

Whitefaced Duck

Nonnetjie-eend

Dendrocygna viduata

The Whitefaced Duck is widespread throughout sub-Saharan Africa, except in arid areas, and also occurs in Madagascar and tropical America (Madge & Burn 1988). It is found mainly in the eastern parts of southern Africa and is seasonally abundant in the tropical areas, especially on the Okavango–Chobe–Zambezi floodplain. It is widespread in the Transvaal, except in the south, and is common in the lowveld of Swaziland (Tarboton *et al.* 1987b; Parker 1994). In KwaZulu-Natal it is largely concentrated along the coastal littoral belt and along major watercourses but is spreading throughout (Cyrus & Robson 1980). It is expanding its range in the Free State, but is common only in the Welkom (2726DC)–Virginia (2826BB) region (Earlé & Grobler 1987). It is a rare nonbreeding visitor to the southwestern Cape Province (Hockey *et al.* 1989). In winter it is the commonest duck on the Pongolo Floodplain and is the second most abundant duck in Zimbabwe (Rogers 1980; Irwin 1981). Reporting rates were highest in the Okavango–Chobe–Zambezi floodplain and in scattered pockets in Zimbabwe, the Transvaal and KwaZulu-Natal.

Habitat: It can occur on a wide variety of waterbodies, but nonbreeding flocks typically favour large expanses of shallow water (backwaters of larger rivers, grassy floodplains) while breeding pairs are frequently found on small ephemeral pans, usually with emergent vegetation. It can also nest in grassland and woodland far from water (Tarboton *et al.* 1987b). On the Pongolo Floodplain it forages in large numbers in winter on the propagules of *Potamogeton crispus* in the seasonal pans (Rogers 1980).

Movements: Seasonal movements are known to occur (Tarboton *et al.* 1987b), such as to the lowveld in winter. Some movement seems to be nomadic, possibly dictated by rainfall and the availability of flooded feeding areas (Geldenhuis 1975). The lack of subspeciation further suggests long-distance movements (Oatley & Prýs-Jones 1986). Moulting migrations to large waterbodies in the Free State occur in mid-summer (January–February) and midwinter (June–July) (Geldenhuis 1975). The models suggest a movement northwards out of the southern African region during the winter.

For example, other than the Chobe floodplains and some backwaters in the Okavango, there are no major dry-season refuges for this species in the wetlands of northern Botswana (Herremans 1993e; Herremans *et al.* 1994d). It visits the Luangwa Valley in Zambia (Benson *et al.* 1971) and Zambezi Valley mainly November–May (A.J. Tree pers. comm.).

Breeding: Breeding takes place mainly summer–autumn, with a peak December–March (Siegfried 1973; Clark 1976; Tarboton *et al.* 1987b). The models show a marked peak February–April, which was probably influenced by the conspicuousness of chicks.

Interspecific relationships: Whitefaced and Fulvous Ducks *D. bicolor* often occur together, but have somewhat different foraging methods (Siegfried 1973; Clark 1978). Siegfried (1973) showed that their breeding seasons overlap little, but Clark (1976) gave a December–February peak for both species. They often roost together in flocks.

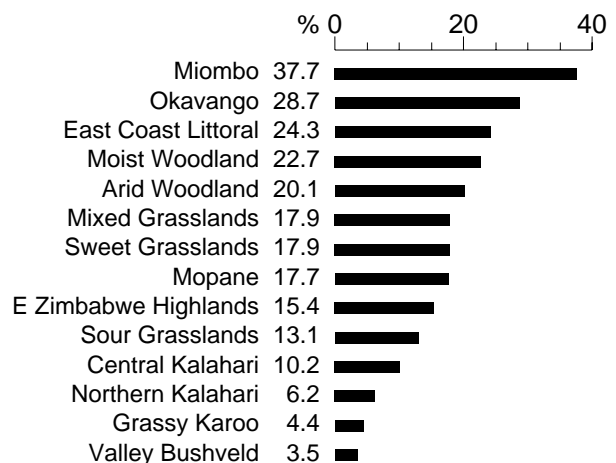
Historical distribution and conservation: Described as rare in southern Africa and recorded only from KwaZulu-Natal, the western Transvaal, the Okavango–Lake Ngami area, the upper Zambezi in Zimbabwe and southern Mozambique (Stark & Sclater 1906), it had spread widely by 1970 (Clark 1974a). It began to increase on the Witwatersrand from the 1950s (Winterbottom 1964c) and by 1955 was resident and breeding (Clark 1974a). At Barberspan (2625DA) it has shown a small increase since the 1960s (Skead & Dean 1977). It was rare in the Free State, began to increase from 1953 and bred near Welkom in 1972 (Clark 1974a). In KwaZulu-Natal it was widespread by the 1960s and now breeds throughout the province. It was first recorded in the southwestern Cape Province in the 1940s and is still rare there, but is becoming an increasingly regular visitor and breeder in the eastern Cape Province (Skead 1967b; Vernon 1992). Its range in Namibia has changed little, being largely confined to the Okavango and Chobe systems (Clark 1974a) and it is a straggler elsewhere in that country.

