Judy Roold

Brownheaded Parrot

Bruinkoppapegaai

Poicephalus cryptoxanthus

This small parrot has the core of its distribution in Mozambique and southeastern Tanzania, entering the atlas region in northern KwaZulu-Natal, eastern Swaziland, northern and eastern Transvaal and southeastern Zimbabwe; it is also found in southern Malawi, along the coast of Kenya and on Pemba and the southern Zanzibar Islands (Rowan 1983; Fry *et al.* 1988; Forshaw 1989). It is widespread within its range but never numerous, though it may be locally common, as in the Kruger National Park (Cyrus & Robson 1980; Tarboton *et al.* 1987b). It is gregarious and flock sizes vary from 4–12 birds, but occasionally flocks of up to 50 birds have been found at good food sources (Fry *et al.* 1988; Maclean 1993b). Pairing takes place just before breeding (Vincent 1934).

The Brownheaded Parrot is wary and difficult to approach, and tends to keep to the upper parts of bushveld trees (Clancey 1964b). It is noisy and conspicuous in flight, with a distinctive flight pattern. It is similar in size, behaviour and appearance to Meyer's Parrot *P. meyeri*, though the two species overlap only marginally and are rarely if ever recorded together (Rowan 1983). The atlas data for this parrot are reliable, except in southeastern Zimbabwe and the northeastern Transvaal where it overlaps with Meyer's Parrot and may hybridize extensively with that species (Clancey 1977b; Irwin 1981; Rowan 1983).

Habitat: It is a parrot typical of lowveld woodland, particularly along riparian fringes and occasionally in mangrove forests (Forshaw 1989; Maclean 1993b). The vegetation analysis reveals high and equally strong associations with both Mopane and Arid Woodlands, and some association with Moist Woodland. In Swaziland, and probably also the eastern Transvaal, it is strongly associated with arid woodlands, specifically *Acacia nigrescens* savanna (Parker 1994).

Movements: Populations in Swaziland and northern KwaZulu-Natal (Zone 7) appear to be resident, though reporting rates are low in these areas. In the Transvaal and southern Zimbabwe (Zone 6) there were higher reporting rates May–November. This coincides with its breeding season and may represent increased foraging activity of nesting birds at this time, or a population increase resulting from the recruitment of young birds. These seasonal variations in reporting rate cannot be interpreted as being indicative of regular movements, the species being regarded as sedentary (Fry *et al.* 1988). However, some local movements between sites of good fruit availability may take place (Rowan 1983; Tarboton *et al.* 1987b).

Breeding: Atlas breeding records were limited to the Transvaal and southern Zimbabwe (Zone 6), where it shows a preference for breeding during the dry winter months April–September. This agrees with previous findings in other parts of its range (Rowan 1983; Tarboton *et al.* 1987b; Fry *et al.* 1988; Maclean 1993b).

