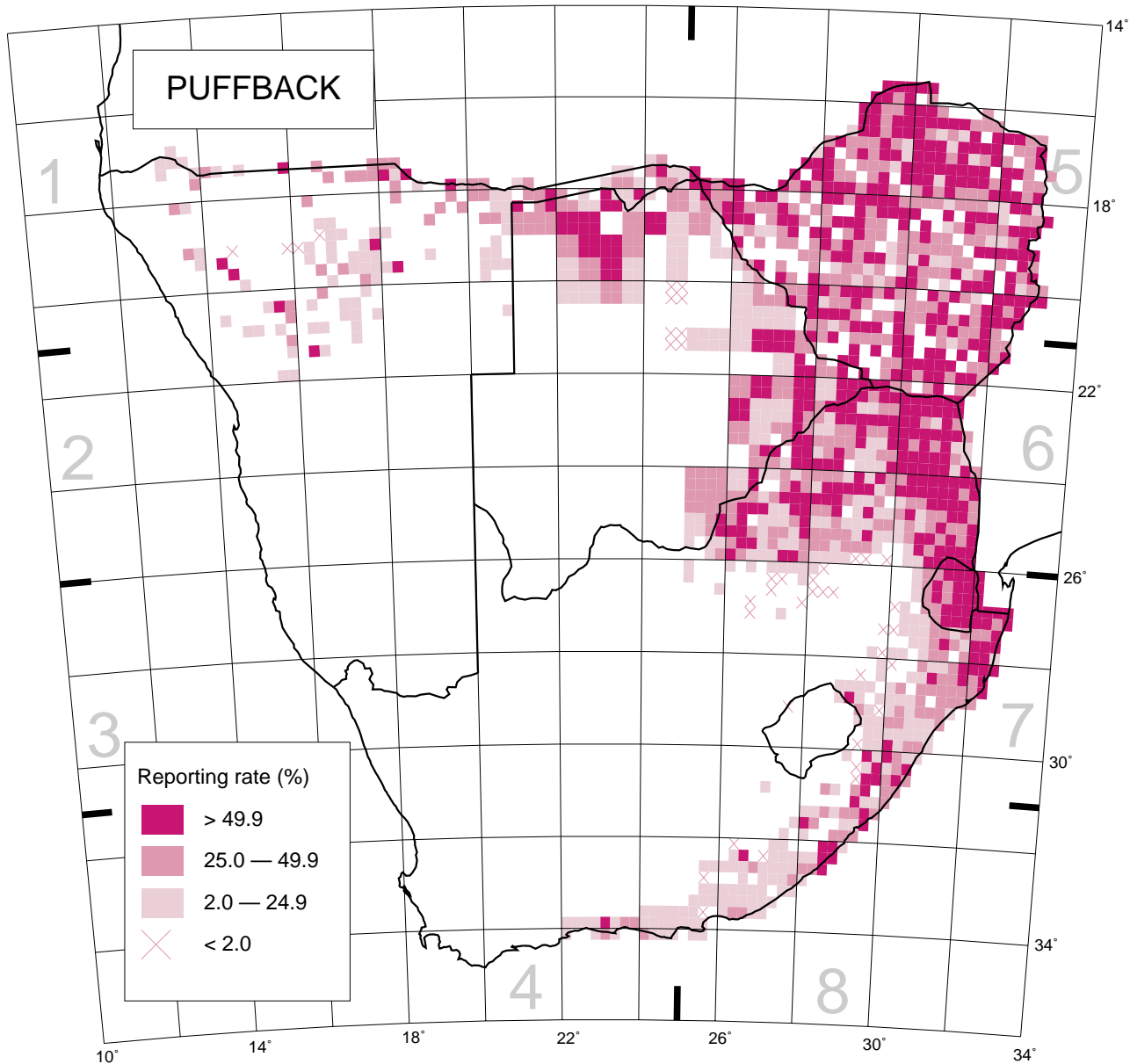
Historical distribution and conservation: It is unlikely that its past distribution was much different from the present, except where intensive agriculture and human population pressures have led to the destruction of large areas of the Puffback's natural habitat, especially in the eastern Cape Province and KwaZulu-Natal.

V. Parker

Recorded in 1485 grid cells, 32.7%
Total number of records: 28 387
Mean reporting rate for range: 34.5%

Reporting rates for vegetation types





Models of seasonality for Zones. Number of records (top to bottom, left to right):
 Occurrence: 437, 6, 0, 213, 4450, 4698, 2743, 748; Breeding: 10, 4, 0, 11, 101, 122, 26, 6.