

Longtailed Starling

Langstertglanspreeu

Lamprotornis mevesii

This species is endemic to southcentral Africa (Hall & Moreau 1970), ranging from southeastern Angola, southern Zambia and southern Malawi, to northwestern Namibia and the Caprivi, northern and eastern Botswana, and the lower-lying areas of Zimbabwe. In South Africa it is confined to the Limpopo Valley and extreme northern Transvaal (cf. Tarboton *et al.* 1987b). It occurs locally in Mozambique along the valleys of the Limpopo, Save and Zambezi rivers (Clancey 1971c). Most of the range coincides with large river systems: Okavango, Zambezi, Limpopo, Save; even the Nata drainage holds a somewhat isolated stronghold on the Botswana–Zimbabwean border (2027). The stronghold in the northern Kaokoveld in Namibia coincides with the broken escarpment zone dominated by Mopane *Colophospermum mopane* trees and bushes and deeply incised by westward-flowing ephemeral rivers such as the Hoarusib and Hoanib, which are lined with tall *Acacia* and *Combretum* trees. To the south, the increasing aridity results in the birds being confined to the riparian vegetation along the large ephemeral rivers (C.J. Brown pers. comm.).

Most of the range in the atlas region is occupied by the nominate race, but the isolated population in northwestern Namibia has been described as *L. m. violacior* (Clancey 1980b).

It is likely to have been confused often with Burchell's Starling *L. australis*. The data were carefully vetted but this confusion may have affected the mapping of the limits of the ranges for these two species.

Habitat: It prefers tall riparian and lowland woodland with an open understorey and bare ground. It occurs both in broadleaved woodland (e.g. Mopane) and *Acacia*, but avoids *Baikiaea* on deep sands (Irwin 1981). It clearly follows a different pattern to Burchell's Starling, being more frequent in Mopane, particularly in Zimbabwe, and especially common in the riparian woodlands of the Oka-

vango. It is frequently found on alluvial ground in river valleys (Irwin 1981) and Tarboton *et al.* (1987b) noted that it is usually associated with areas which are seasonally flooded.

Movements: In Zimbabwe (Zone 5) there is an indication of seasonal fluctuation in occurrence with markedly lower reporting rates November–February. Irwin (1981) remarked that it was believed to be sedentary, but that there were a number of records from outside its usual range, suggesting movement of at least some birds. Changes in behaviour during the breeding season and more flocking outside the breeding season, leading to changes in conspicuousness, may be confounding factors. Daily movements over considerable distances to large roosts in reedbeds are known from the Okavango (Utschick & Brandl 1986).

Breeding: Reports spanned September–May. There are few other records, except for Zimbabwe where nesting has been recorded December–April (Irwin 1981) with a sharp peak February–March.

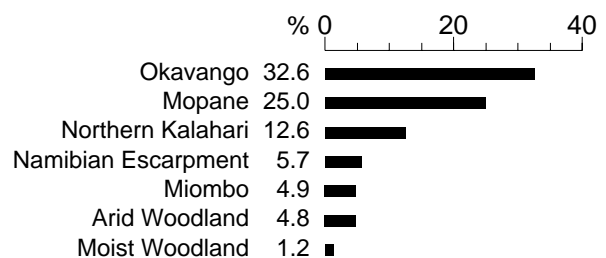
Interspecific relationships: It joins communal roosts with other glossy starlings, including Burchell's (M.H. pers obs; R.D. Randall pers. comm.) and various herons and other piscivorous birds (Utschick & Brandl 1986). Longtailed and Burchell's Starlings tend to be mutually exclusive in most parts of their distribution. They do overlap and frequently occur side by side in the Caprivi and Okavango regions, but Burchell's dominated Longtailed Starling in aggressive encounters near a food source (Herremans & Herremans-Tonnoeyr 1995). The Longtailed Starling has been observed feeding on the protective capsules of Mopane psyllids without eating the insects (Herremans-Tonnoeyr *et al.* 1995).

