

Glossy Starling

Kleinglansspreeu

Lamprotornis nitens

The Glossy Starling was recorded in most parts of southern Africa, except southwestern Namibia, much of the southwestern and central Cape Province, the Drakensberg highlands, and parts of eastern and northern Zimbabwe. To the north of the atlas region, it is found from southwestern Zambia through western Angola as far north as coastal Gabon (Hall & Moreau 1970). It is common in Mozambique south of the Limpopo River (Clancey 1971c).

Major strongholds are in the Kalahari and in the western Transvaal. It is absent from the arid and treeless parts of the Namib and Karoo, but establishes populations wherever sizeable trees occur, such as along the Kuiseb (2315), the Orange River, and patchily in the interior of Namaqualand. The well-separated population along the coast in the eastern Cape Province and Transkei has been assigned to the race *L. n. culminator*, while the remainder of the range pertains to *phoenicopterus*. The gap between inland and coastal ranges continues well to the north, but *phoenicopterus* replaces *culminator* from KwaZulu-Natal northwards (Clancey 1980b).

In the northern and eastern Transvaal, throughout Zimbabwe, and in northern Botswana and Namibia, it occurs alongside Greater Blue-eared Starlings *L. chalybaeus*. In Zimbabwe and the Caprivi region, the Lesser Blue-eared Starling *L. chloropterus* also occurs, and these three species are likely to be confused in the field. However, maps based only on Glossy Starling specimens support the distribution derived from the atlas data (pers. obs).

Habitat: It was reported from a wide range of vegetation types, with high reporting rates in many of these. This gives a misleading picture, as it is not a bird of grassland nor of forest, and depends on trees or tall vegetation such as *Euphorbia* for nest sites. It would appear that it occurs wherever the structure of the vegetation is suitable, rather than being associated with particular plant species. It is able to exploit plantations of alien trees as well as parks and gardens. It is one of a relatively small number of woodland species which is abundant in the Central Kalahari. Reporting rates were relatively high along the Vaal and eastern Orange rivers.

Movements: There are few indications of seasonal changes in occurrence. The most prominent pattern is seen in Zone 1, which includes the Okavango, where an influx in winter from more arid Kalahari habitat to the south is possible. A slight summer drop in reporting rates appears to be associated with

the breeding season, or just thereafter, when birds are moulting. It forms larger flocks during the nonbreeding season but seems unlikely to move extensively.

Breeding: Breeding occurs mainly October–February in the east, with some indication of a later season in Namibia with more records extending into March–April. This agrees with other published data (Irwin 1981; Craig 1983; Tarboton *et al.* 1987b; Brown & Clinning in press).

Interspecific relationships: In many areas it will be found feeding on the ground alongside other starlings, including Pied *Spreo bicolor*, European *Sturnus vulgaris*, Wattled *Creatophora cinerea* and Burchell's *L. australis* Starlings. It is also associated with Greater and Lesser Blue-eared Starlings at many localities, and Irwin (1981) stated that 'interspecific competition

between the glossy starlings is apparent'. It dominates most other species for access to nest holes, including Redbilled Woodhoopoe *Phoeniculus purpureus* and Redthroated Wryneck *Jynx ruficollis* (M.A. du Plessis pers. comm.). It is a host of the Greater Honeyguide *Indicator indicator*.

