



Brubru

Bontroklaksman

Nilaus afer

The Brubru is widespread throughout the savannas of sub-Saharan Africa (Harris & Arnott 1988; Maclean 1993b). In southern Africa it is found from the arid Namib to the humid tropics in lowland KwaZulu-Natal. It is generally fairly common and many of the apparent gaps in distribution in Namibia, Botswana and Zimbabwe may be artefacts of incomplete coverage. However, even in well-covered areas in South Africa the reporting rates in adjacent grid cells are very variable, indicating localized occurrence and abundance. There seem nevertheless to be strongholds in the tall *Acacia* woodlands of the central Kalahari in western Botswana, in the mixed woodlands in far eastern Botswana, in tall mixed woodlands in northern Botswana, and in the northwestern Transvaal and in the lowveld of the Transvaal and Swaziland. In the eastern Transvaal it is scarce along the escarpment which separates the subspecies *N. a. solivagus* in the east (Transvaal lowveld, Swaziland, KwaZulu-Natal) from the nominate race to the west; the range of *miombensis* in lowland KwaZulu-Natal and the eastern lowlands of Zimbabwe (Clancey 1980b) is continuous with other races.

Densities may reach 1 pair/30–50 ha in the Transvaal (Ginn *et al.* 1989), and in 11 woodlands throughout northern and eastern Botswana where it was present, an average density of 1 bird/9 ha was recorded (unpubl. data).

It occurs solitarily or in pairs and has loud, striking antiphonal duet-calls during the breeding season (Maclean 1993b). Even though it is a rather inconspicuous canopy feeder, the atlas records present a reliable pattern.

Habitat: It occupies a wide variety of savanna woodlands, and has strongholds in both pure *Acacia* woodland in the Kalahari, and in pure broadleaved woodland, e.g. miombo. In northern Botswana, peak densities of 1 bird/4 ha were

found in the tall *Acacia* woodlands to the southwest of the Okavango (2022B) and in the tall Mopane woodlands along the Khwai River (1923B) (unpubl. data). It had high reporting rates in biomes with well-developed, mixed woodlands and with a mosaic of broadleaved and *Acacia* trees (Okavango, Arid Woodland, Mopane, Northern Kalahari, Moist Woodland). It ranges from tall, well-developed woodland, and even forest edges, to scattered scrubby areas in the arid Namib. It also has a wide altitudinal range from coastal to montane biomes. With such broad habitat tolerances, it is unclear why the distribution shows a cut-off along the Orange River at about 30°S.

Movements: No movements are known in southern Africa and the models do not suggest any regular migration.

Breeding: The atlas breeding records confirm that breeding is mainly in the summer, August–April, with a peak September–November (Irwin 1981; Tarboton *et al.* 1987b; Ginn *et al.* 1989; Maclean 1993b; Skinner 1995a). In the east (Zones 5–7), breeding peaks progressively later to the south, while in the more arid west (Zones 2 and 3), it appears that breeding can be at almost any time of the year.

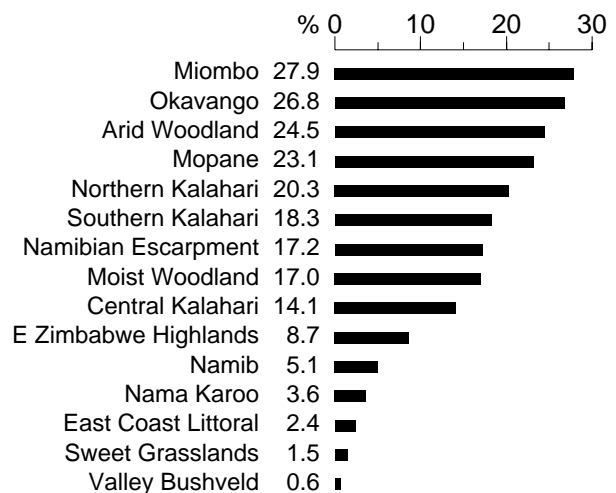
Interspecific relationships: Although the Brubru is a shrike, aspects of its behaviour are similar to those of flycatchers and cuckooshrikes (Ginn *et al.* 1989). Its ecology is probably most similar to the larger Puffback *Dryoscopus cubla*, with which its distribution overlaps widely, and to the much smaller flycatchers in the genus *Batis*. However, in transect-counts in 17 woodlands in northern and eastern Botswana, Brubru and Puffback each occurred in 11 habitats, but they were present alongside each other at only seven sites, suggesting specialization, avoidance or active displacement (unpubl. data).

