

Golden Weaver

Goudwewer

Ploceus xanthops

The Golden Weaver occurs from KwaZulu-Natal through Swaziland, the eastern half of the Transvaal, over much of Zimbabwe, in the Okavango region of Botswana and adjacent Caprivi, and in far northwestern Namibia along the Kunene River. There are concentrations of the race *P. x. jamesoni* in the southeastern Transvaal escarpment and adjacent higher regions of Swaziland, the northern plateau and the eastern highlands of Zimbabwe, where it occurs up to 2200 m (Irwin 1981), and most prominently of the nominate race in the Okavango basin. It is widely distributed in southern Mozambique (Clancey 1971c). To the north of the atlas region, it extends from Angola, southern Zaire and Zambia eastwards to Uganda and inland East Africa; there appear to be no coastal records north of the Zambezi River (Hall & Moreau 1970).

Because this is a large, plain-coloured yellow weaver, it can easily be confused with other species when encountered in dense vegetation, particularly in the dry season when weavers are in nonbreeding plumage. Males develop a clear orange-brown wash on the throat in the breeding season, making them superficially similar to the smaller Brownthroated Weaver *Ploceus xanthopterus* which occupies the same habitat in some places. Being solitary or in pairs, the Golden Weaver is not particularly conspicuous, and it was probably under-reported in most areas.

Habitat: It favours riparian woodland, thickets, reedbeds and rank vegetation near water in relatively moist or lush areas. Reporting rates were low in all vegetation types, except those in Botswana and Zimbabwe, which reflects the relative abundance of the birds in the region, but does not exactly reflect their habitat preference.

Movements: It is likely to be resident, and six recoveries were all within 10 km of the ringing site (Craig 1982a). The seasonal changes in reporting rates were related to the increased conspicuousness of breeding birds, but these seasonal changes are smaller than in other, more seasonally dimorphic *Ploceus* species.

Breeding: Breeding was recorded in the wet season, mainly September–March, which agrees with earlier data for KwaZulu-Natal, Zimbabwe, the Transvaal and Botswana (Dean 1971; Irwin 1981; Tarboton *et al.* 1987b; Skinner 1995a). Peak breeding is about two months earlier in Zimbabwe (Zone 5) than in the Transvaal (Zone 6), also concurrent with published information (Irwin 1981; Tarboton *et al.* 1987b), but the number of records from Zones 1 and 7 is too low for firm conclusions.

Interspecific relationships: There are no reports of Golden Weavers associating with other species. Territorial pairs were aggressive and dominant over Masked Weavers *P. velatus* at an artificial feeding station (Herremans & Herremans-Tonnoeyr 1995).

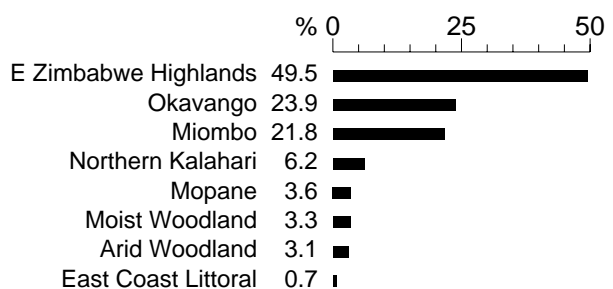
The distribution overlaps considerably with six other *Ploceus* species, but is most similar to Spotted-backed *P. cucullatus* and Spectacled *P. ocularis* Weavers. The latter is a smaller, predominantly insectivorous bird, and the Golden Weaver is more restricted to riparian vegetation than the former. There is no evidence from the distributions for complementarity or competitive exclusion with any of the *Ploceus* species.

