

## Redwinged Pratincole

### Rooivlerksprinkaanvoël

*Glareola pratincola*

The subspecies *G. p. fuelleborni* ranges from Kenya to KwaZulu-Natal; breeding Redwinged Pratincoles in South Africa and most of Zimbabwe belong to this race. Birds from the species' stronghold in the region, the Okavango–Linyanti–upper Zambezi floodplain system, have been described as the race *riparia* (Clancey 1980a). Over most of northern Namibia other than the Caprivi it appears to be an occasional visitor, especially in wet years (Clinning & Jensen 1976). In northern Botswana it also occurs along the Boteti River, at Lake Ngami (2022B), where large colonies may breed under suitable flood conditions (Penry 1990), and occasionally in the Makgadikgadi pans. It occurs locally as a breeding species throughout southern Mozambique (Clancey 1971c). It is a rare breeding vagrant to the Kruger National Park and Swaziland; nonbreeding stragglers have been recorded as far west as Barberspan (2625DA) (Tarboton *et al.* 1987b). In KwaZulu-Natal it may occur as far south as the border with the Transkei, but is normally confined to the north (Cyrus & Robson 1980). In Zimbabwe it is most common in the Zambezi Valley, but in the past 20 years it has expanded its range onto the central plateau where it now breeds on the Manyame Lakes (1730DC,DD) (e.g. Tree 1987d,g).

It is a highly gregarious species at all times, especially when not breeding. In summer when the similar Blackwinged Pratincole *G. nordmanni* is present, the two species can be confused, but its dark chestnut underwing coverts, as distinct from black in the latter species, distinguish it in flight.

**Habitat:** It frequents sandbanks, mudflats, grassy floodplains, ploughed fields, always near water such as estuaries, coastal lakes and larger rivers. It is abundant in the Okavango–Chobe floodplain region.

**Movements:** It is nomadic, but its movements are not well understood. Southernmost populations in KwaZulu-Natal (Zone 7) have definite seasonal movements, as they are largely absent from February–June. Similarly in Swaziland it was recorded only October–February (Parker 1994). In the Okavango region (Zone 1) it occurs mainly August–March, i.e. between floods, but may be found there in any month of the year. In contrast with the model for Zone 1, Brewster (1991) recorded the largest numbers in the western part of the Okavango (part of Zone 1) in May–June, suggesting concentrations and movements of birds within the Okavango flood-

plain system. Along the Chobe, large migrant flocks occurred in June (Randall 1994b). Reporting rates for Zimbabwe (Zone 5) were highest July–October, which may reflect movement of Okavango birds to the middle Zambezi River when the latter river's water-levels are low.

**Breeding:** Breeding is primarily in the late dry and early wet season: September–October in Mozambique and August–December elsewhere in southern Africa, usually when water-levels are falling or at their lowest. In Zimbabwe it may breed as late as February, but the peak is in November (Irwin 1981). Atlas data confirm a spring/summer breeding season.

**Interspecific relationships:** In the summer months the Redwinged Pratincole sometimes mixes with flocks of Blackwinged Pratincole, but the nature of such encounters has not been documented. The flocks are usually separated by the Redwing's greater preference for habitats near water.

#### Historical distribution and conservation:

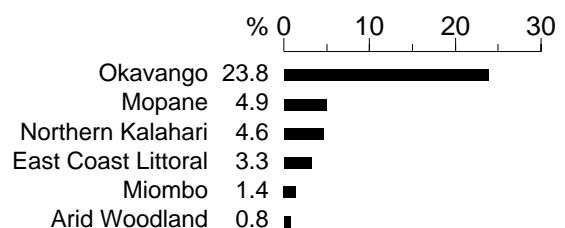
Although Stark & Sclater (1906) regarded the Redwinged Pratincole as 'an accidental visitor' to South Africa, this is unlikely to have been the case even then. Clancey (1964b) cited breeding records near Isipingo (2930DD) in 1907 and 1908, although numbers were small, and there are breeding records from several coastal and low-lying localities in northern KwaZulu-Natal (e.g. Mkuze, St Lucia, Richards Bay, Mtunzini, Mtubatuba and Umvoti).