The Whitefaced Duck is not under any immediate threat, but its aquatic habitats need special conservation attention, especially on the Okavango–Chobe–Zambezi floodplain.

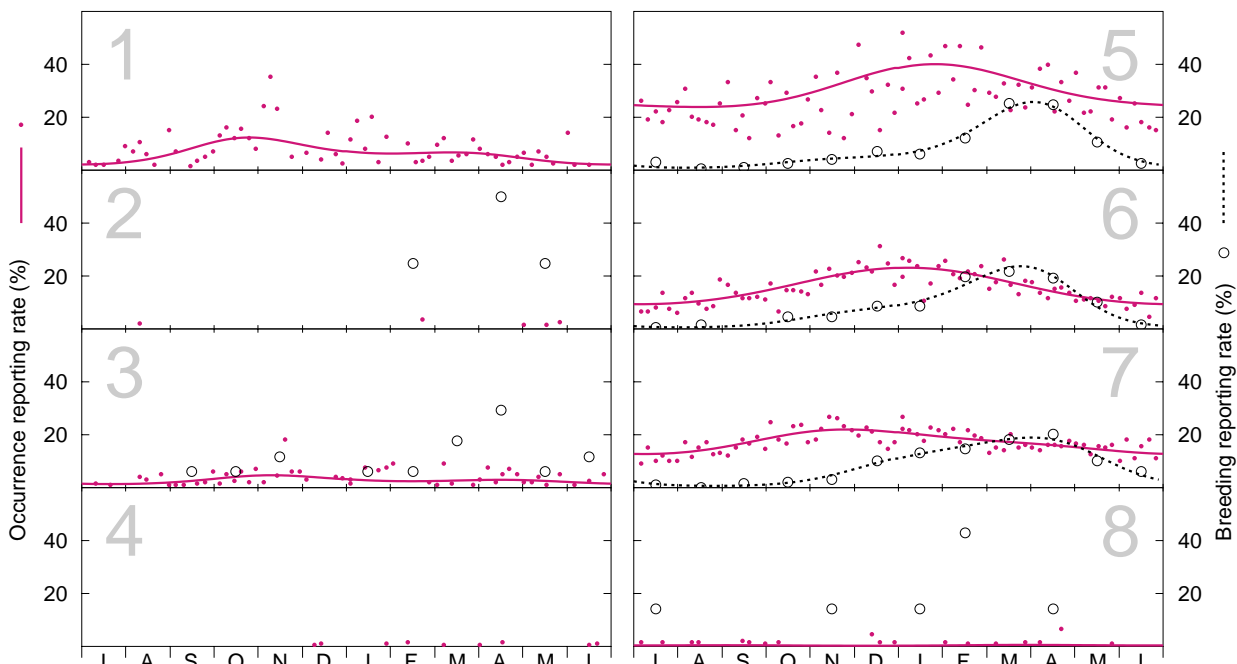
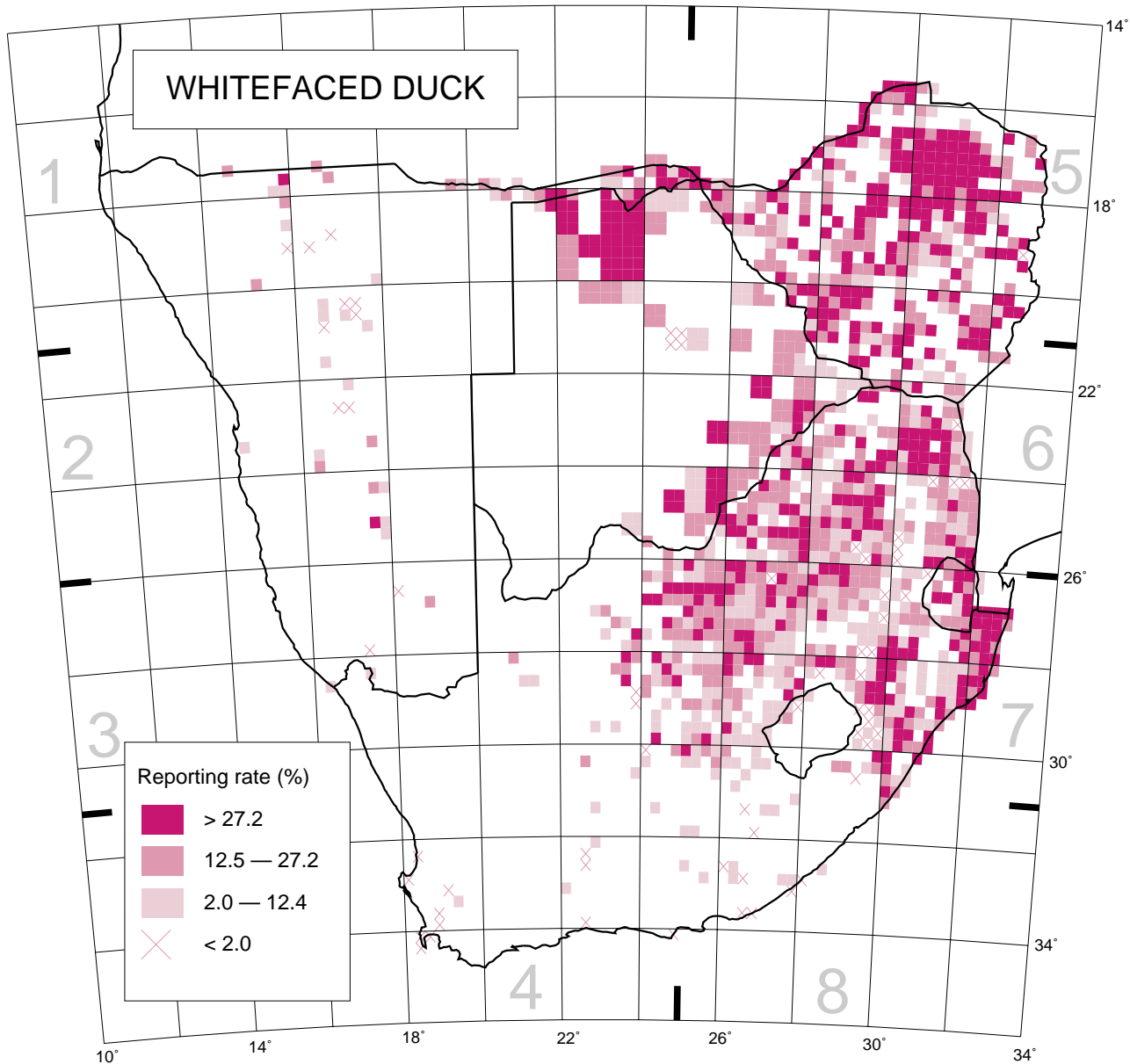
G.L. Maclean

Recorded in 1309 grid cells, 28.9%
Total number of records: 19 115
Mean reporting rate for range: 21.5%

Reporting rates for vegetation types



Also marginally in Nama Karoo, Alpine Grasslands, Succulent Karoo, Fynbos, Namibian Escarpment, Southern Kalahari and Namib.



Models of seasonality for Zones. Number of records (top to bottom, left to right):
 Occurrence: 202, 5, 147, 11, 2628, 1795, 3379, 22; Breeding: 0, 4, 17, 0, 190, 157, 317, 7.