

### Lesser Blue-eared Starling

Klein-blouoorglanspreeu

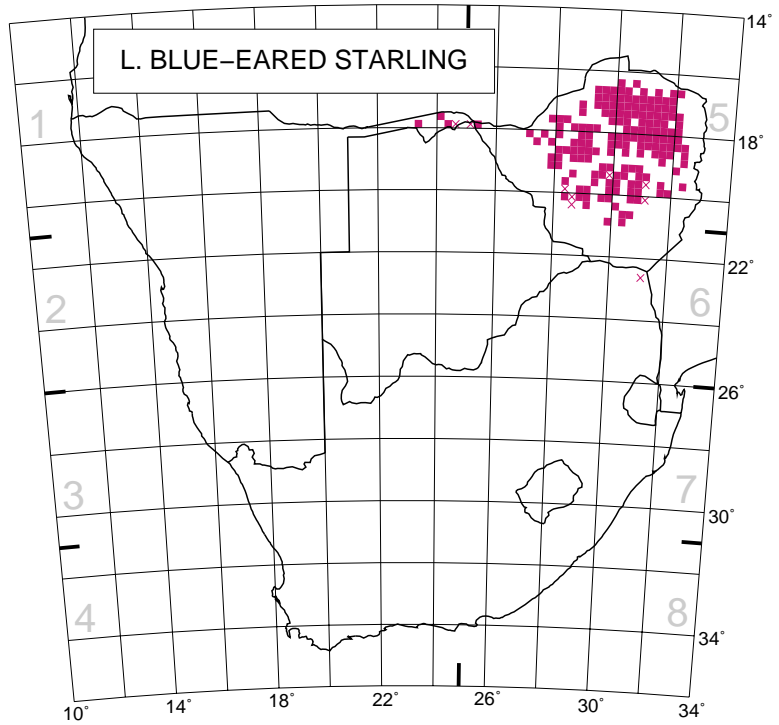
*Lamprotornis chloropterus*

The Lesser Blue-eared Starling is widespread in Africa south of the Sahara, but in southern Africa it is confined to northeastern regions. There has been a series of reports from along the Limpopo Valley and catchment in both Zimbabwe and the Transvaal, but only one has been accepted here. An authenticated sighting was made near Punda Maria (2331AA) in January 1995 (Hockey *et al.* 1996). In northern Zimbabwe it is the commonest glossy starling but in the drier south, the Greater Blue-eared Starling *L. chalybaeus* is more numerous (Irwin 1981). It is inclined to form much larger flocks than either of the other two common glossy starlings, but combined parties may be found from time to time.

Glossy Starlings have always created identification problems in the field; the Lesser Blue-eared Starling in particular is likely to have suffered from misidentification. The enormous scatter in the reporting rates in the model for Zone 5 is testimony to the inconsistency and lack of confidence be-devilling the recording of this species.

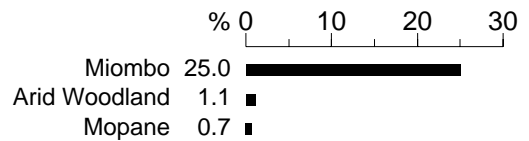
It is essentially a bird of miombo woodlands, occasionally wandering into adjacent woodland types. In the Caprivi Strip it may be found in the intermixed Arid Woodland, Mopane and Okavango vegetation types, and there are a few records from adjacent Botswana (Borello 1992b; Penry 1994).

These westerly occurrences appear to be seasonal, with most records coming from the end of the rains and early dry season, but the source of these birds is more likely to be Zambia than Zimbabwe. After breeding the birds remain in family parties and these gradually coalesce towards the end of the rains to form the large flocks found March–August. This is a time when there is extensive wandering of flocks within Zimbabwe with large influxes into one district when there may be a total absence in others. Influxes appear to be linked to food supply, either in the form of fruit or invertebrates. The extent of these seasonal wanderings is unknown, but locally they can give the impression of well-defined movements.



