

Blackbellied Starling

Swartpensglansspreeu

Lamprotornis corruscus

This small glossy starling occurs along the coastal belt from the southern Cape Province northeastwards through the Transkei, KwaZulu-Natal and Swaziland, into the Transvaal lowveld. In Zimbabwe it is known only from the lowland forests around Haroni–Rusitu (2032BB) where it is apparently seasonal (Irwin 1981). It is widespread in the coastal lowlands of southern Mozambique (Clancey 1971c), extending north of our region through coastal Tanzania and Kenya to southern Somalia (Hall & Moreau 1970). Apart from Zimbabwe, the only regular records from forests more than 100 km from the coast come from Kenya (Britton 1980). Dull-plumaged juvenile Glossy Starlings *L. nitens*, or even adults seen in poor light, can be misidentified for Blackbellied Starlings.

Habitat: It is a bird of coastal forest and bush and, in the south, of Afromontane forest patches in lowland areas near the coast.

Movements: The models suggest some fluctuations in seasonal abundance in Zones 7 and 8. Quickelberge (1989) stated that Blackbellied Starlings are subject to movement in the Transkei, without providing evidence. A previous review of the available data on seasonality in this species was inconclusive (Craig 1989). It appears that flocks move in relation to the availability of fruit, so that individual birds are not present at one locality for extended periods. The seasonality of rainfall along the coast does change with latitude, however, and this species may move along the littoral zone in response to this. It was recorded at the Haroni–Rusitu confluence mainly late October to February (Zone 5).

Breeding: The available records suggest a December–February peak in breeding activity, and most records fell within the period October–March, as did earlier records (Craig 1989).

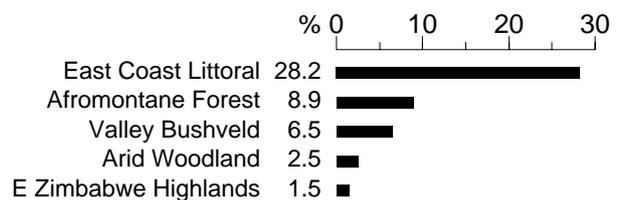
Historical distribution and conservation: A survey of older distribution records, based largely on museum specimens, gave a much narrower range with fewer inland records in the atlas region (Craig 1989). Tarboton *et al.* (1987b) noted few acceptable records for the Transvaal, while Hockey *et al.* (1989) reported two sightings of vagrants in the southwestern Cape Province, and noted that there was no evidence that Blackbellied Starlings had occurred there regularly in the past.