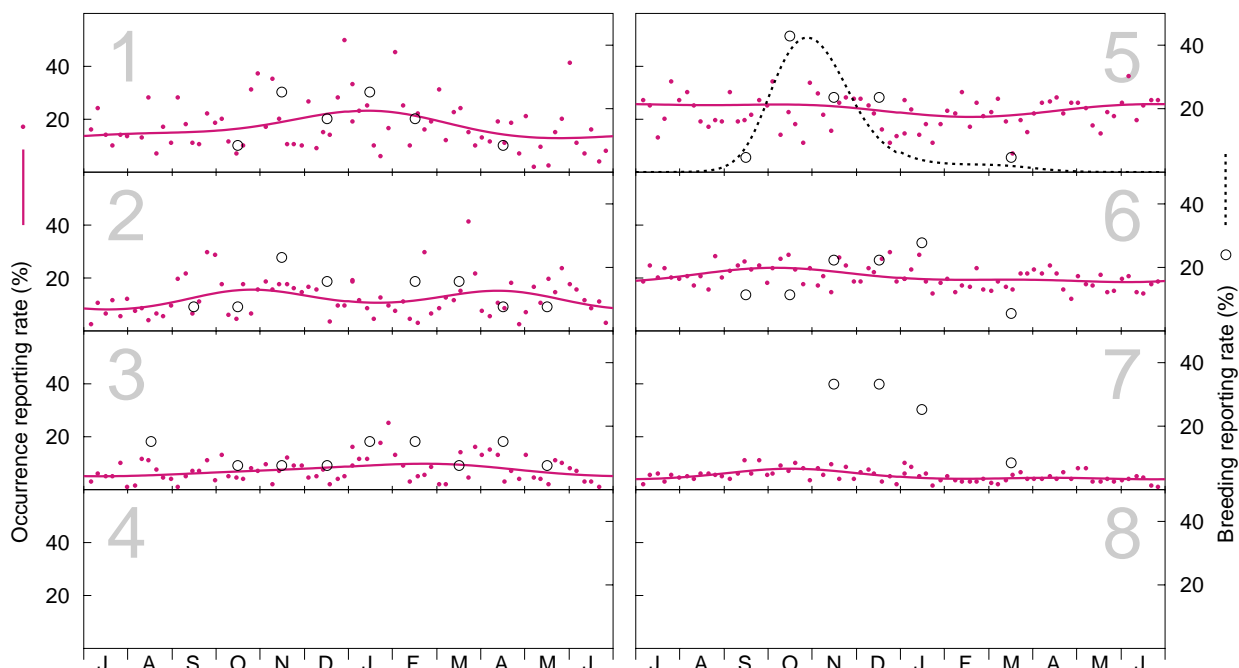
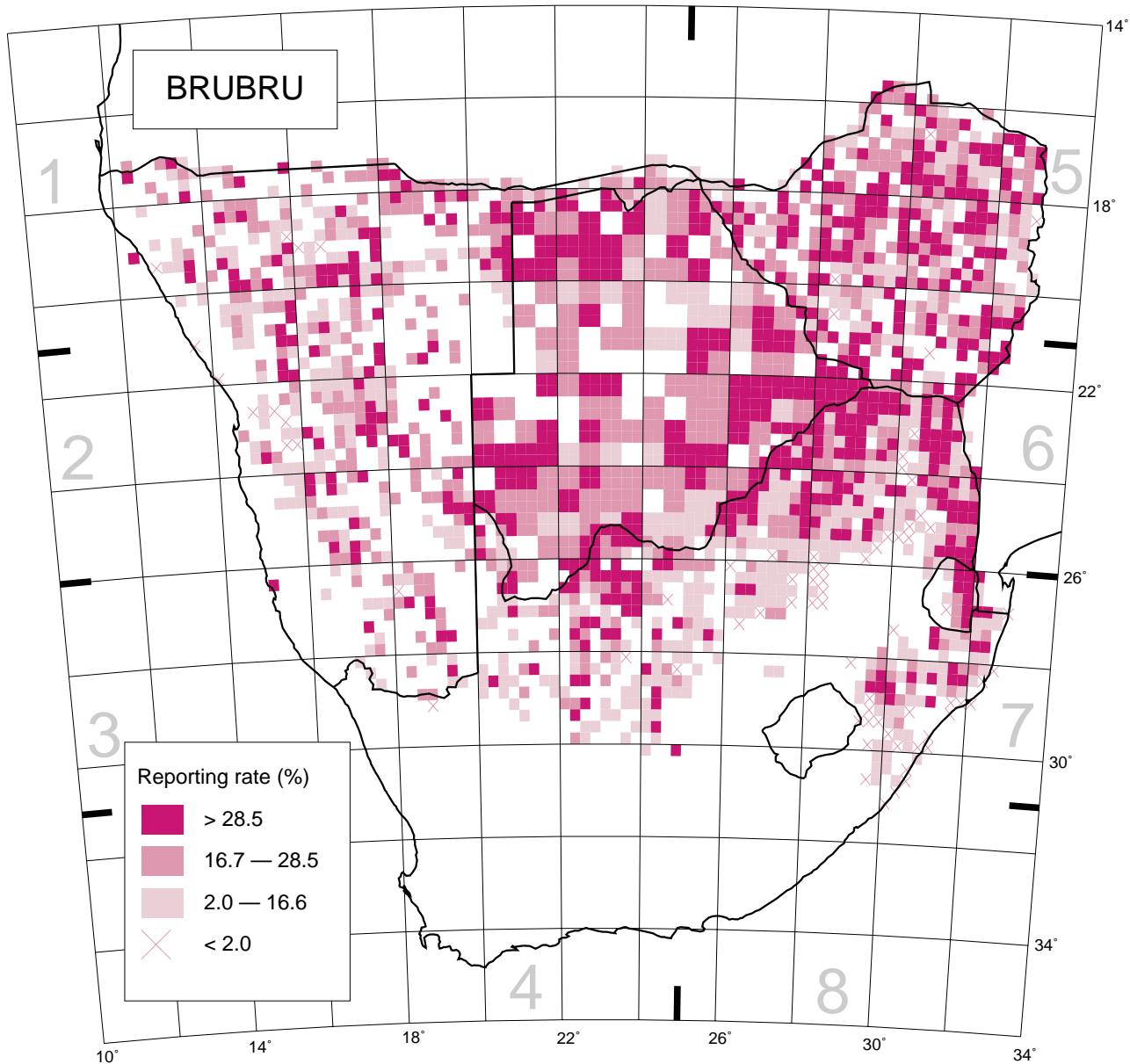
Historical distribution and conservation: There is no evidence that the past and present distributions differ. The Brubru is common and widespread in its extensive range and is of no conservation concern.

M. Herremans

Recorded in 2159 grid cells, 47.6%
Total number of records: 13 903
Mean reporting rate for range: 17.2%

Reporting rates for vegetation types





Models of seasonality for Zones. Number of records (top to bottom, left to right):
 Occurrence: 537, 436, 396, 0, 2105, 2338, 1019, 0; Breeding: 12, 13, 13, 0, 21, 18, 12, 0.