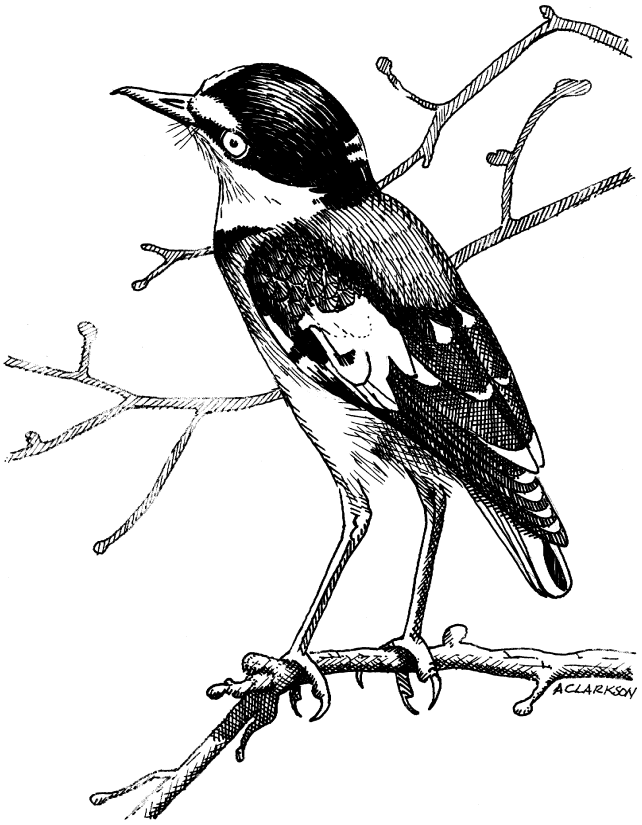


Whitetailed Shrike

Kortstertlaksman

Lanioturdus torquatus

This unmistakable black-and-white 'shrike-like thrush' is a near-endemic to Namibia's rugged northwest and central highlands, but it is also found in similar habitat in southwestern Angola (Pinto 1970).

Undoubtably one of Namibia's commonest birds, the population was recently estimated to number *c.* 1.5 million birds in Namibia, and over 24 000 birds in the Etosha National Park (Jarvis & Robertson 1997). This is much more than any other range-restricted species in Namibia. It occurs at its greatest densities in escarpment regions in the northwestern sections of its range, where 26 birds/km^2 were recorded (Robertson *et al.* 1995). According to atlas data, the Namibian distribution covers 166 000 km^2 (Robertson 1993).

It occurs in groups of 2–5 birds in winter when it forages more often in the vicinity of dry riverbeds, but groups of up 12 birds have also been recorded (Harris & Arnott 1988). It is fairly conspicuous, has loud and distinctive vocalizations, and is unlikely to be misidentified.

Habitat: It forages most often on the ground but may also glean insects within the canopy of trees, particularly Mopane *Colophospermum mopane* and *Combretum imberbe* in highlands above 1000 m. Atlas data indicate that reporting rates were tenfold higher in the Namibian Escarpment than in Mopane woodlands, but large areas of the northern escarpment also support Mopane habitat. Its attraction to the Namibian Escarpment is strikingly shown in the distribution map, extending about 900 km from Epupa (1613CD) on the Kunene River to south of the Naukluft Mountains (2416A) in Namibia's largest park.

Movements: Although seasonal movements are poorly studied, the winter appearance of birds in suburban gardens, and of groups in dry riverbeds, suggests that they move to lower-lying areas and become less territorial in winter. Reporting rates show minor seasonal variation.

Breeding: Details of only one nest have ever been published (Dedekind 1987). However, 39 nest records in Namibia's nest record scheme indicate egglaying September–April, with a peak February–March (Brown & Clinning in press). Atlas data confirm that breeding is predominantly in late summer. Nests are built up to 3 m above ground where large trees are available. They are small, inconspicuous, hair-and-grass structures bound by spider webs. Cooperative breeding has not been shown – winter groups always break into pairs during the breeding season – but neither breeding success nor social systems have been well studied.

