

Violetbacked Sunbird

Blousuikerbekkie

Anthreptes longuemarei

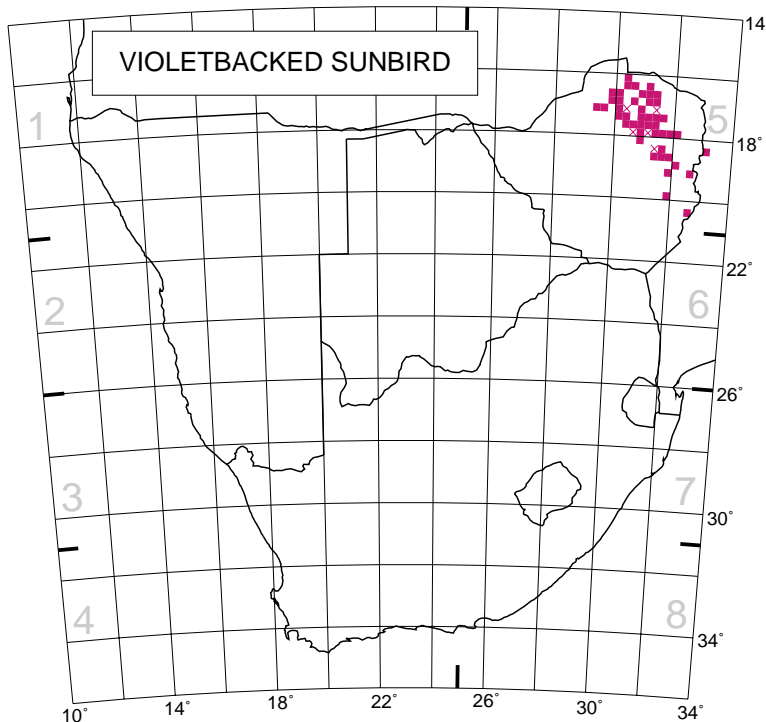
The Violetbacked Sunbird reaches the southern extremity of its range in Zimbabwe and Mozambique, occurring from Senegal and the southern Sudan to southern Africa, but avoiding the equatorial forests (Skead 1967c). Within the atlas region it is localized and uncommon, being restricted to the canopy of mature miombo woodland in higher-rainfall areas, as well as associated *Uapaca* woodland in the eastern highlands (Irwin 1981).

It is not as inclined to visit isolated nectar sources as other sunbirds, but will readily feed on flowering *Erythrina abyssinica* and especially *Faurea speciosa*, both of which are minor components of miombo woodland. It also favours the alien Weeping Bottlebrush *Callistemon* spp. A variety of other food sources are exploited and it is also insectivorous (Skead 1967c).

Although the model indicates a degree of seasonality, this is probably due to its being a relatively inconspicuous canopy feeder and thus easily overlooked when trees are in full leaf; it is more readily seen during winter. In addition, it can be more obvious when visiting rich winter nectar sources. Ringing results suggest that adults are almost completely sedentary (pers. obs) but that there is a considerable degree of juvenile dispersal during the winter months.

Egglaying takes place August–December, mainly August–October (Irwin 1981); the atlas breeding data span September–February, mainly September–November. Late atlas records may represent chicks and/or fledglings.

The present map is similar to that shown by Skead (1967c) and Irwin (1981) but provides more detail and marginally extends the known range to the northwest, probably a result of more extensive coverage. The fragmentation of miombo woodlands since the 1940s must have contributed greatly towards the patchiness of the distribution (Tree 1990b). The Violetbacked Sunbird may be particularly sensitive to the degradation of mature miombo woodland and deserves careful monitoring.



Recorded in 50 grid cells, 1.1%
 Total number of records: 261
 Mean reporting rate for range: 7.6%

A.J. Tree

