



## Temminck's Courser

### Trekdrawwertjie

#### *Cursorius temminckii*

Temminck's Courser is widespread in Africa south of the Sahara (Snow 1978). It is absent from the driest parts of southern Africa and scarce in the highveld and most open grasslands. It is largely tropical to subtropical, though surprisingly widespread in the Free State (Earlé & Grobler 1987), and in the Transvaal (Tarboton *et al.* 1987b), being most frequent in woodlands in the northwest and northeast. In KwaZulu-Natal it is largely confined to woodlands in the north (Cyrus & Robson 1980), but has been recorded occasionally as far south as Pietermaritzburg (2930CB). In Swaziland it is uncommon, and in southern Mozambique it is uncommon but widespread (Clancey 1971c; Parker 1994). In Botswana, Smithers (1964) found it to be widespread, but only in the wet season in the southwestern parts (sandveld). It is a vagrant in the southwestern Cape Province (Hockey *et al.* 1989).

Two subspecies breed in the region. *C. t. aridus*, formerly *damarensis* (Clancey 1980b; Clancey *et al.* 1991), occupies the more arid northwest (Namibia, the Kalahari and the Okavango region); its rather discrete breeding range is best seen on the seasonal map for November–December. The race *ruvaniensis* occurs to the east of this and its breeding range is best defined in the July–December maps.

It is usually seen singly or in pairs when breeding, or in small groups of up to 12 birds, rarely up to 40 birds (Urban *et al.* 1986), when not breeding.

**Habitat:** It favours bare or recently burnt short grass in open woodland or at the edges of vleis, grassy plains, dry pans, bare or overgrazed veld, fallow lands and airfields. Biome preferences are for woodland vegetation types: Miombo, Okavango, Mopane, Arid Woodland and the semi-arid woodlands of the Kalahari, but it is clearings within woodland habitat which it frequents. It tends to avoid the driest biomes. Temminck's Courser may arrive within an hour of a grass fire (Dean 1987).

**Movements:** A number of sources point to a partial migration into drier regions during the rainy season, when it is relatively scarce in Zambia and Malawi (Tree 1969). Benson (1982) said that it is regular in the Kruger National Park only in the dry season (winter), but the atlas data refute this. Tree (1972c) suggested that it moves northward from central Bot-

swana to breed after midwinter (June). It is a winter and spring breeding visitor (late June to early December) on the Mashonaland Plateau of Zimbabwe, but is a nomadic resident in the drier parts of Matabeleland (Irwin 1981).

The models and seasonal maps provide evidence for summer rainy-season visitors in the west (Zones 1 and 2). These could be the endemic breeding race *aridus*, or they may be nonbreeding visitors of the nominate race (Clancey *et al.* 1991). The statement that birds in the dry west are sedentary (Clancey *et al.* 1987, 1991) is clearly incorrect. Partial emigration is also evident in South Africa during winter, with a concomitant influx into Zimbabwe, especially in the north-east, while numbers are lower in Zimbabwe during summer. Other than movements of the eastern subspecies *ruvaniensis*, migration from outside the atlas region, including the nominate race, may complicate the picture (Clancey *et al.* 1987, 1991).

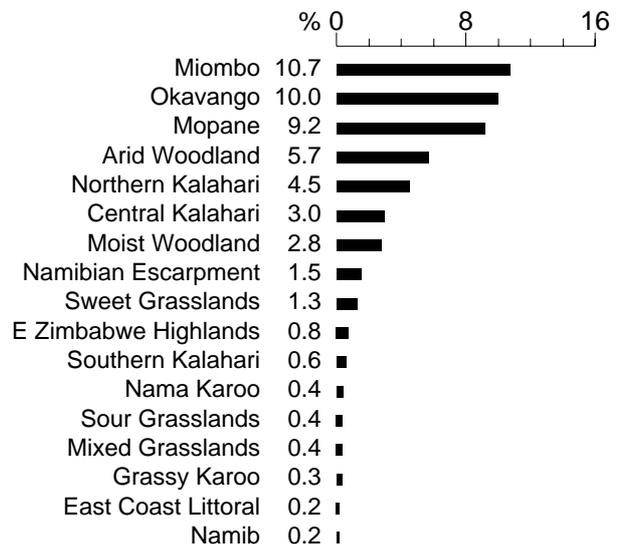
**Breeding:** It breeds October–January in the western Transvaal (Farkas 1962), and May–December with a peak from July–November in Zimbabwe (Irwin 1981). Atlas data confirm these patterns, but indicate that breeding of *ruvaniensis* in the east is predominantly August–December, while in the relatively arid west the few breeding records from the wet-season visitors are later, i.e. in the middle of the wet season.

