



## Greyheaded Bush Shrike

### Spookvoël

#### *Malaconotus blanchoti*

The Greyheaded Bush Shrike occurs widely in sub-Saharan Africa. Within the atlas region it occurs throughout Zimbabwe, in the Caprivi Strip, the extreme northern and eastern parts of Botswana, most of the Transvaal, Swaziland, KwaZulu-Natal and coastal eastern Cape Province. The subspecies *M. b. extremus* has a small range from the eastern Cape Province to the Transkei, while birds in the remainder of the atlas region belong to *hypopyrrhus*, except for the few records from along the Kunene River in northwestern Namibia, where a third race, *citrinipectus*, just comes into the region (Clancey 1980b; Clancey *et al.* 1987).

It is believed to occur at densities of below 1 pair/200 ha in the Transvaal (Tarboton *et al.* 1987b). A typical breeding pair occupies a breeding territory of about 50 ha (Harris & Arnott 1988); it usually occurs in pairs.

Although it is large and brightly coloured, it is inconspicuous because it remains hidden in foliage. It can easily be overlooked by observers who are not familiar with its loud and far-carrying calls. If not seen clearly, it can be confused with the similarly coloured Orangebreasted Bush Shrike *Telophorus sulfureopectus*. The atlas data nevertheless appear to be accurate.

**Habitat:** It is absent from areas with an annual average rainfall below c. 500 mm and areas above 1500 m in altitude. It appears to be most common in woodland of medium density and less common in dense woodland and open savanna. The vegetation analysis indicates that it had relatively high reporting rates in several woodland types, excepting the Kalahari. It is rarely encountered in plantations of alien trees (Harris & Arnott 1988). In Swaziland it was found to be resident in some *Eucalyptus* plantations in the south, but absent from these and all other plantations elsewhere (Parker 1994).

**Movements:** It may undertake some local seasonal movements in KwaZulu-Natal (Maclean 1985c). The atlas data and Cyrus & Robson (1980), however, do not provide any clear evidence for this. An increase in reporting rates appears to be

correlated with the pre-breeding period and probably reflects increased vocalizations.

**Breeding:** The models show a summer breeding season. Breeding has been reported September–January in KwaZulu-Natal, August–January in the Transvaal, and July–April with a peak September–November in Zimbabwe (Maclean 1993b).

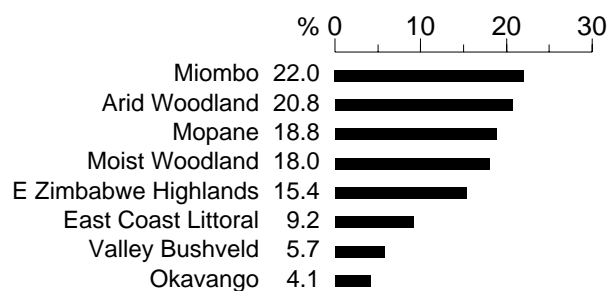
**Interspecific relationships:** It is widely sympatric and shares similar habitats with the similarly plumaged but smaller Orangebreasted Bush Shrike. The Okavango represents the least-favoured wooded habitat for this species, while it was the most favoured by the Orangebreasted Bush Shrike.

