

## Purplebanded Sunbird

### Purperbandsuikerbekkie

*Nectarinia bifasciata*

This is an eastern species occurring northwards from the vicinity of Durban (2931CC) along the coastal and sub-coastal zones through Mozambique to East Africa. It extends inland to Swaziland and perhaps marginally into the eastern Transvaal (Tarboton *et al.* 1987b), and also occurs in northern and eastern Zimbabwe, the Caprivi Strip and in extreme northern Botswana along the Chobe River (Penry 1994). It occurs in greatest abundance along the eastern littoral and in Mozambique it is probably the commonest sunbird.

The Purplebanded Sunbird is similar to the Marico Sunbird *N. mariquensis* but the two species do not overlap widely in the region.

**Habitat:** In coastal areas it inhabits coastal bush and the edges of lowland evergreen forest, but further inland it is essentially a bird of evergreen riparian growth. It will visit well-vegetated urban gardens, such as those in Harare (1731CC), or suitable concentrations of nectar-bearing plants away from rivers, when arriving in their breeding areas on the Mashonaland highveld.

**Movements:** The models show considerable seasonality with a distinct low in reporting rates from late summer to early winter. Care must be taken in interpreting this pattern, as this is one of the sunbirds in which the male assumes an eclipse plumage, mainly December–May. As most sunbirds are identified from males in adult breeding dress, it could easily be overlooked at this time. In Zimbabwe, however, virtually all birds apparently leave the plateau from December and start to return in May. It is likely that these are the birds that make up the large January concentrations found in stands of trees supporting *Loranthus* in the Zambezi Valley, and the majority of these probably move on to Mozambique where there is a large

summer influx (Tree 1990d). The situation in the small population of the Caprivi Strip is not clear from the limited data available.

**Breeding:** Egg-laying takes place September–March, mainly September–November, in Zimbabwe (Irwin 1981), and similarly October–November in KwaZulu-Natal (Dean 1971). The atlas breeding records span August–February.

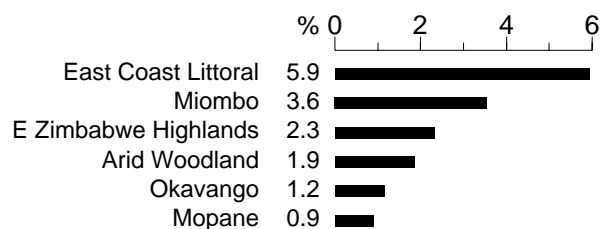
**Interspecific relationships:** It is replaced in more arid woodlands by the Marico Sunbird.