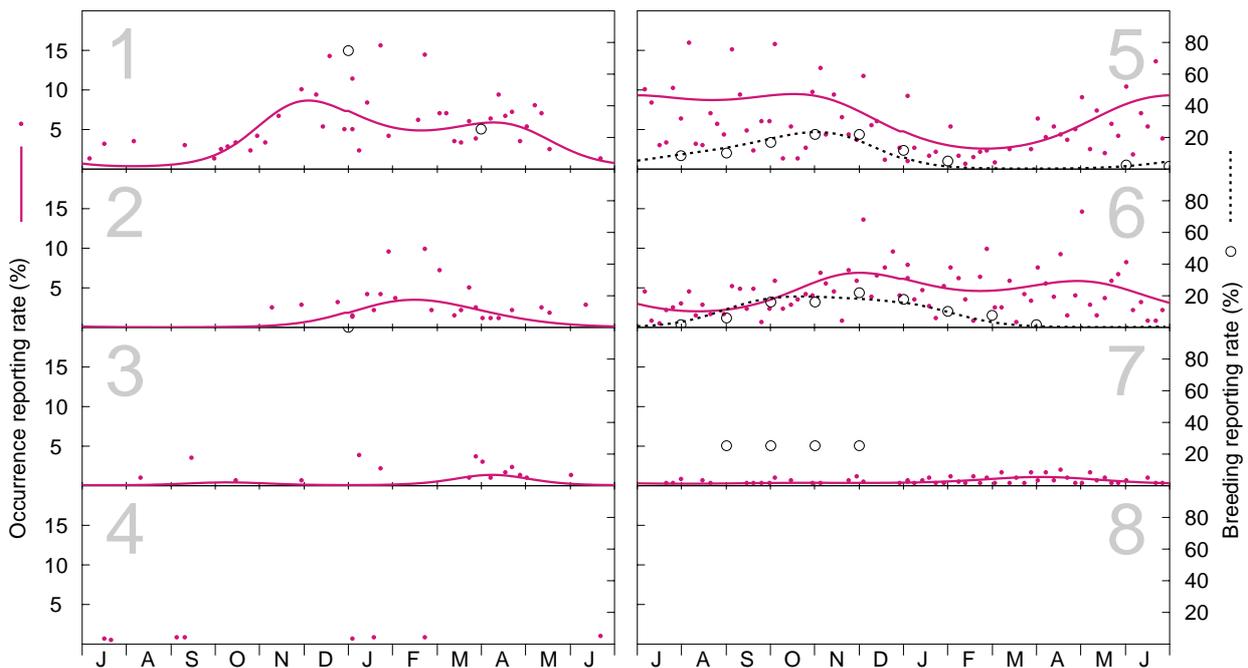
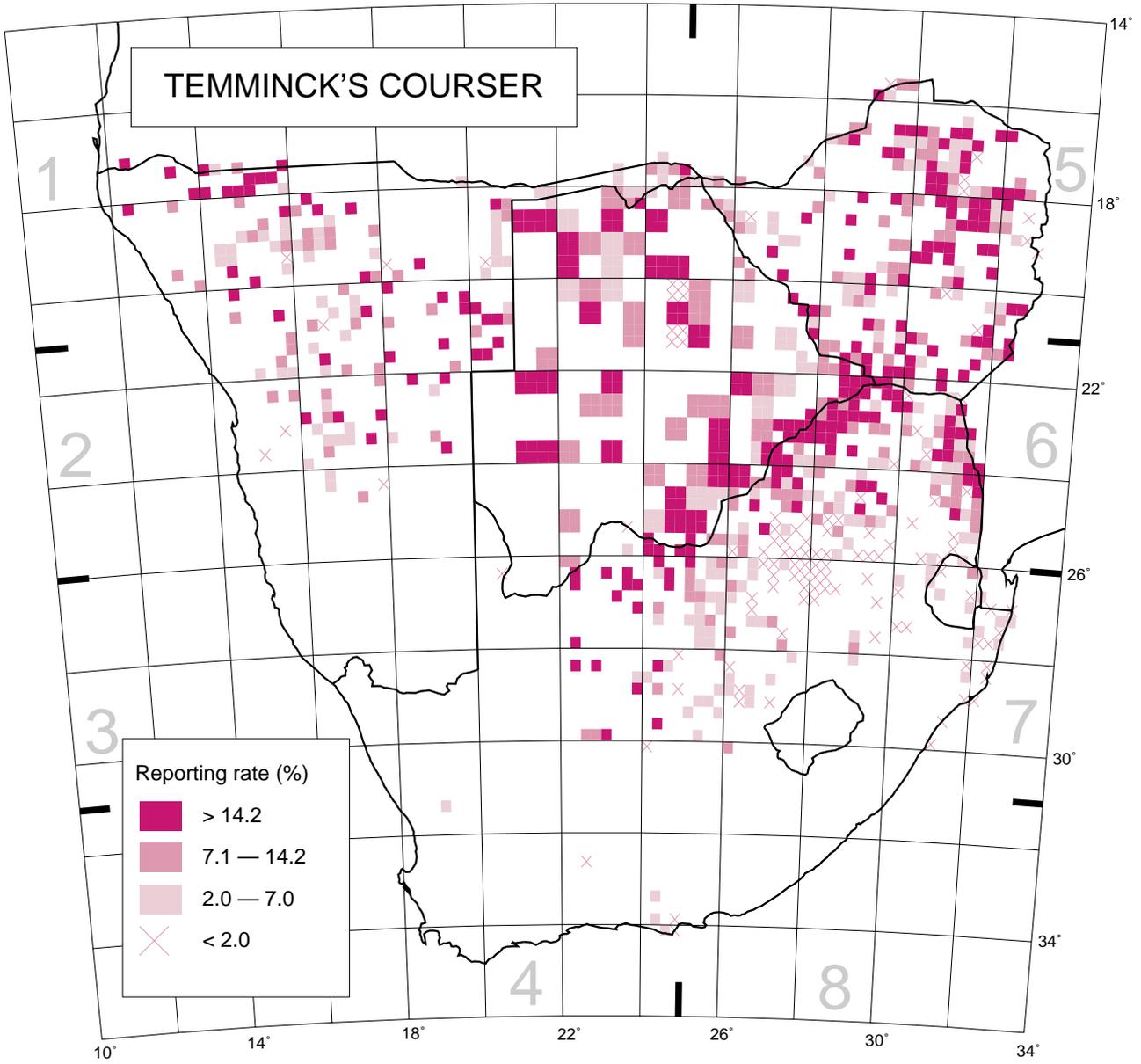
**Historical distribution and conservation:** It formerly occurred in the eastern Cape Province (Stark & Sclater 1906; Skead 1967b), but no longer does so. Its range has contracted and conservation measures may be needed. As a habitat specialist of early succession in the woodland biome, Temminck's Courser is sensitive to variations in temporal factors such as grazing pressure, burning, bush clearance, etc. In Botswana, it is concentrated in the eastern hardveld, an area with a relatively high human population density, characterized by traditional land-use with cyclical bush clearance and many fallow lands (M.H. pers. obs). On the other hand, large-scale, sophisticated agricultural practices are probably inimical to this species.

