



Indian Myna

Indiese Spreeu

Acridotheres tristis

Native to the Indian subcontinent and adjacent areas, the Indian Myna expanded its range in the 20th century, possibly assisted by introductions, throughout the Malay peninsula, Thailand, Vietnam and southern China. It was deliberately introduced to Australia, New Zealand and various islands in the Pacific, Indian and even Atlantic oceans (Long 1981). Birds from India were introduced to Madagascar in the second half of the 19th century (Langrand 1990). Mynas were released in Durban (2930DD) around 1900, and now occur from KwaZulu-Natal to the southern Transvaal and northeastern Free State (Cyrus & Robson 1980; Earlé & Grobler 1987; Tarboton *et al.* 1987b). Mynas are distinctive birds, unlikely to be overlooked or misidentified.

Habitat: Throughout its range, the Indian Myna is a bird of urban and cultivated areas, closely associated with man. It appears to scavenge more than the European Starling *Sturnus vulgaris*, but also feeds by probing in the grass mat.

Movements: There is no evidence of seasonal variations in occurrence, and slow colonizing suggests limited dispersal. As in the European Starling, an increase in reporting rates coincides with the breeding season which probably reflects use of man-made structures for nesting. The lower reporting rates after breeding may be the result of a lower profile during moult.

Breeding: Nesting occurs primarily October–March, with some breeding in all months in urban areas. All atlas records were from the summer-rainfall region, and the timing of breeding agrees with available data from other sources (Maclean 1993b).

Interspecific relationships: Raucous and conspicuous, it is often accused of displacing other bird species from gardens, probably unjustly (cf. Clancey 1966a). However, competition for nest holes may be intense, and mynas ap-

parently kept adult Redbilled Woodhoopoes *Phoeniculus purpureus* and perhaps also Redthroated Wrynecks *Jynx ruficollis* from their nests until the chicks died (Birkhead 1988). Weaver nests were reportedly demolished by mynas in Durban (Cuthbertson 1952).

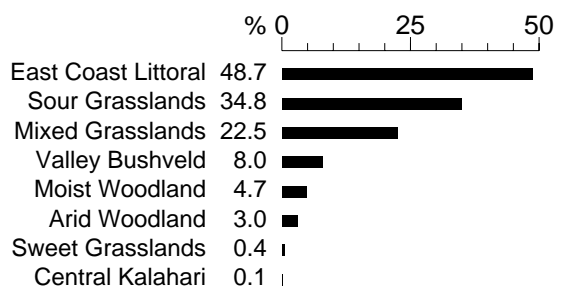
Historical distribution and conservation: Anecdotes ascribe the release of Indian Mynas in Durban to a gentleman from Mauritius in 1888 (Cuthbertson 1952), or to bird dealers in 1900 (Kent 1927); only the later introduction succeeded (Brooke *et al.* 1986). These KwaZulu-Natal birds originated from populations of the subspecies *A. t. tristoides* native to Burma and Assam (Brooke 1976). By 1953 mynas were widely distributed in the coastal areas and KwaZulu-Natal midlands (Calder 1953). Except for some expansion in the northwest, the Natal atlas showed little change over the next three decades (Cyrus & Robson 1980). A separate introduction apparently took place in Johannesburg (2628AA) in the 1930s and mynas were still very localized in 1953 (Calder 1953). These birds were evidently from a population of the nominate Indian subspecies *A. t. tristis* (Brooke *et al.* 1986). Mynas first appeared in Pretoria (2528CA) in 1955, but were not regular until the mid-1980s when no successful breeding had yet been reported (Carr 1988). Tarboton *et al.* (1987b) suggested that there were no large, permanent populations in Transvaal towns except for Johannesburg. Subsequent to the atlas period, mynas reached Pietersburg (2329CD) where breeding occurred in 1997 (R. Becker *in litt.*). They colonized a single locality in western Swaziland in 1993 and now seem to be resident there (Boycott 1995). Indian Mynas were reported breeding in Kimberley (2824DB) in 1957, but failed to become established (Liversidge 1985a). Their occurrence in the Transkei is sporadic and they do not seem to be increasing (Quickelberge 1989). Single birds were observed in eastern Botswana near Mahalapye (2326B) in March 1975 (Gerhart 1976) and in Gaborone (2425D) in March 1991 (R. Borello pers. comm.). There have been occasional reports from Port Elizabeth (3325DC) and breeding has been reported from Cape Town (3318CD), but it has not become established there (Hoofdirekoraat: Natuur- en Omgewingsbewing 1987).