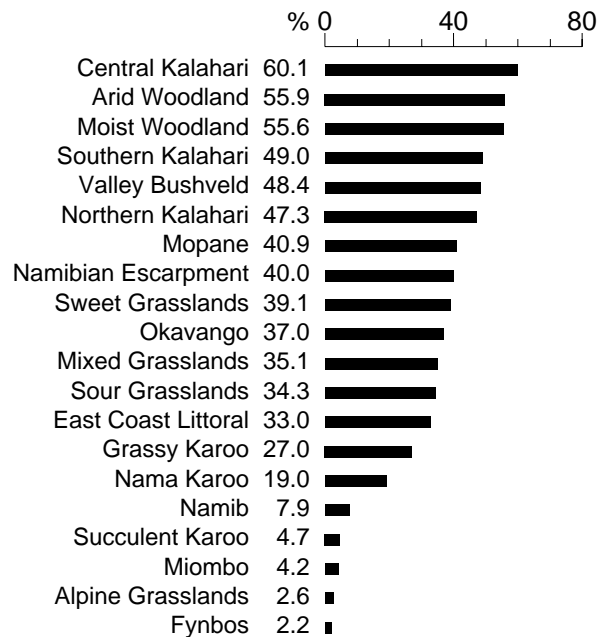
Historical distribution and conservation: Earlier records in the western Cape Province were restricted to the Orange River, with a population extending southwards to Garies (3017DB) (Winterbottom 1968a). Hockey *et al.* (1987) regarded it as a vagrant in the southwestern Cape Province and speculated that it might be expanding its range in the region. This is the only part of southern Africa where there has been an apparent range expansion.

