

Palewinged Starling

Bleekvlerkspreu

Onychognathus nabouroup

Essentially endemic to southern Africa, the Palewinged Starling extends north of the atlas region only in the arid coastal belt of southern Angola (Hall & Moreau 1970). It is widespread in coastal and central Namibia, south to the interior of the Cape Province, and eastwards through the southern Free State and along the Orange River to the base of the Drakensberg highlands. There have been no records from Lesotho (Bonde 1993), and it has been recorded only in the extreme southwestern Transvaal (cf. Tarboton *et al.* 1987b). There are two records from far southwestern Botswana (2420C, 2521B) (Penry 1994).

With its orange eye and white wing-patch, this starling is distinctive, but confusion with the Mountain Chat *Oenanthe monticola* is possible, or with the male Redwinged Starling *Onychognathus morio* if the birds are not seen in flight.

Habitat: A bird of arid country, its reporting rates indicate high densities on the Namibian Escarpment and in Karoo habitats. It frequents rocky outcrops and escarpments, which explains its marked absence from the plains of Bushmanland (centred on 30°S 20°E) and the southern Great Karoo (3222, 3223). It seldom nests on man-made structures, and does not frequent settlements in the manner of the Redwinged Starling. An exception is Windhoek (2217CA) where it is common in the city centre, roosting and perching on high-rise buildings, although it has not yet been recorded breeding on these sites (C.J. Brown pers. comm.).

Movements: There are subtle seasonal fluctuations in reporting rates. Flocks appear to remain based at a roost site during the nonbreeding season, but in some areas the birds

enter towns or forage in orchards (Craig *et al.* 1991). There is no evidence of regular movements.

Breeding: Although the samples from each region are small, there are apparently spring and late-summer peaks in breeding, suggesting that it may be double-brooded. Breeding in Namibia is evidently later than further south. These patterns are supported by the breeding records reviewed in Craig *et al.* (1989) and in Brown & Clinning (in press).

Interspecific relationships: Its distribution is largely complementary to that of the Redwinged Starling, but there is an extensive area of sympatry in the Cape Province and Free State. The two species may nest on the same cliffs, although they favour different nest sites (Craig *et al.* 1989). In aggressive encounters, Redwinged Starlings are usually dominant over Palewinged Starlings, which are also involved in fewer interactions with other cliff-nesters (Craig *et al.* 1991). Craig & Hulley (1992) suggested that historical factors rather than present specific interactions account for the present distribution of these two species. The area of overlap appears to correlate with areas of intermediate rainfall compared to the relatively arid range of the Palewinged Starling and the relatively humid range of the Redwinged Starling.

Palewinged Starlings have been observed to perch on Klipspringer *Oreotragus oreotragus* in search of ectoparasites (Tilson 1977).

Historical distribution and conservation: Previously published records, museum specimens and personal observations were mapped in Craig & Hulley (1992). The distribution obtained does not differ significantly from the atlas map, and there is no indication of any recent changes. There are reports which suggest that, at the range limits, numbers fluctuate in response to climatic conditions (V. Pringle pers. comm.). Locally common in its arid and rocky habitat which is subject to little human pressure, the Palewinged Starling is not threatened.