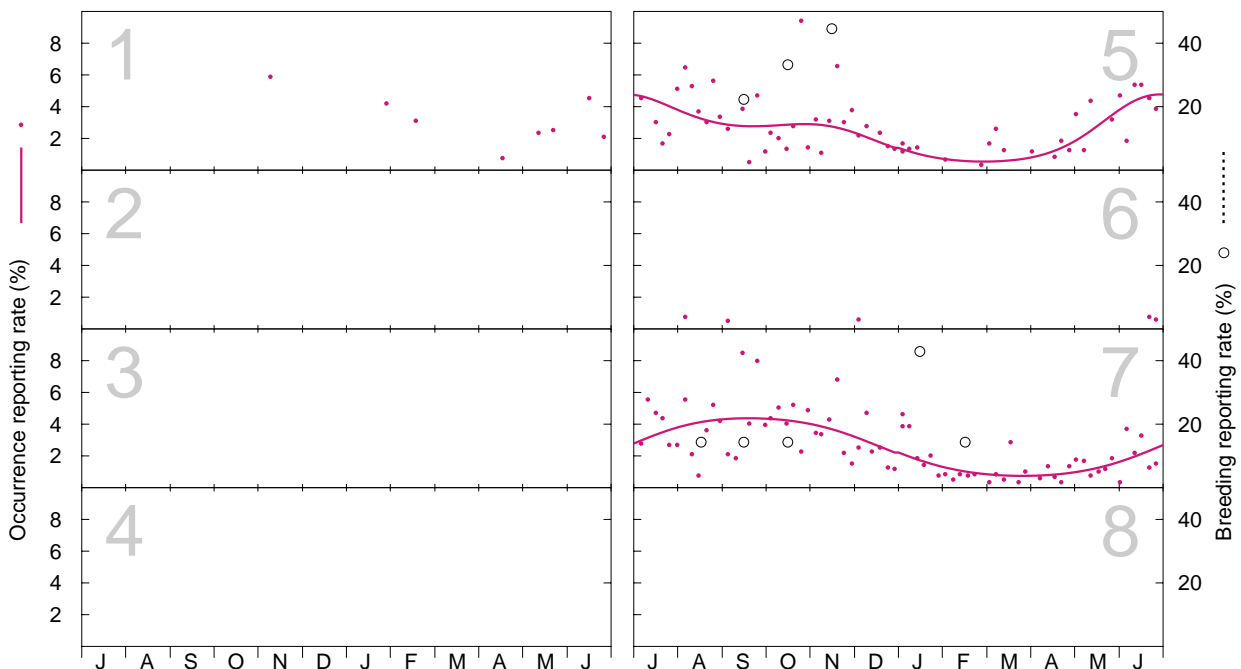
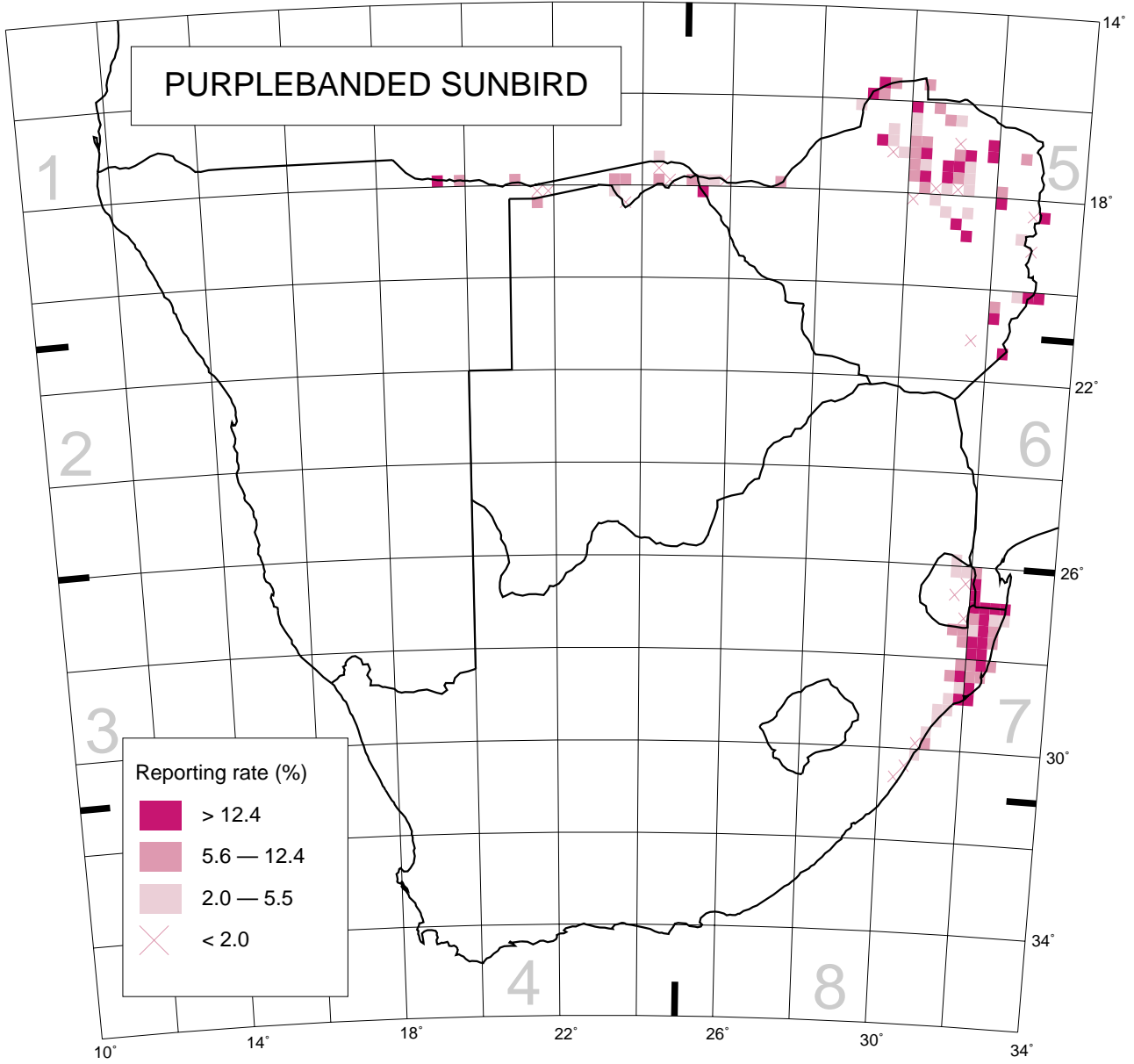
**Historical distribution and conservation:** Compared with Skead's (1967c) distribution map, the atlas data provide records for eastern Swaziland and the Caprivi Strip, regions without previous records. The records from central and eastern Botswana, northern Namibia, and from the northern Transvaal shown in Skead (1967c), most probably were in error. Although the Purplebanded Sunbird has a relatively restricted distribution in southern Africa, it is not considered to be of conservation concern. Locally, however, it is threatened by deforestation of riparian woodland in the Caprivi (C.J. Brown pers. comm.).

A.J. Tree

Recorded in 131 grid cells, 2.9%  
Total number of records: 1232  
Mean reporting rate for range: 8.9%

#### Reporting rates for vegetation types





Models of seasonality for Zones. Number of records (top to bottom, left to right):  
 Occurrence: 9, 0, 0, 0, 210, 5, 490, 0; Breeding: 0, 0, 0, 0, 9, 0, 7, 0.