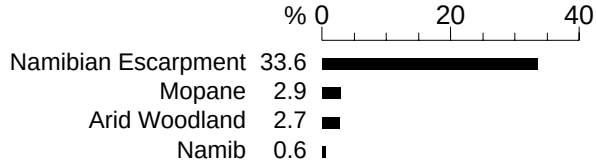
Interspecific relationships: It is often the only bird to be found in the bleaker areas of the Namibian escarpment. It may briefly join bird parties in dry riverbeds in the winter months.

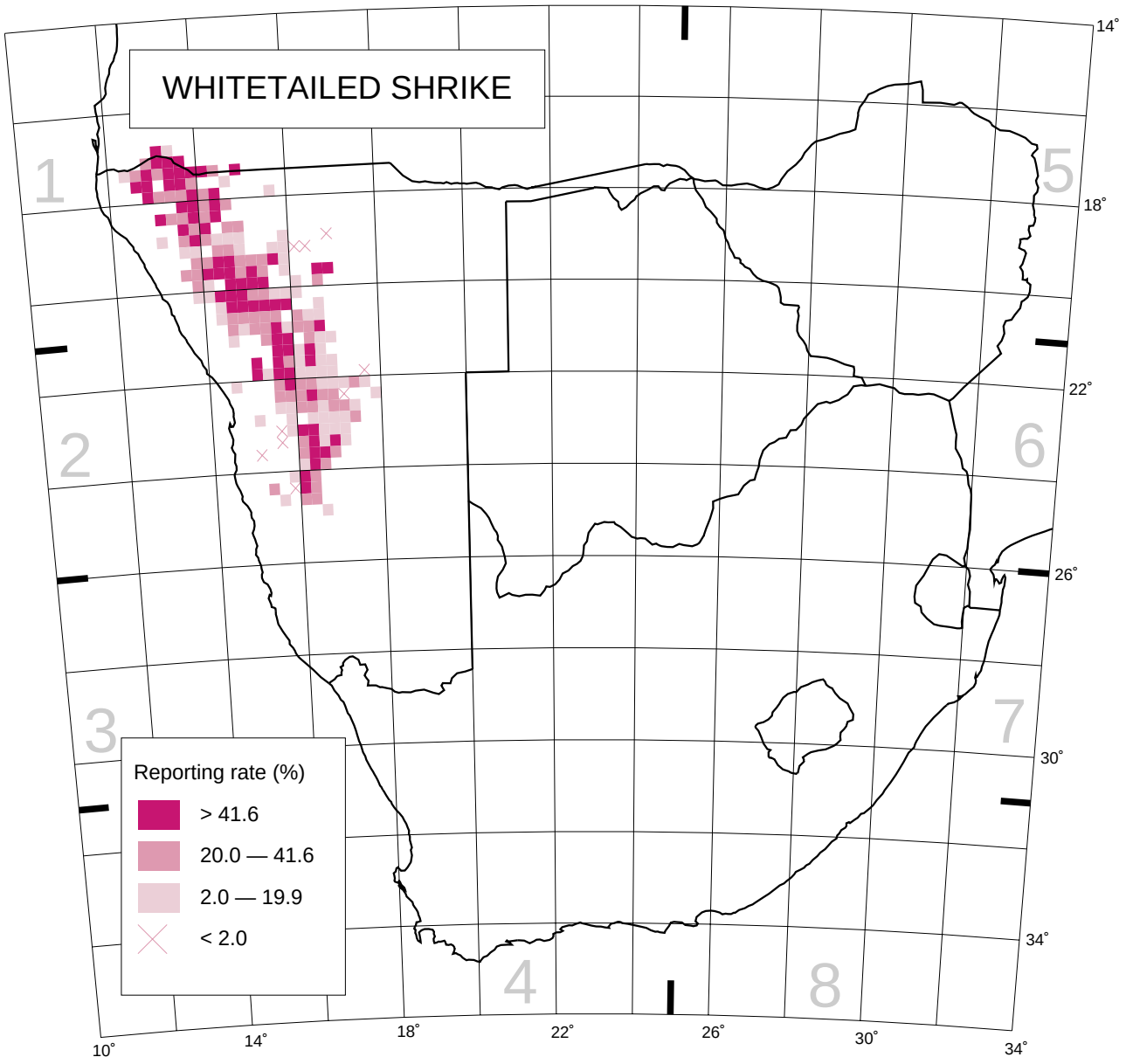
Historical distribution and conservation: Its attachment to and likely evolution in the rugged Namibian escarpment means that it is unlikely to have altered its pattern of distribution in recent times. However, as desertification occurs on the eastern borders of its range, it will be interesting to determine if its range expands into such areas. There are unlikely to be any major threats to the Whitetailed Shrike in the foreseeable future.