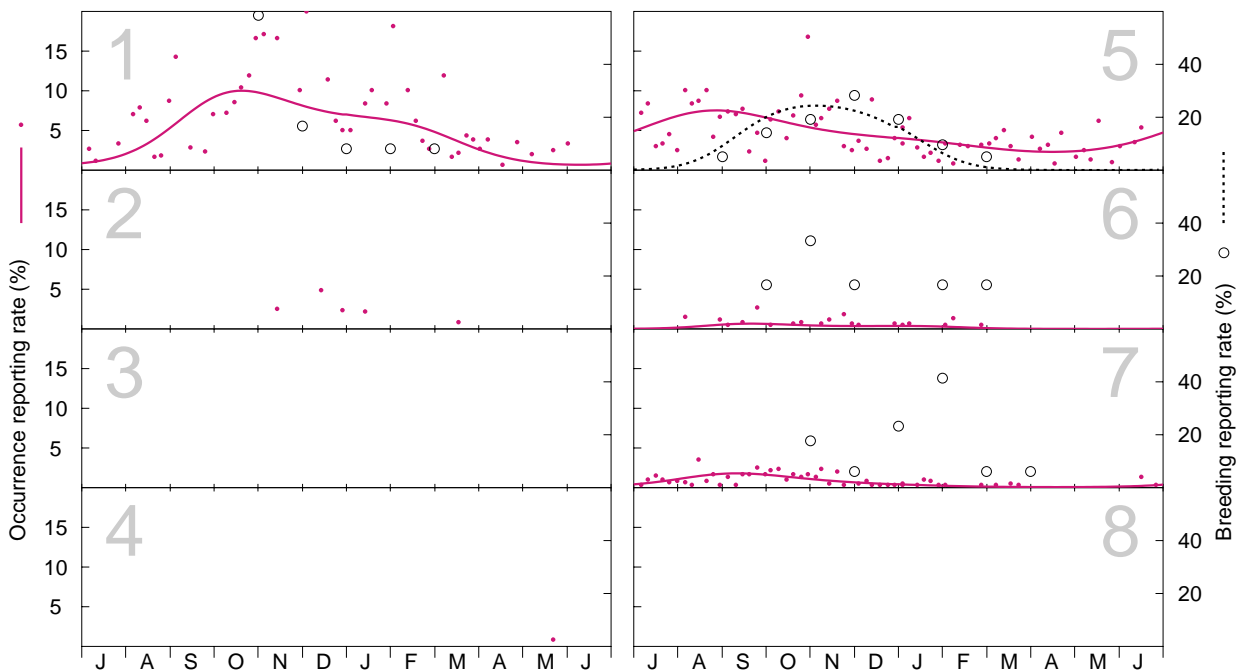
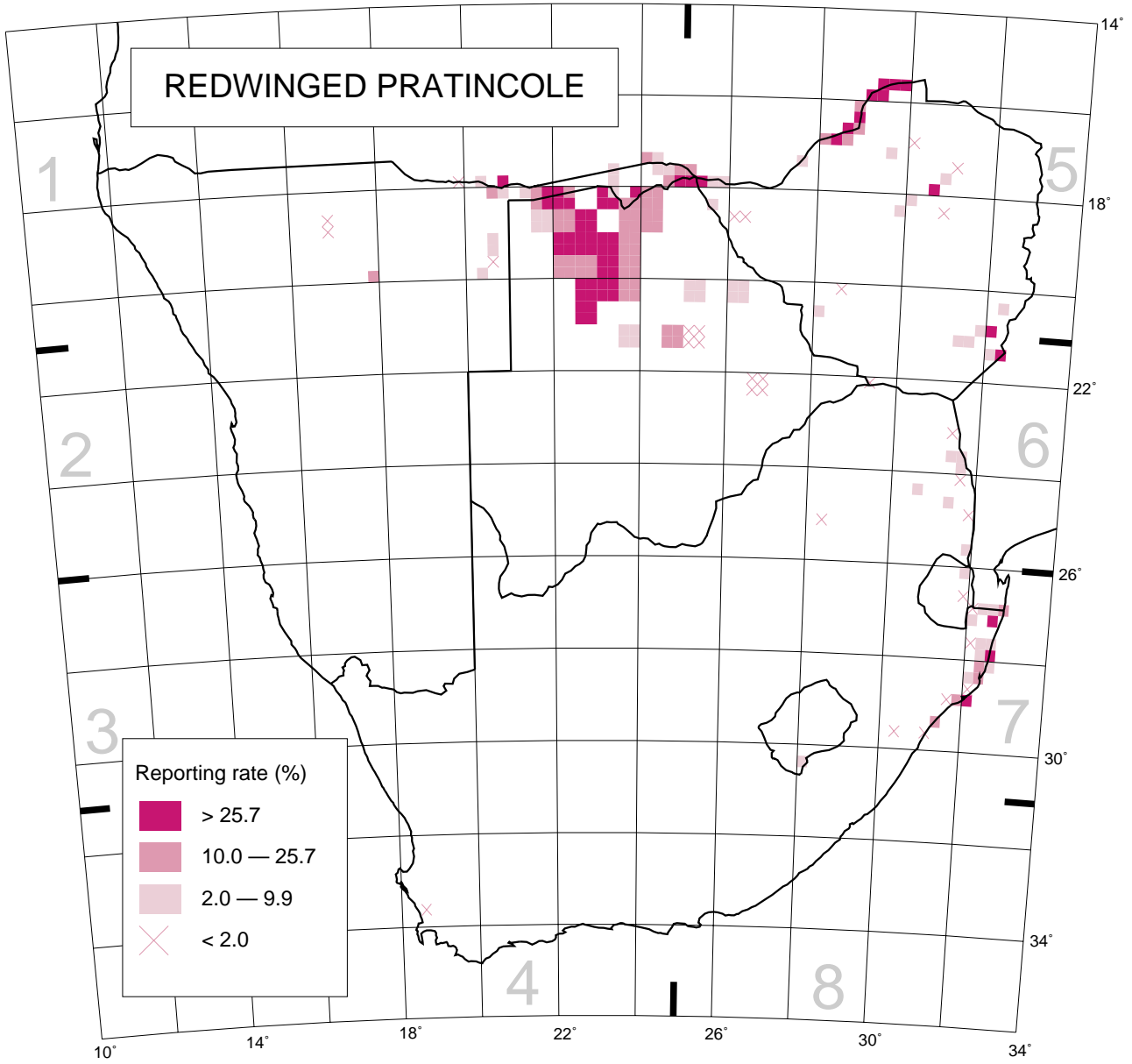
Although listed as 'rare' in South Africa by Brooke (1984b), the race *fuelleborni* is a common bird over its limited breeding range in southern Africa and ranges widely further north. Its breeding range in the south has contracted northward, however, probably as a result of urbanization and industrial development. It has also declined on the middle Zambezi Valley with changing environmental conditions, and it may no longer occur regularly on the lower Save and Runde rivers (Wood & Tree 1992; A.J. Tree pers. comm.). Owners of land with potential or actual breeding sites could be encouraged to provide suitable nesting habitat, such as is done at Umvoti River mouth (2931AD), where fields are specially ploughed in early spring (September–October) and left for the birds to nest in before being planted with crops. The race *riparia* is abundant and under no threat in the Okavango region; on the contrary, frequent burning of floodplain grassland within the 'buffalo-fence', and overgrazing and trampling outside it, probably create more suitable habitat.

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Recorded in 209 grid cells, 4.6%  
Total number of records: 1159  
Mean reporting rate for range: 10.3%

#### Reporting rates for vegetation types





Models of seasonality for Zones. Number of records (top to bottom, left to right):  
 Occurrence: 140, 5, 0, 1, 404, 28, 125, 0; Breeding: 12, 0, 0, 0, 21, 6, 17, 0.