Interspecific relationships: It may compete for nest holes with Cape *P. robustus* and Meyer's Parrots, as well as with other secondary cavity-nesting species, such as rollers.
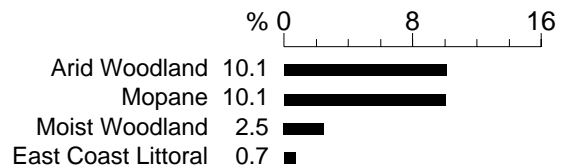
Historical distribution and conservation: It appears not to have altered its distribution much over the past century (Stark & Sclater 1903). However, Woodward & Woodward (1899) found it to be common along the White Mfolozi River (2831A,B), where it no longer occurs.
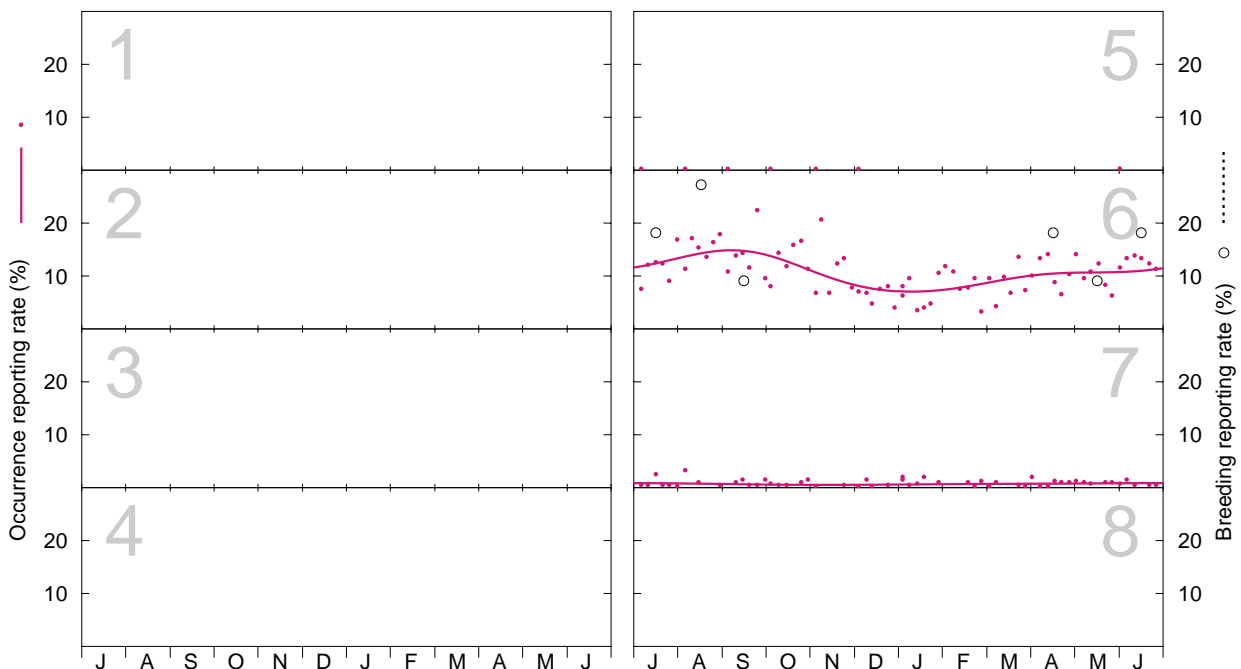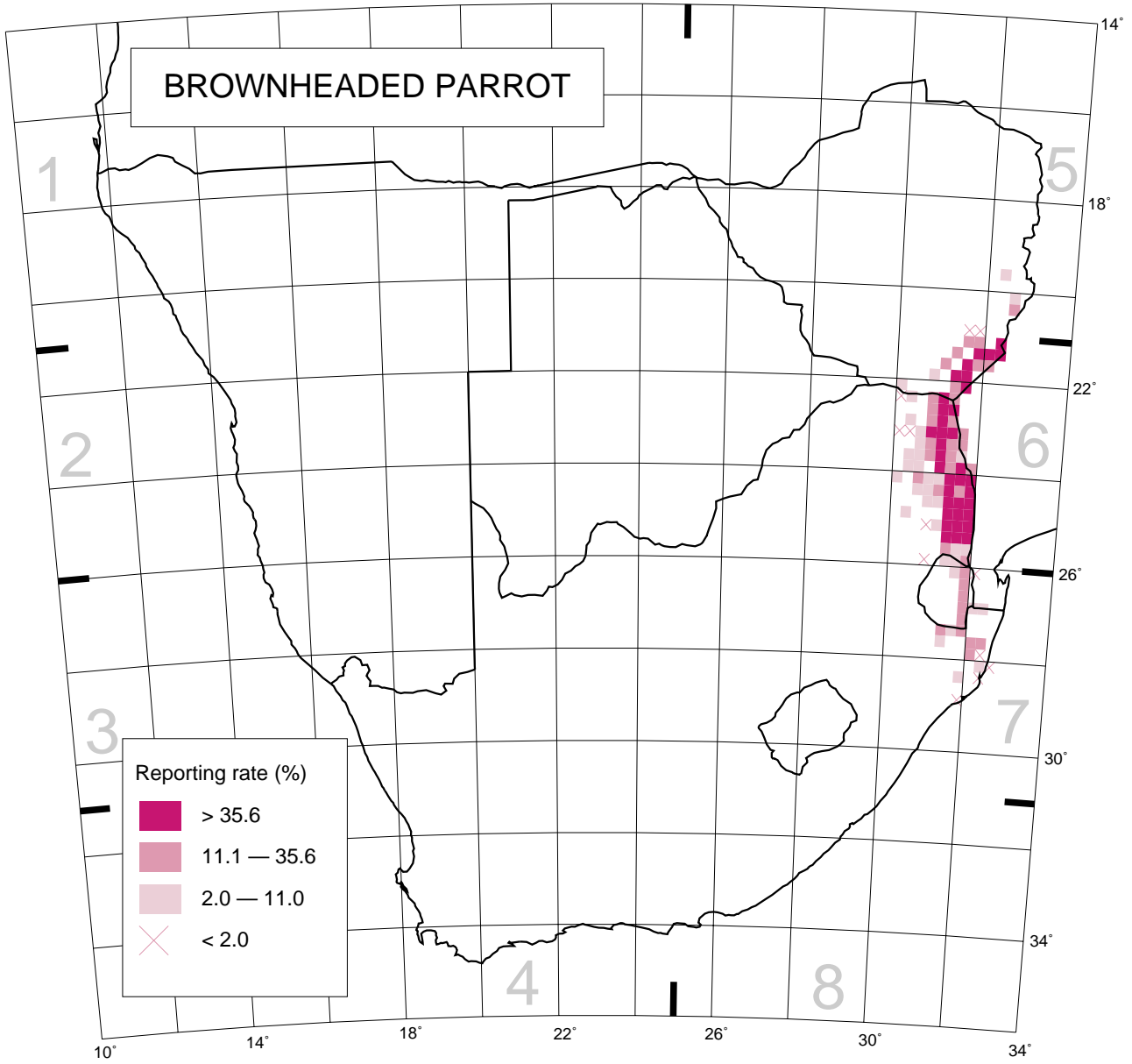
As with other members of the genus *Poicephalus*, it is known to raid orchards, nut plantations and grain crops such as maize and sorghum (Stark & Sclater 1903; Vincent 1934; Clancey 1964b). The Brownheaded Parrot is currently not considered to be threatened.

J.O. Wirminghaus

Recorded in 117 grid cells, 2.6%
Total number of records: 2997
Mean reporting rate for range: 26.8%

Reporting rates for vegetation types

	% 0	8	16
Arid Woodland	10.1		
Mopane	10.1		
Moist Woodland	2.5		
East Coast Littoral	0.7		

BROWNHEADED PARROT

Reporting rate (%)

> 35.6

11.1 — 35.6

2.0 — 11.0

× < 2.0

Occurrence reporting rate (%)

Breeding reporting rate (%)

Models of seasonality for Zones. Number of records (top to bottom, left to right):
Occurrence: 0, 0, 0, 0, 7, 1212, 135, 0; Breeding: 0, 0, 0, 0, 0, 11, 0, 0.