



Yellowbellied Sunbird

Geelpenssuikerbekkie

Nectarinia venusta

This sunbird has a wide range in Africa extending from Zimbabwe and Mozambique to Senegal and Eritrea (Skead 1967c). During the atlas period it was found only in Zimbabwe, although there are a few historical records from the eastern Transvaal of which at least one is confirmed (Tarboton *et al.* 1987b). In Zimbabwe it is mainly in the eastern highlands, but it has apparently extended its range to the west, colonizing suitable habitat (Irwin 1981). A separate short-billed form occurs in the Zambezi Valley (Irwin 1981) and is not common. It is not yet known if the birds to the north of Harare (1731CC) are of the eastern highlands or the Zambezi Valley form, but are more likely to be the former.

The Yellowbellied Sunbird is often confused with the Collared Sunbird *Anthreptes collaris* and subadult males of the Yellowbellied and Whitebellied *N. talatala* Sunbirds are also easily confused (Hustler 1985c). Some of the atlas records therefore may represent misidentifications and records from the periphery of the range should be regarded with caution.

Habitat: It is found mainly on the edges of evergreen forest, both montane and riparian. In the eastern highlands it is regularly found in nearby zones of rank herbaceous growth, bracken-briar and scrub (Irwin 1981) and also in the richer stands of *Brachystegia*-dominated woodland, as in the vicinity of Marondera (1831BA), and it is now widespread in the artificially wooded urban environment of Harare (Tree 1990d). In the middle Zambezi Valley, as far upstream as Chirundu (1628BB), it is sparse along riverine fringes but wanders into woodland in search of nectar sources such as that provided by *Loranthus* spp. or the Flame Tree *Combretum paniculatum*.

Movements: The atlas data give no indication of seasonal movements, but ringing studies by A.J. Manson in the eastern highlands suggest a considerable degree of local movement. Possibly movements are not migratory but rather nomadic in response to the seasonal availability of food sources. In newly settled habitats, such as that of Harare, it appears to be fairly sedentary, although there is a certain amount of local wandering within the city and probably into the surrounding countryside.

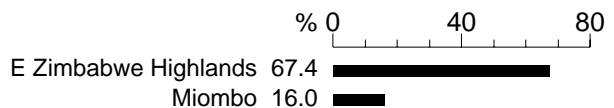
Breeding: Egg-laying has been recorded throughout the year in Zimbabwe with most records coming from late summer through to spring (February–October) (Irwin 1981). The atlas breeding data also span all months of the year, with little evidence for discrete seasonality.

