

Purple Widowfinch

Witpootblouvinkie

Vidua purpurascens

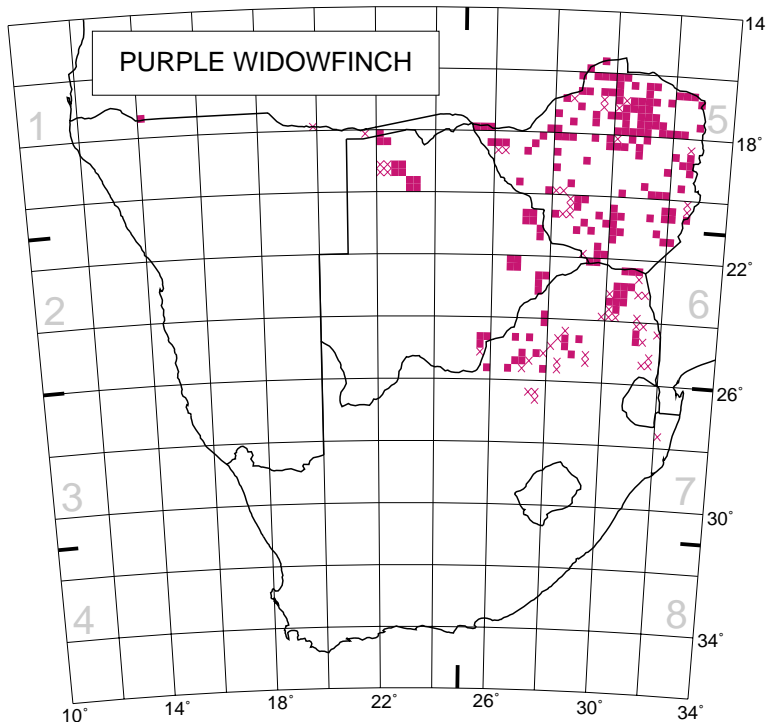
The Purple Widowfinch is widely but sparsely distributed across the savannas and open broad-leaved woodlands of southern and eastern Africa (Payne 1973, 1996; Ginn *et al.* 1989; Maclean 1993b). In the atlas region, it occurs in the north-east, mainly in Zimbabwe, northern and eastern Botswana, the Caprivi Strip and the Transvaal.

This little-known brood parasite of Jameson's Firefinch *Lagonosticta rhodopareia* is probably not as widely distributed as its host. Although there is a tendency to ignore records of brood parasites from areas where their hosts do not occur, this may be short-sighted if the host is a year-round resident (as many estrildids are) while the parasite moves seasonally to different habitats (as many viduids do). Like other widowfinches, it may easily be overlooked, especially in the nonbreeding season, and the seasonality model reflects this. It appears to be uncommon, and possibly nomadic, throughout its southern African range.

Tarboton *et al.* (1987b) noted a nest in north-central Transvaal with two host chicks and one parasite chick on 8 March 1982. Maclean (1993b) summarized egg-laying records as December–March in the Transvaal and January–April in Zimbabwe. Payne (1977) recorded yolky follicles or hard-shelled eggs in dissected birds from mid-January to late March in the Transvaal, and late February to early April in Zimbabwe. A single egg-laying record from Botswana was estimated to have been in April (Skinner 1995a,b). Jameson's Firefinch is recorded breeding in all months in parts of its range, so opportunistic breeding by the Purple Widowfinch may be possible in winter in some areas.

The Purple Widowfinch may have been affected by human encroachment and deforestation, and conservation monitoring seems prudent in view of its relative rarity.

P. Barnard



Recorded in 243 grid cells, 5.4%
 Total number of records: 668
 Mean reporting rate for range: 4.2%

Reporting rates for vegetation types

