

## Gorgeous Bush Shrike

### Konkoit

#### *Telophorus quadricolor*

The Gorgeous Bush Shrike is confined to the east coast and the adjacent interior of Africa. Within the atlas region it was recorded from the eastern highlands of Zimbabwe, along the foot of the Drakensberg escarpment in the eastern Transvaal, the lowveld and 'middleveld' in Swaziland, and the coastal regions of KwaZulu-Natal. It is conspicuously absent from large parts of the Transvaal lowveld in comparison with Swaziland. At the southern edge of a more extensive range in the tropics, it was also marginally recorded from the Zambezi Valley. Birds in eastern Zimbabwe belong to a subspecies different to that in South Africa and Swaziland (Clancey 1980b).

It is usually encountered in pairs; the size of a typical breeding territory is about 1.5 ha (Harris & Arnott 1988). Although brilliantly coloured, it usually remains hidden in the densest thickets and is seldom seen. However, its loud and distinctive call, of which the Afrikaans name is onomatopoeic, is frequently repeated and it is easily detected – at least during the summer – by observers who are familiar with the call. The map, therefore, probably reflects the distribution of the species accurately.

**Habitat:** South of the Limpopo River it is restricted to altitudes below 1000 m but it occurs at higher altitudes in Zimbabwe. It is absent where the average annual rainfall is much below 500 mm, which includes the drier parts of the lowveld. It occurs in dense thickets associated with woodland and forest fringes. Interpretation of the vegetation analysis is complicated by the fact that its density varies greatly within the Arid Woodland biome. It is absent from Arid Woodland in Namibia and Botswana and scarce in this vegetation type in the eastern Transvaal lowveld, but in Swaziland and northern KwaZulu-Natal its reporting rate in Arid Woodland is relatively high, which may be accounted for both by denser undergrowth in these areas, and by a high incidence of bush encroachment. It seldom occurs in forest interiors, but frequently in the fringes of forests.

**Movements:** It is said to undertake local movements out of the drier parts of its range during winter (Harris & Arnott 1988), but in KwaZulu-Natal and Swaziland no seasonal movements were found (Cyrus & Robson 1980; Parker 1994). Seasonal trends in the models are probably linked to changes in the frequency of vocalizations.

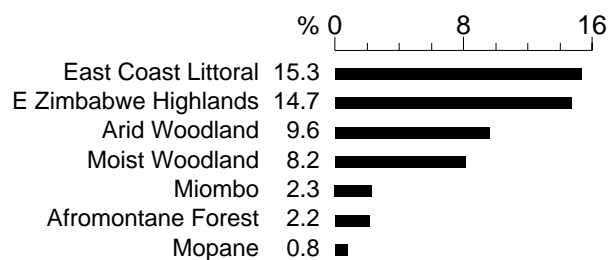
**Breeding:** Egglaying has been reported for October–February (Maclean 1993b). Nests have been found in the Transvaal October–December (Tarboton *et al.* 1987b) and in Zimbabwe egglaying spans October–February, mainly October–December (Irwin 1981). The few atlas data broadly agree with this pattern. If the increase in reporting rates reflected in the occurrence models is a reflection of increased vocalizations early in the breeding season, then there may be an earlier breeding season in Swaziland and KwaZulu-Natal (Zone 7) than further north, which would agree with the regional differences given by Maclean (1993b).