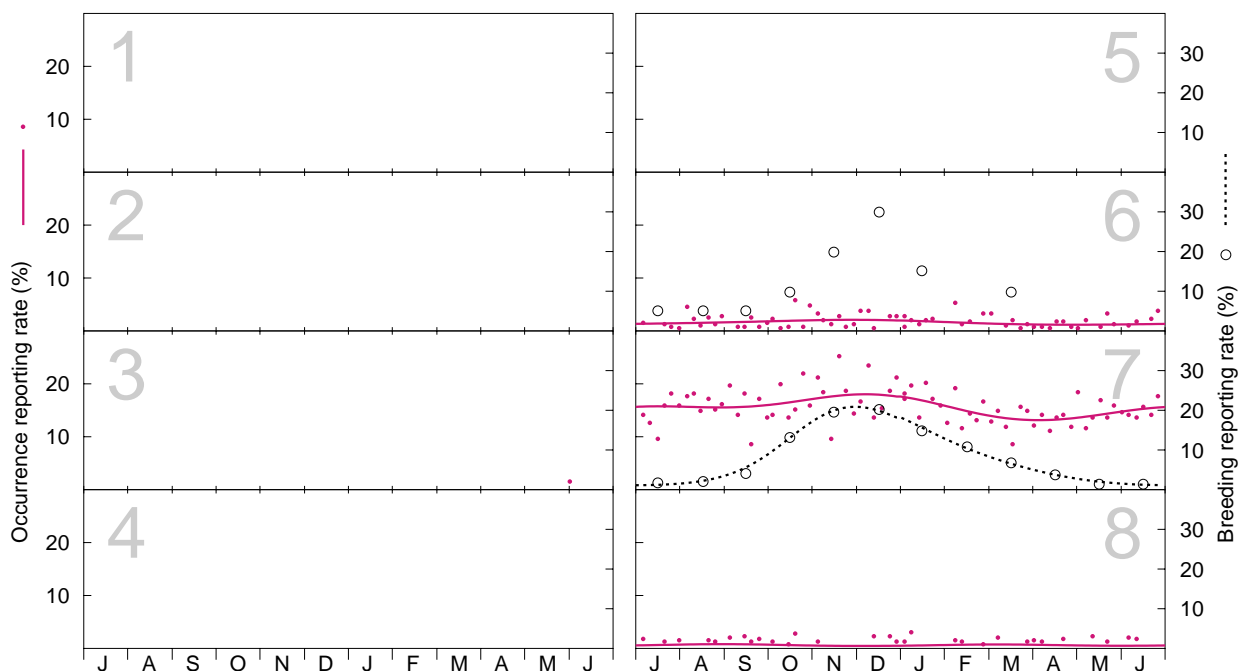
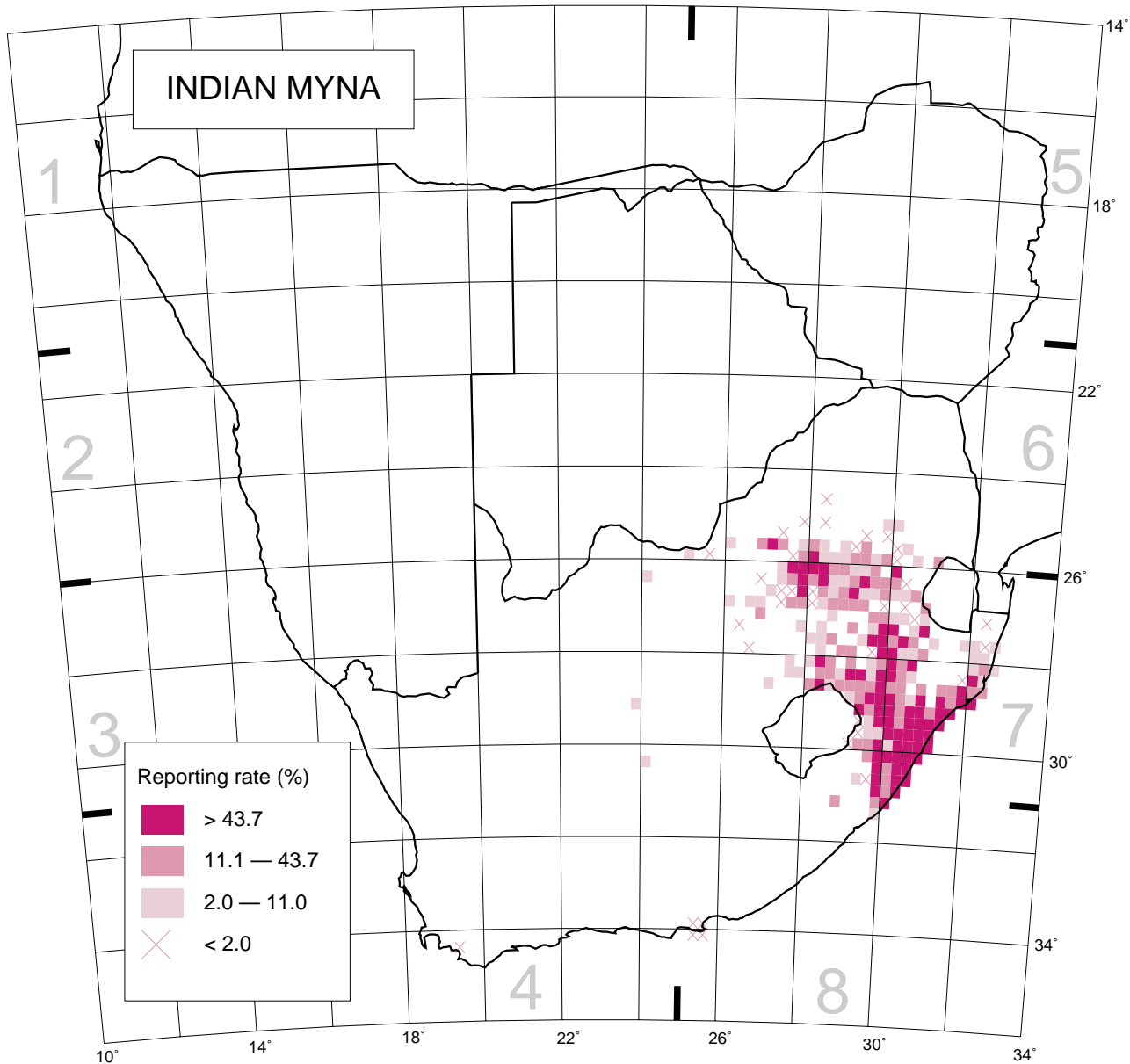
It is unprotected and generally regarded as an unwanted nuisance. Huge roosts in urban centres cause fouling and noise, but the Indian Myna is now accepted as a symbol of Durban and will become a permanent member of the avifauna in some of the cities of the region.

A.J.F.K. Craig

Recorded in 256 grid cells, 5.6%
Total number of records: 16 969
Mean reporting rate for range: 42.2%

Reporting rates for vegetation types





Models of seasonality for Zones. Number of records (top to bottom, left to right):
 Occurrence: 0, 0, 1, 0, 0, 180, 3049, 34; Breeding: 0, 0, 0, 0, 0, 20, 550, 0.