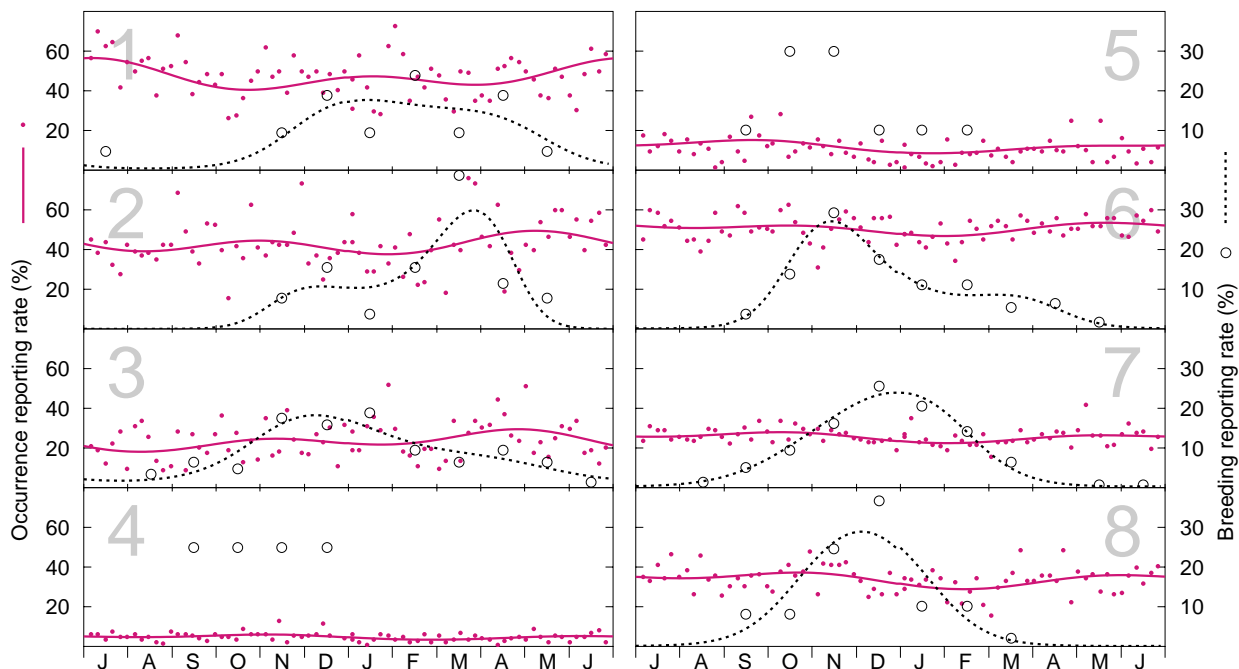
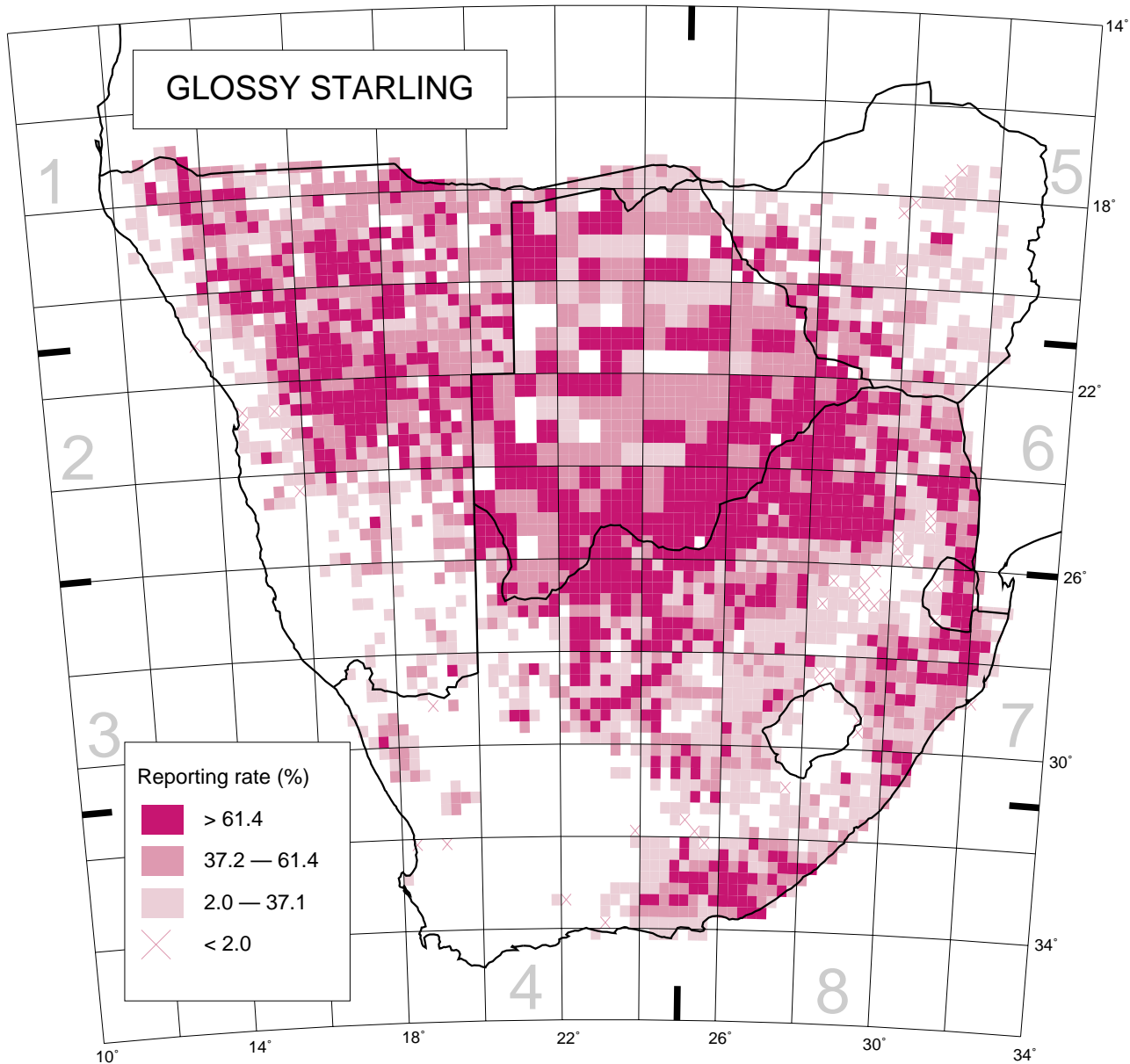
Glossy Starlings are common to abundant in a wide range of habitats over a huge area, and are often closely associated with humans. They are unlikely to be threatened in the foreseeable future.

A.J.F.K. Craig

Recorded in 3010 grid cells, 66.3%
Total number of records: 47 928
Mean reporting rate for range: 43.4%

Reporting rates for vegetation types





Models of seasonality for Zones. Number of records (top to bottom, left to right):
 Occurrence: 1568, 1555, 1300, 415, 1054, 5783, 4982, 1864; Breeding: 21, 26, 63, 4, 10, 109, 141, 49.