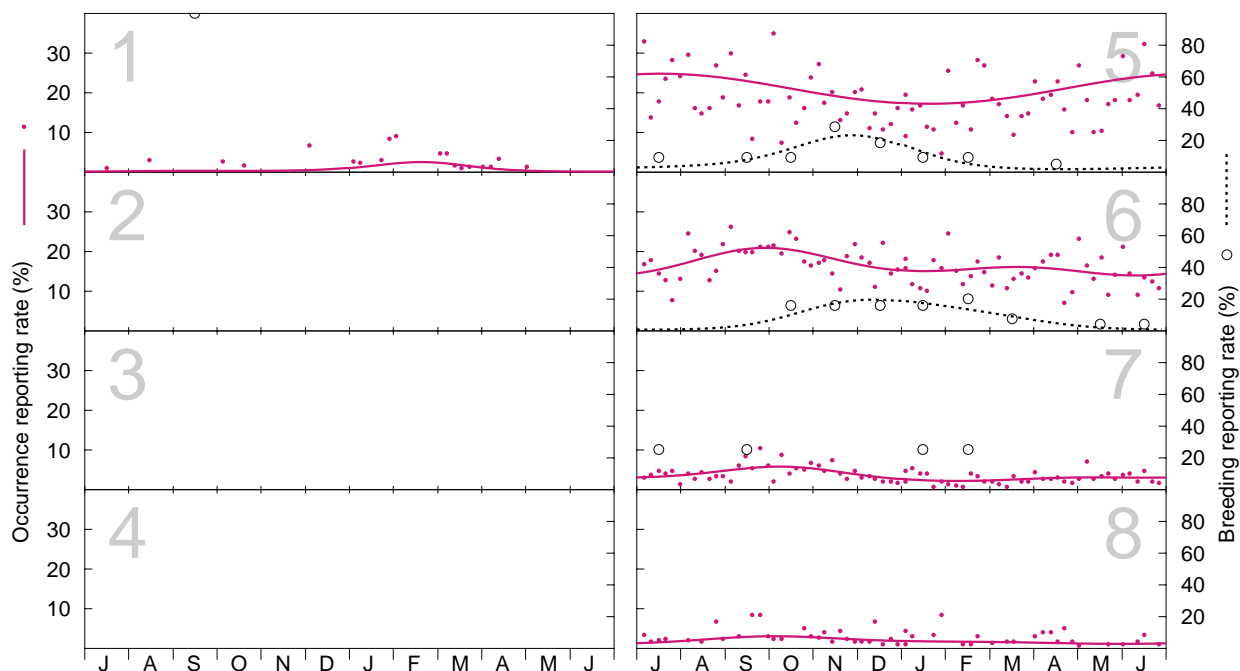
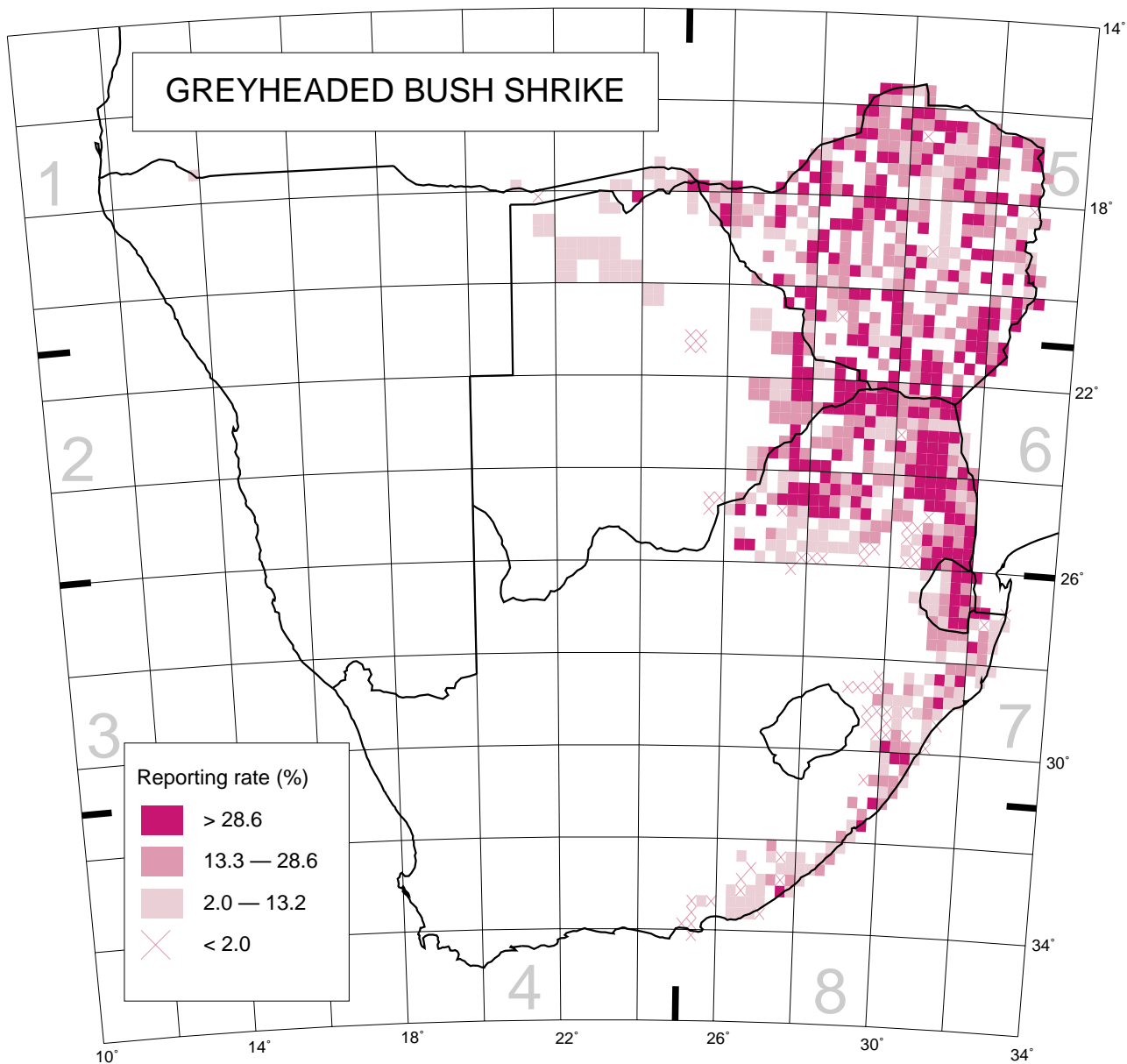
**Historical distribution and conservation:** It is unlikely that any changes in the distributional limits have occurred in historical times. There are records from some higher-lying areas in western KwaZulu-Natal where it was not recorded previously (Cyrus & Robson 1980), but this is more likely to be the result of better coverage. However, its numbers have probably been reduced where intensive agriculture has replaced natural woodland and savanna. On the other hand, it is apparently becoming more common in urban gardens (Harris & Arnott 1988).

V. Parker

Recorded in 864 grid cells, 19.0%  
Total number of records: 10 255  
Mean reporting rate for range: 17.9%

#### Reporting rates for vegetation types





Models of seasonality for Zones. Number of records (top to bottom, left to right):  
 Occurrence: 23, 0, 0, 0, 1843, 1895, 692, 106; Breeding: 1, 0, 0, 0, 21, 25, 4, 0.