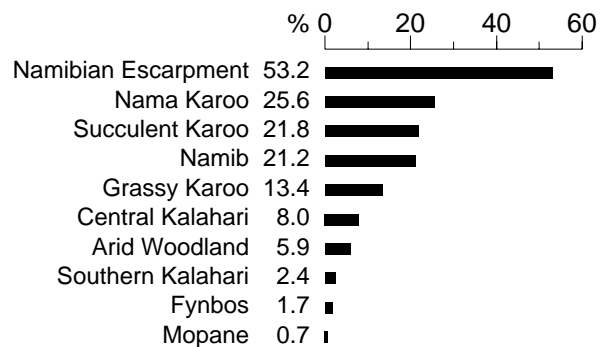
A.J.F.K. Craig

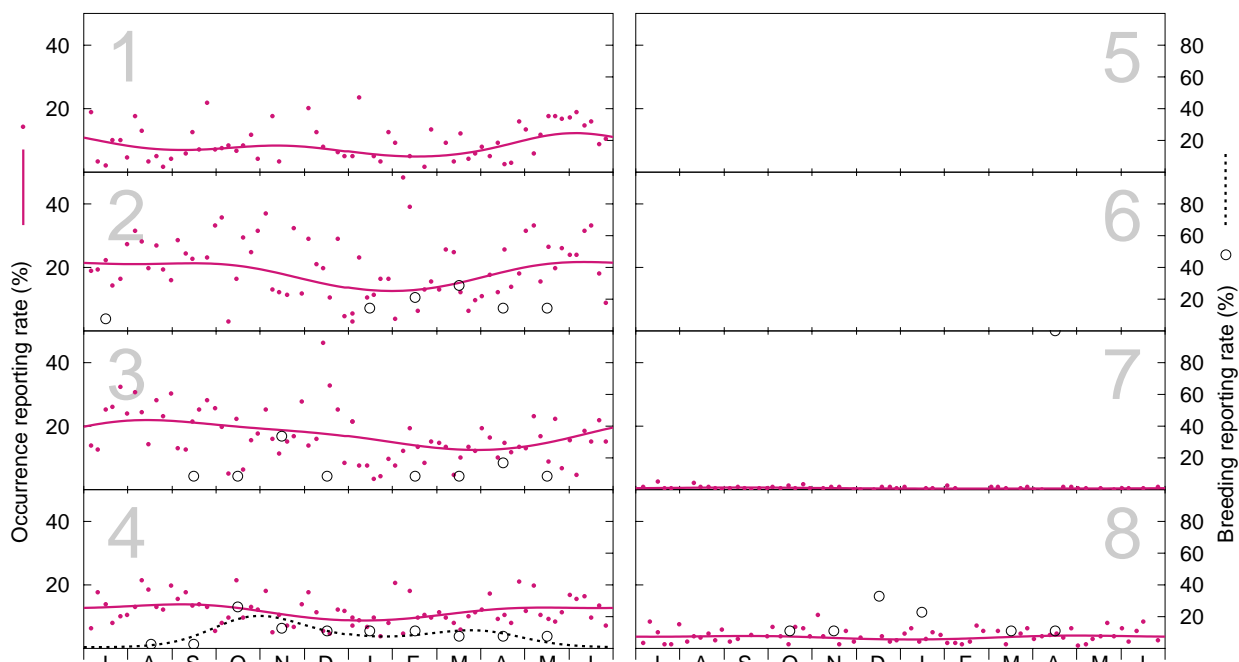
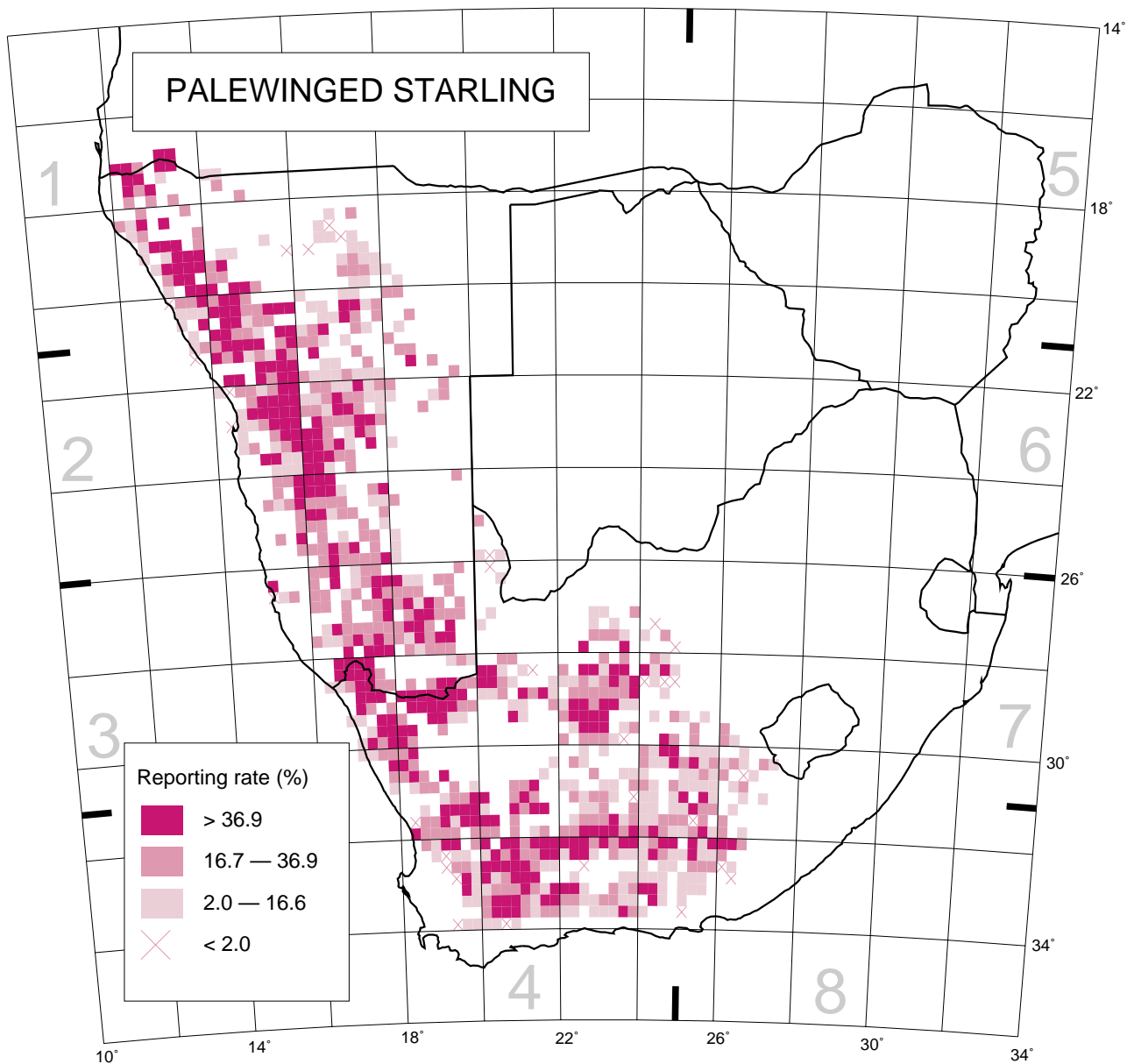
Recorded in 961 grid cells, 21.2%

Total number of records: 7789

Mean reporting rate for range: 29.1%

Reporting rates for vegetation types





Models of seasonality for Zones. Number of records (top to bottom, left to right):
 Occurrence: 273, 665, 962, 1036, 0, 0, 88, 196; Breeding: 0, 14, 12, 38, 0, 0, 1, 9.