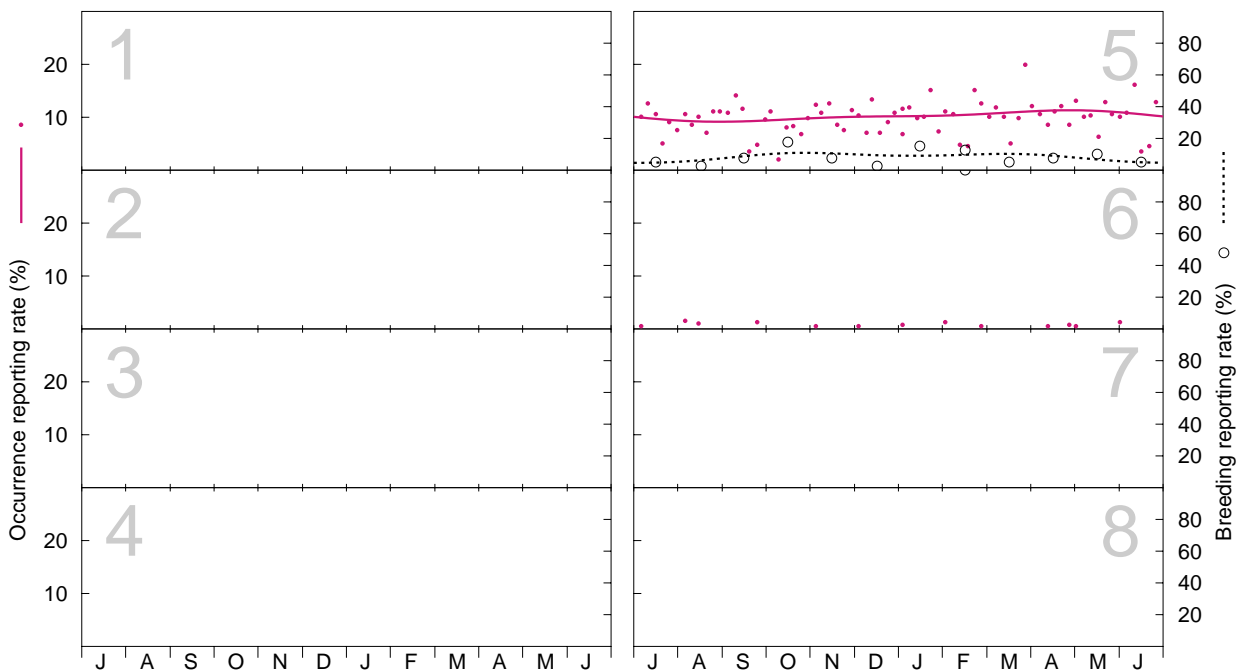
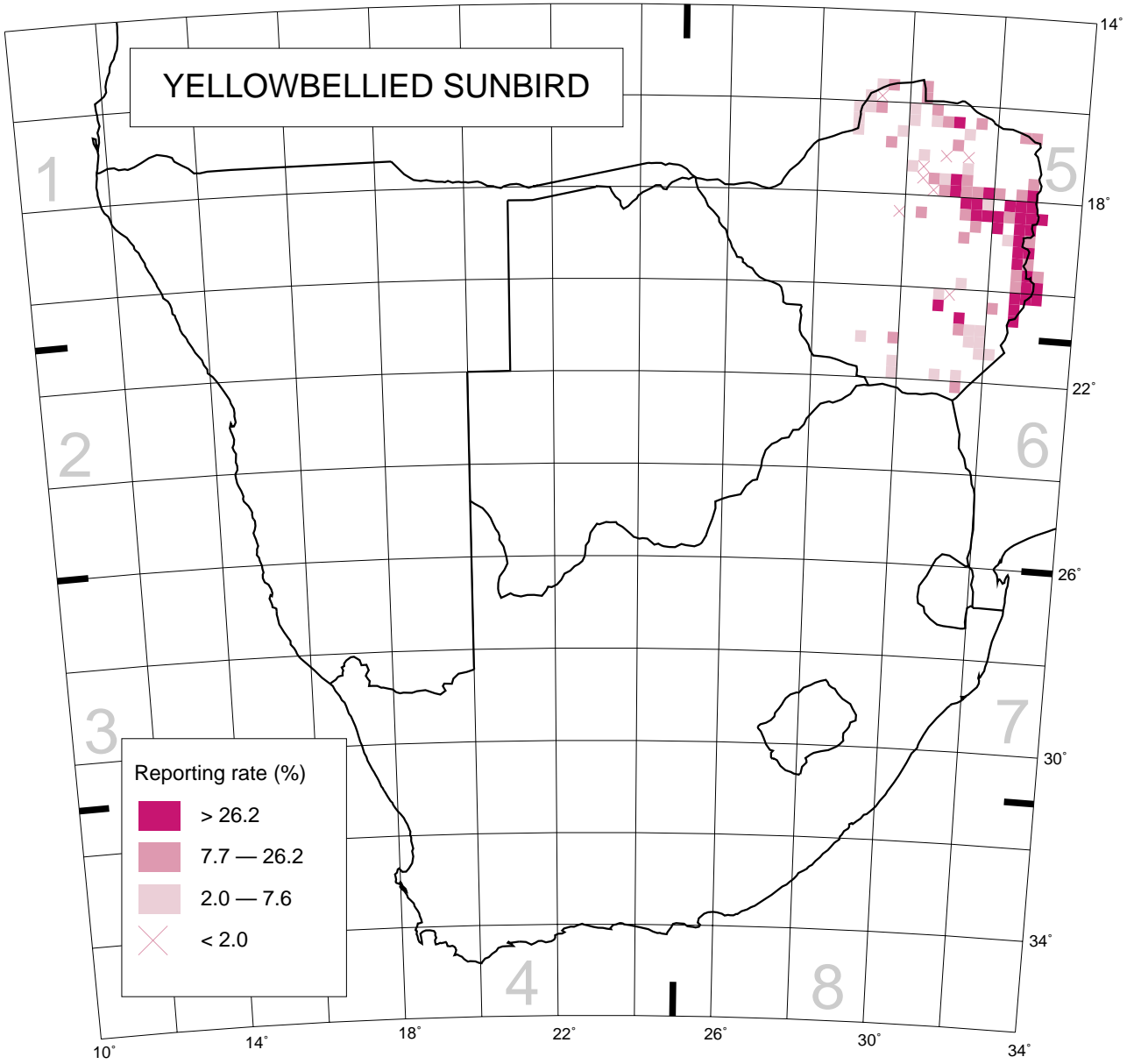
Historical distribution and conservation: The atlas map shows a larger range in northeastern and southern Zimbabwe than shown in the distribution maps provided by Skead (1967c) and Irwin (1981). These areas support patches of rich miombo understory with a variety of bushes and herbaceous matter on the higher-rainfall windward slopes of many granite dwalas, creating a habitat that would be well suited to this species. The Yellowbellied Sunbird may be in an active phase of range expansion westwards from its original range in the eastern highlands. The most recent colonization is that of the artificial environment of Harare where it may well be the commonest resident sunbird within the city limits (Tree 1990d). There is no definite indication of any range expansion by the Zambezi Valley form. Misidentifications obscure this issue and further confirmation of any range expansion, especially in southern Zimbabwe, is required.

A.J. Tree

Recorded in 105 grid cells, 2.3%
Total number of records: 1404
Mean reporting rate for range: 26.1%

Reporting rates for vegetation types





Models of seasonality for Zones. Number of records (top to bottom, left to right):
 Occurrence: 0, 0, 0, 0, 889, 19, 0, 0; Breeding: 0, 0, 0, 0, 39, 1, 0, 0.