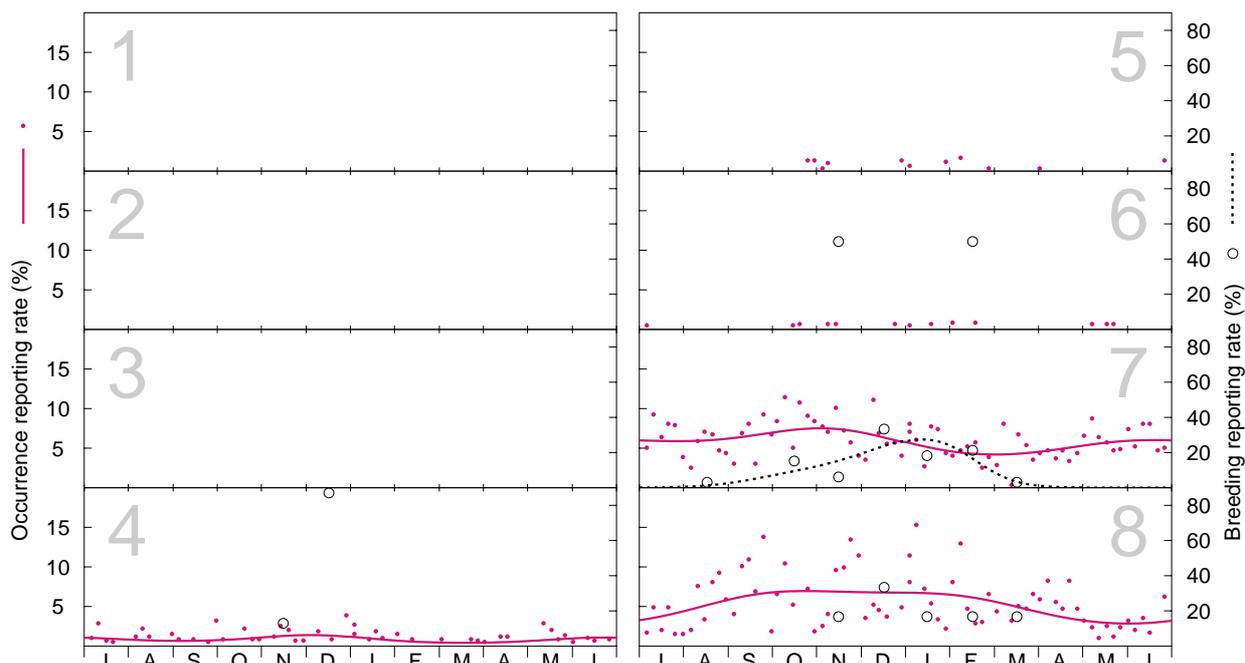
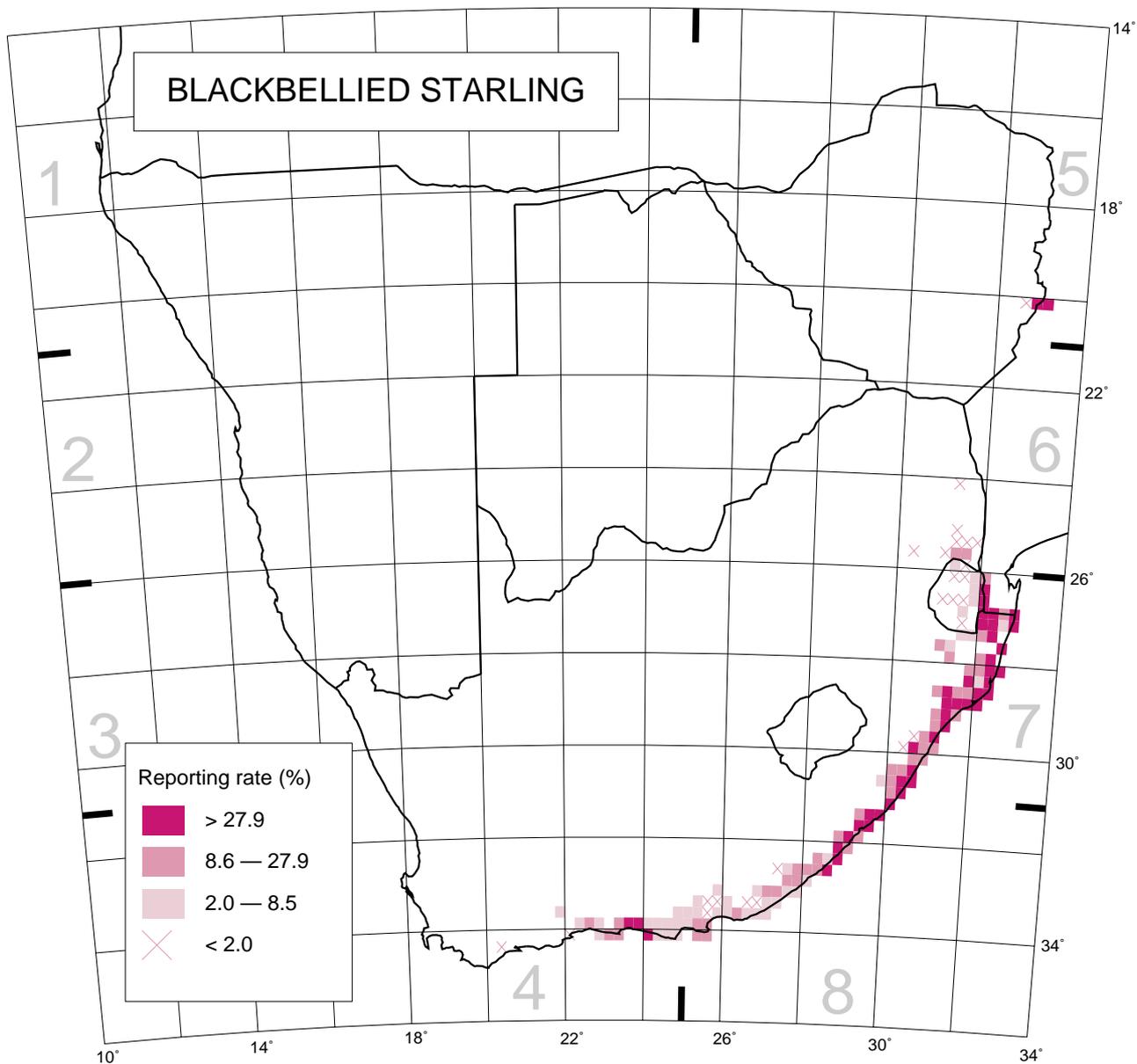
Nomadic frugivores will not remain within conserved areas, and the coastal habitats of this species are currently under increasing human pressure. At present the Blackbellied Starling is numerous and not threatened, but its status should be monitored.

A.J.F.K. Craig

Recorded in 155 grid cells, 3.4%
Total number of records: 4205
Mean reporting rate for range: 18.9%

Reporting rates for vegetation types





Models of seasonality for Zones. Number of records (top to bottom, left to right):
 Occurrence: 0, 0, 0, 72, 13, 14, 1140, 290; Breeding: 0, 0, 0, 8, 0, 2, 33, 12.