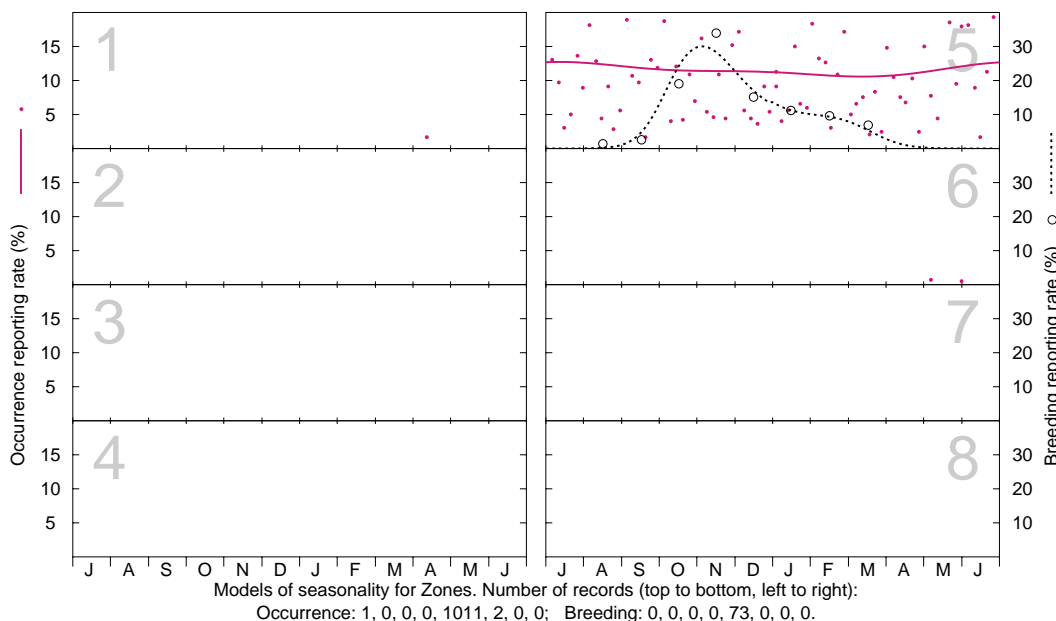
Recorded in 177 grid cells, 3.9%  
 Total number of records: 1778  
 Mean reporting rate for range: 26.4%

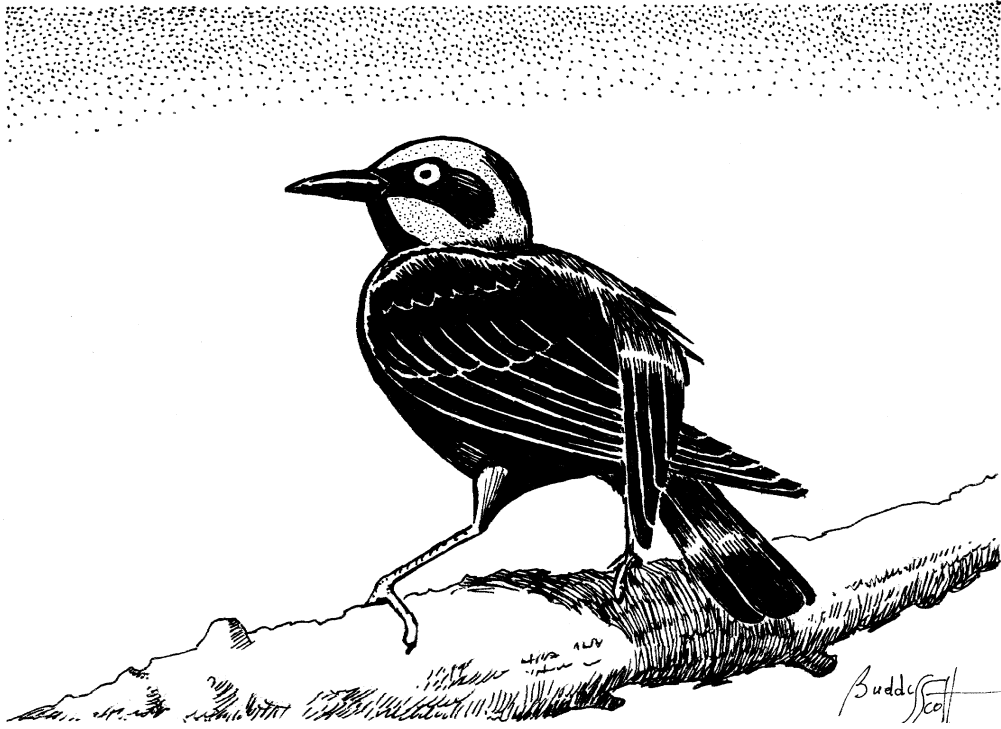
Reporting rates for vegetation types



Egg laying has been recorded September–November (Irwin 1981), but atlas data suggest a longer breeding season.

A.J. Tree





*Lesser Blue-eared Starling*