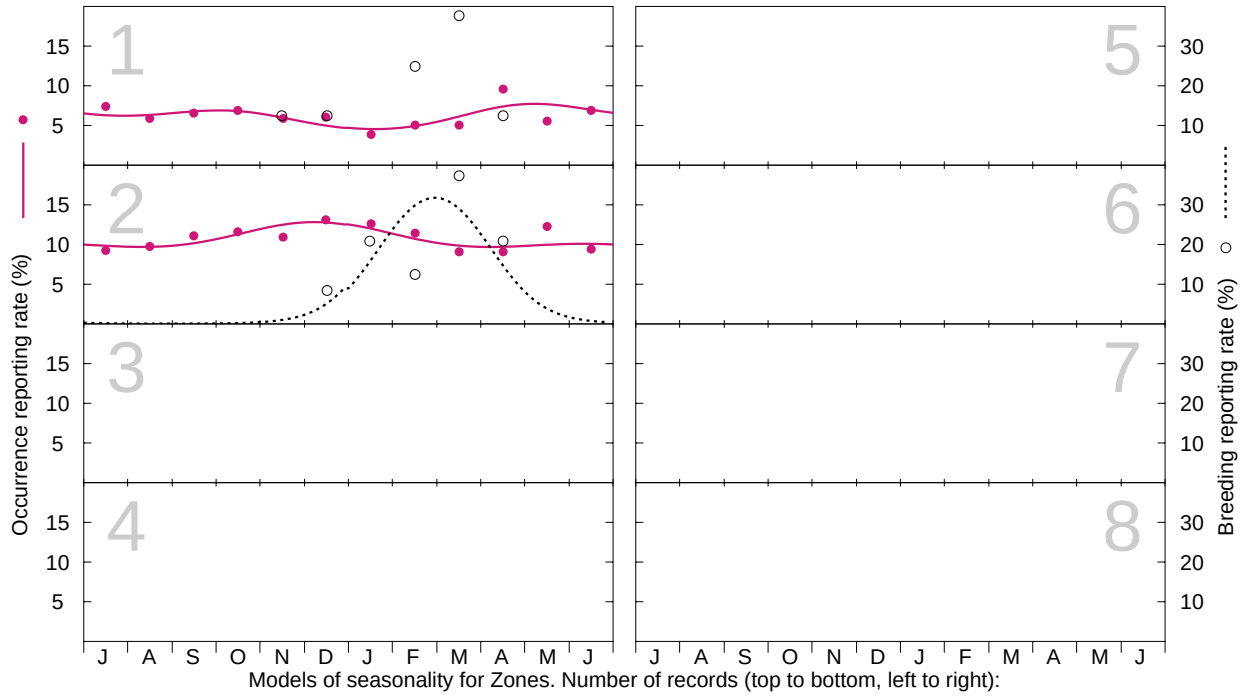
R.E. Simmons

Recorded in 221 grid cells, 4.9%
Total number of records: 1721
Mean reporting rate for range: 25.8%

Reporting rates for vegetation types







Models of seasonality for Zones. Number of records (top to bottom, left to right):
Occurrence: 582, 1132, 0, 0, 0, 0, 0, 0; Breeding: 8, 24, 0, 0, 0, 0, 0, 0.