G.L. Maclean and M. Herremans

Recorded in 942 grid cells, 20.8%  
Total number of records: 3268  
Mean reporting rate for range: 6.3%

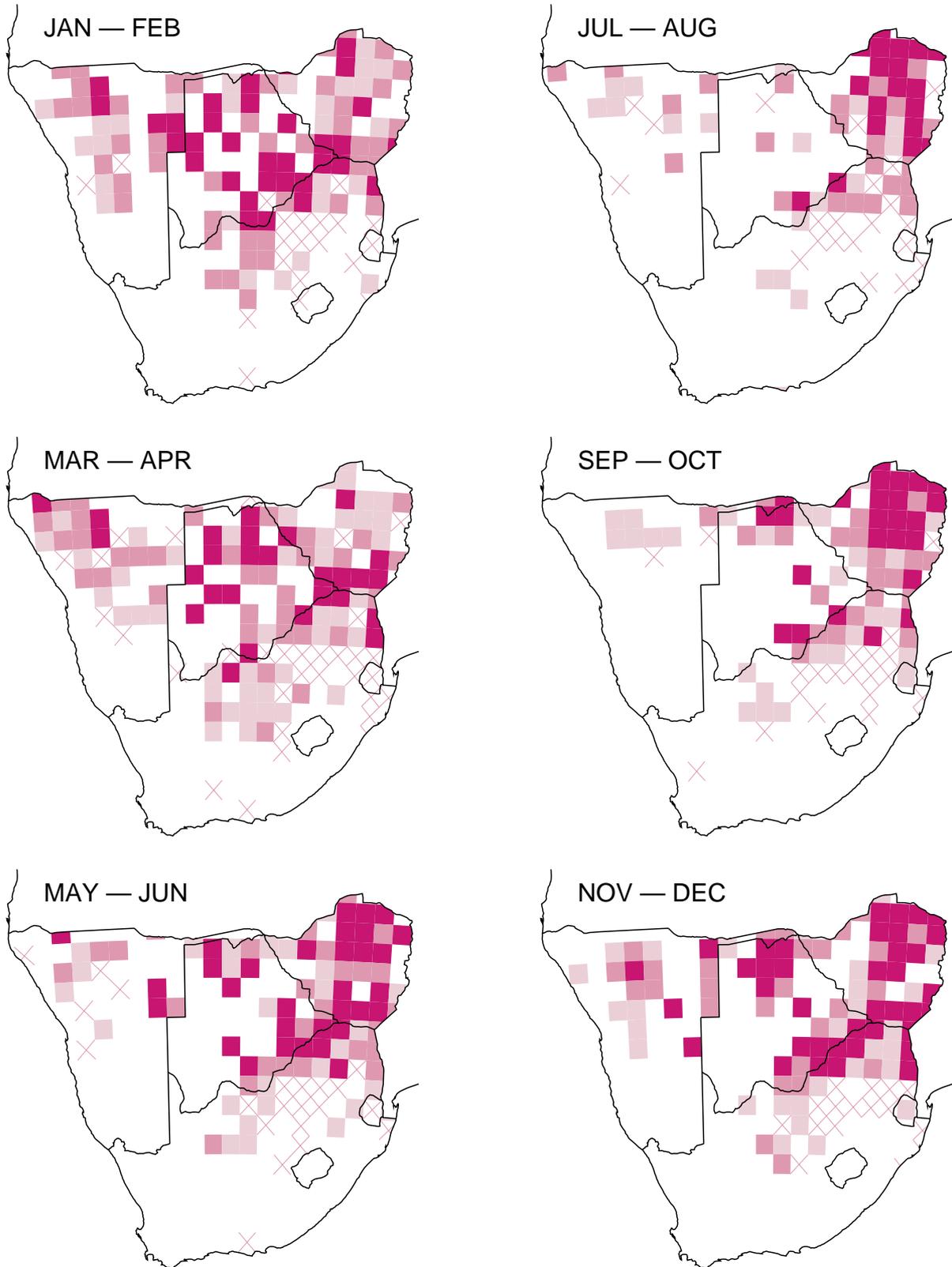
#### Reporting rates for vegetation types





Models of seasonality for Zones. Number of records (top to bottom, left to right):  
 Occurrence: 124, 41, 23, 8, 595, 527, 103, 0; Breeding: 4, 0, 1, 0, 73, 50, 8, 0.

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Seasonal distribution maps; one-degree grid.