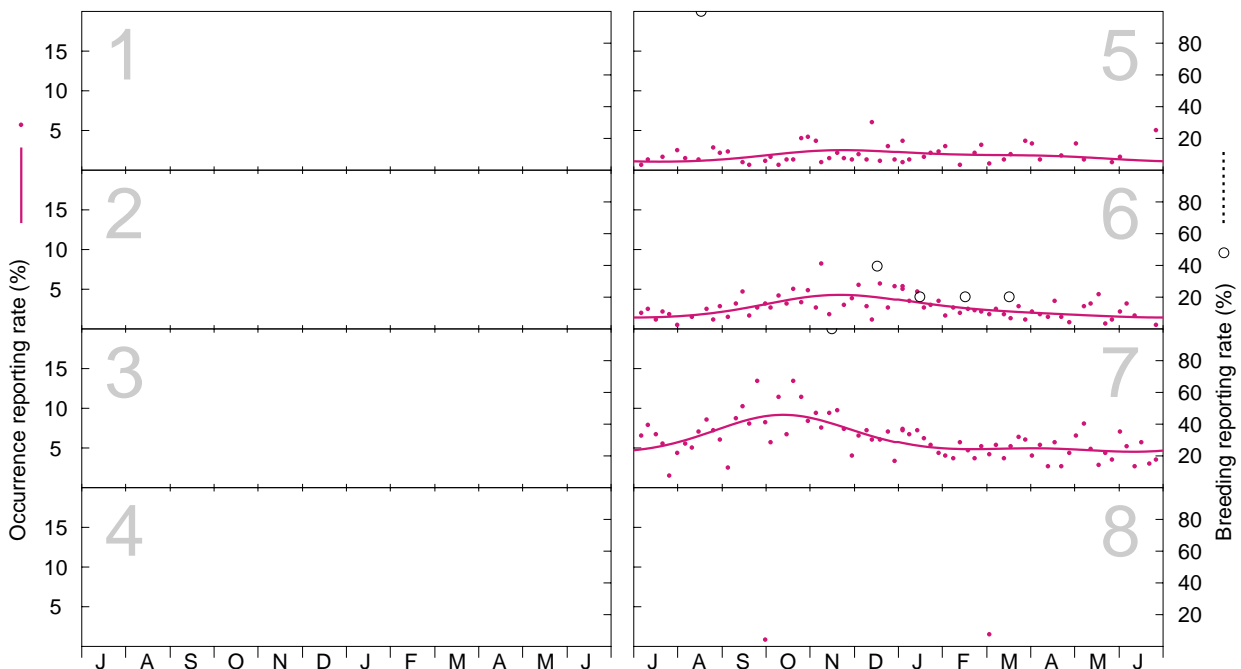
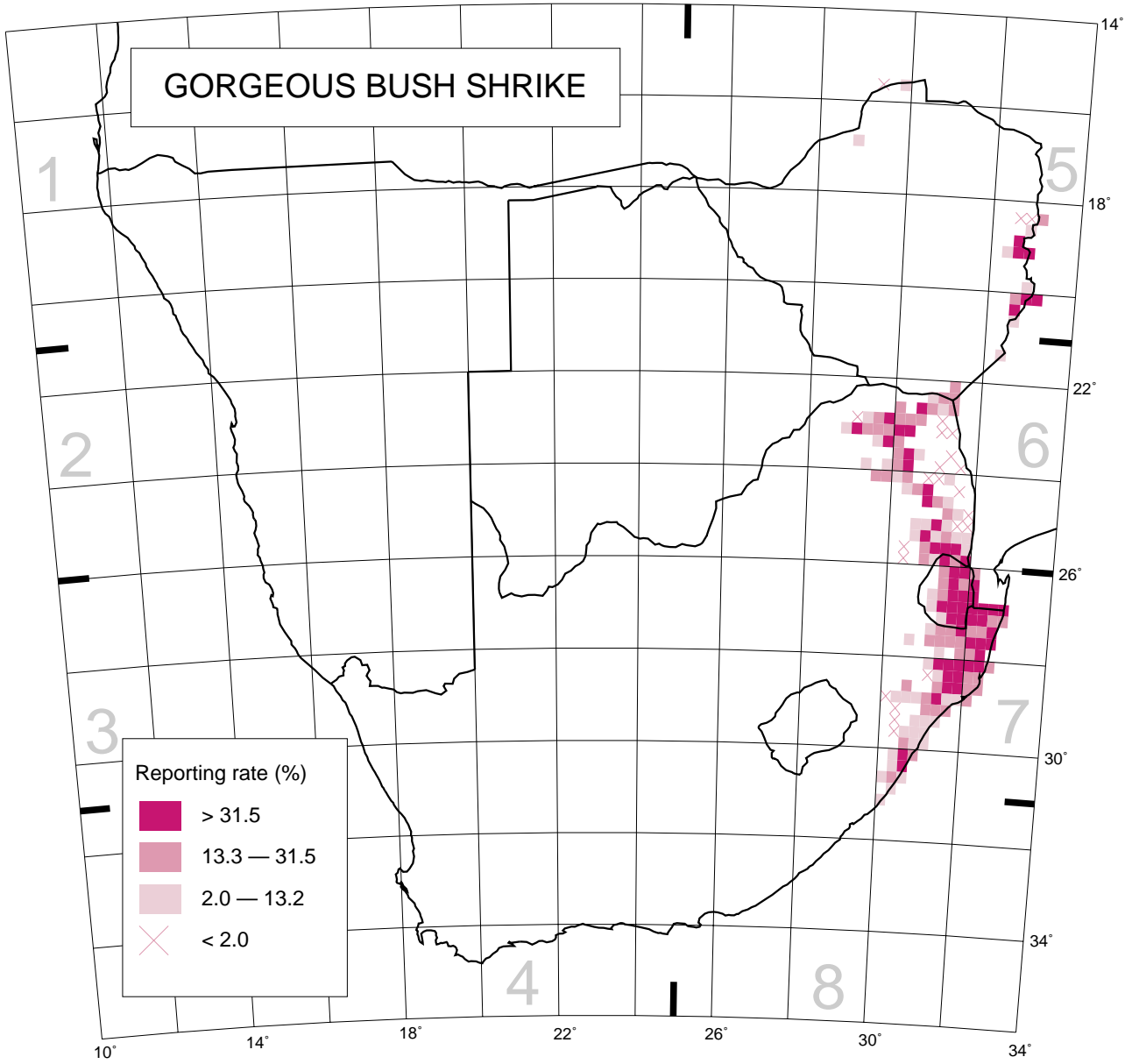
**Historical distribution and conservation:** Populations have probably been depleted in areas where deforestation has occurred, especially in parts of KwaZulu-Natal and Transkei. On the other hand, the Gorgeous Bush Shrike may have increased where bush encroachment has accompanied overgrazing in northern KwaZulu-Natal and Swaziland (Parker 1994). Otherwise, the distribution is probably little changed.

V. Parker

Recorded in 198 grid cells, 4.4%  
Total number of records: 4558  
Mean reporting rate for range: 20.6%

#### Reporting rates for vegetation types





Models of seasonality for Zones. Number of records (top to bottom, left to right):  
 Occurrence: 0, 0, 0, 0, 155, 294, 1187, 2; Breeding: 0, 0, 0, 0, 1, 5, 2, 0.