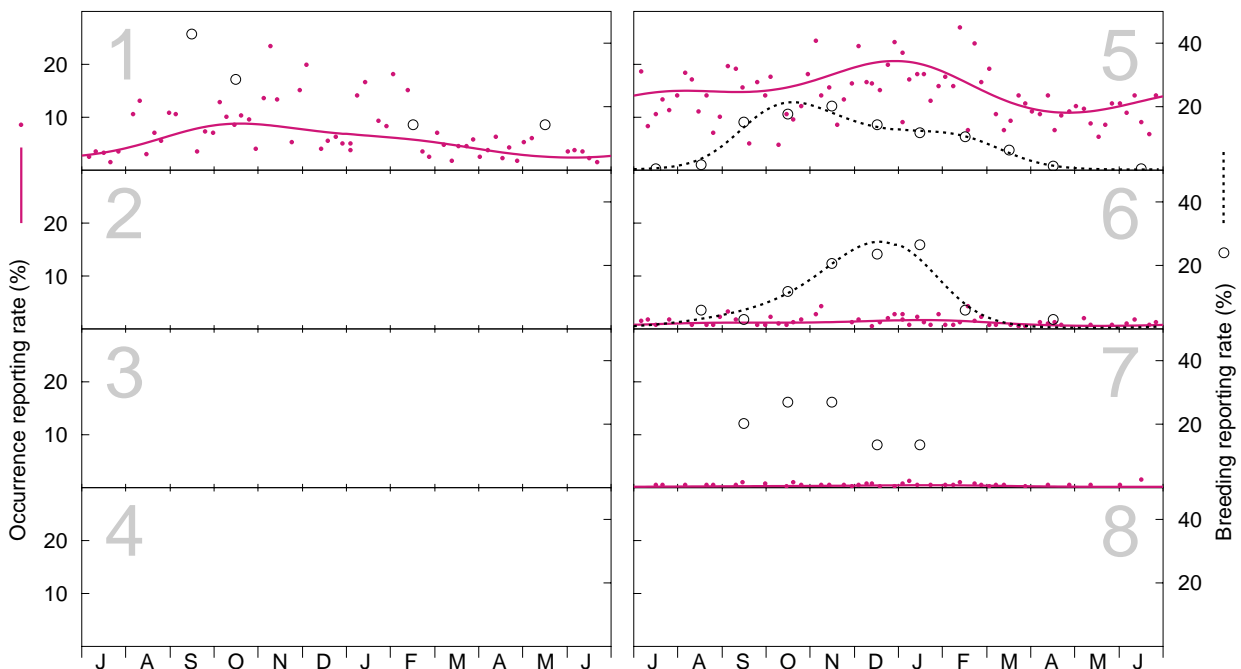
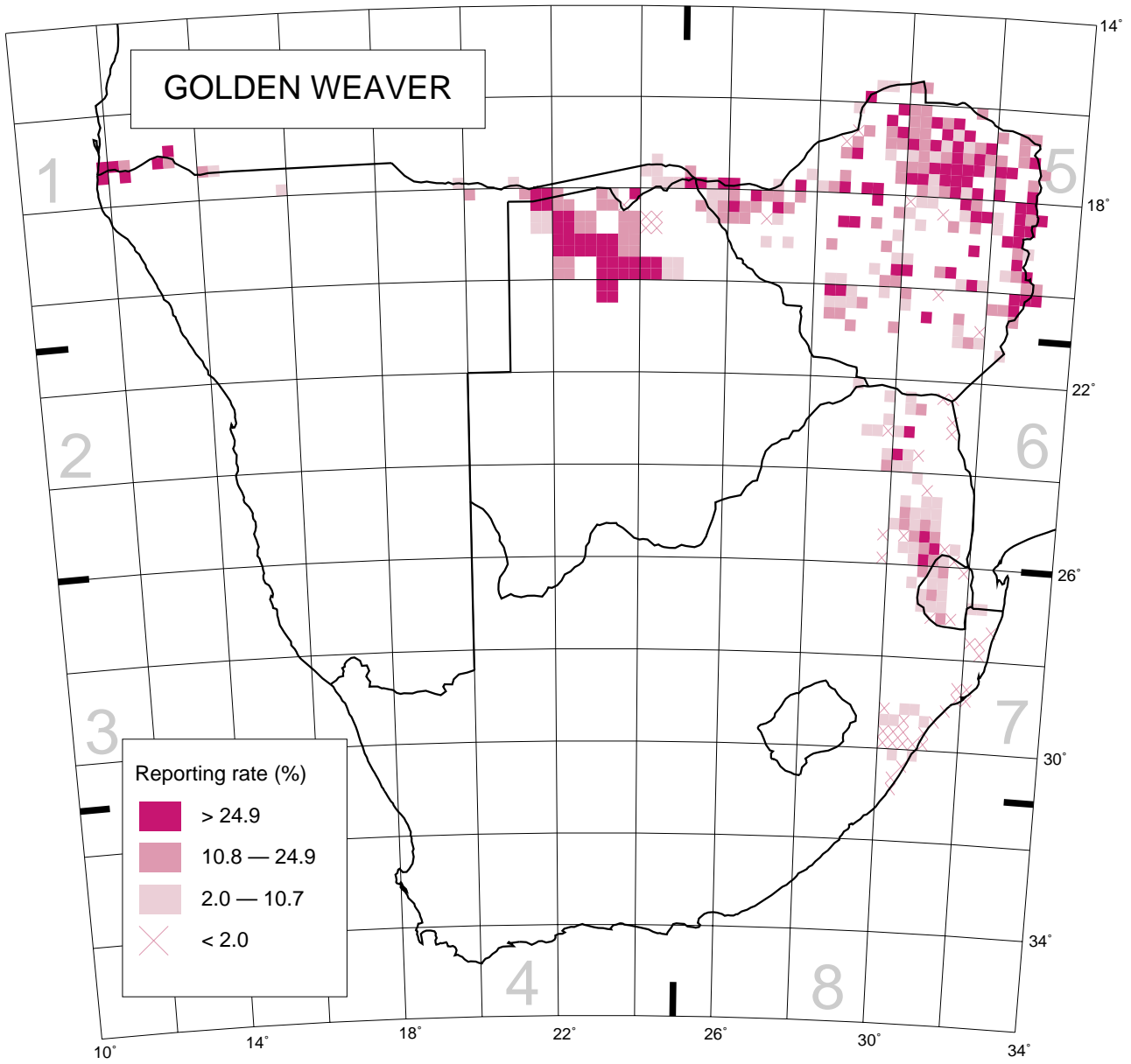
Historical distribution and conservation: There is no evidence of any change in this species' range. The Golden Weaver could be displaced by local habitat destruction, but is not currently threatened.

A.J.F.K. Craig

Recorded in 404 grid cells, 8.9%
Total number of records: 3256
Mean reporting rate for range: 12.4%

Reporting rates for vegetation types





Models of seasonality for Zones. Number of records (top to bottom, left to right):
 Occurrence: 169, 0, 0, 0, 1327, 126, 57, 0; Breeding: 7, 0, 0, 0, 173, 34, 15, 0.