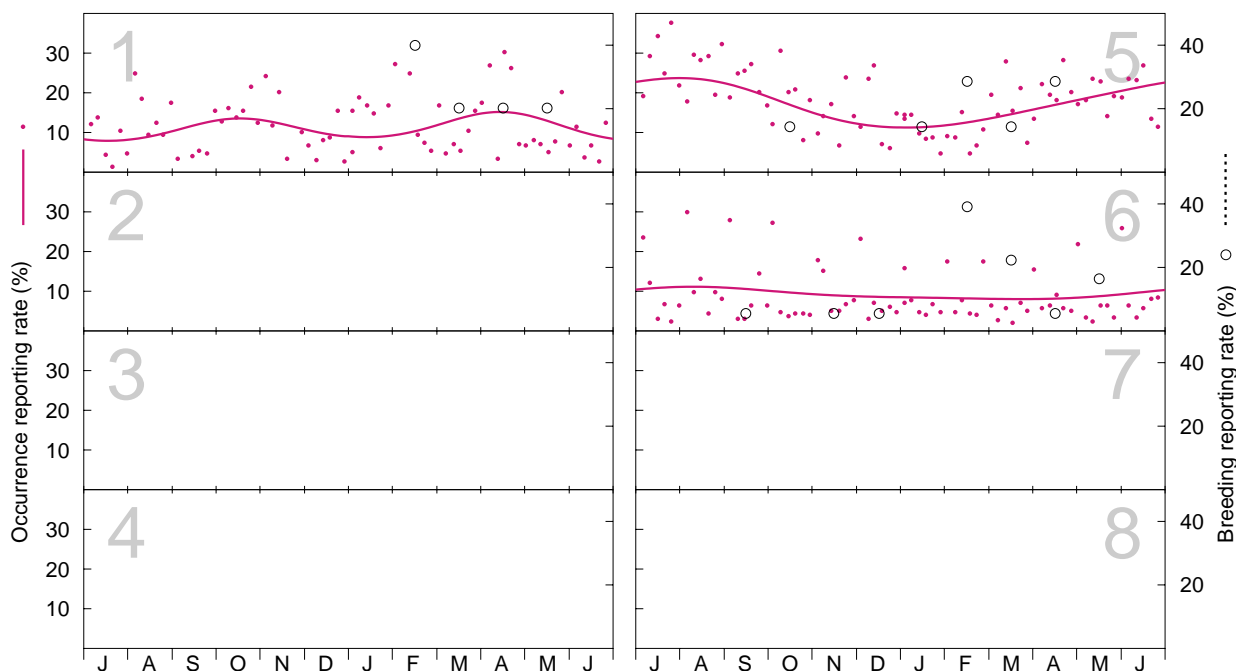
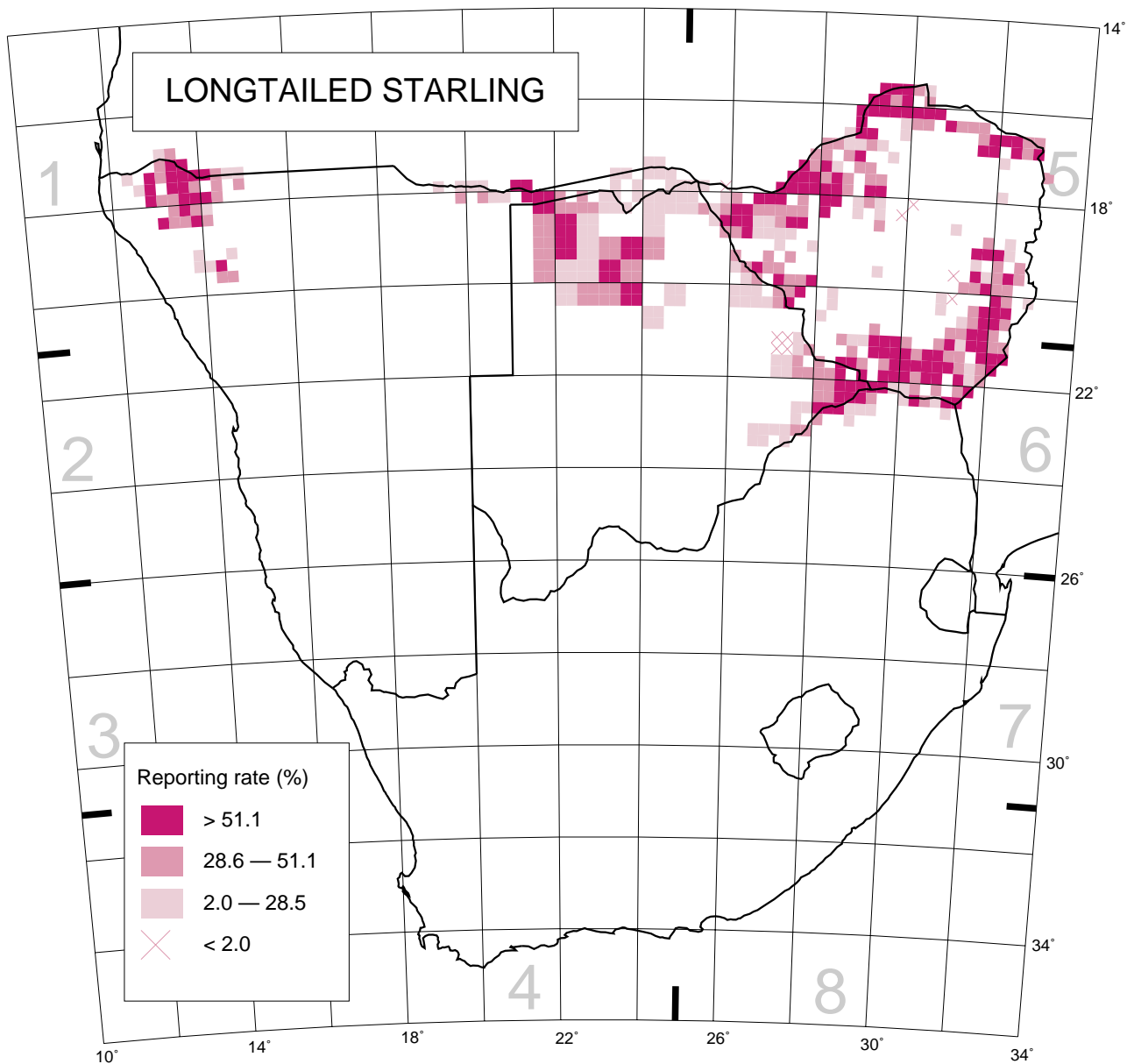
Historical distribution and conservation: The range recorded here is more extensive than on previous maps (Smithers 1964; Hall & Moreau 1970; Tarboton *et al.* 1987b), but there is no evidence for any significant change in distribution. Longtailed Starlings are localized in the atlas region, but their habitat is not under serious threat and they are common in some national parks. Continued clearing of tall riparian woodland, however, may affect the species negatively.

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Recorded in 491 grid cells, 10.8%
Total number of records: 3856
Mean reporting rate for range: 46.2%

Reporting rates for vegetation types





Models of seasonality for Zones. Number of records (top to bottom, left to right):
 Occurrence: 383, 0, 0, 0, 1524, 1053, 0, 0; Breeding: 5, 0, 0, 0, 7, 18, 0, 0.