

Narina Trogon

Bosloerie

Apaloderma narina

A candidate for southern Africa's most beautiful and elusive bird, the Narina Trogon has a wide Afrotropical range, occurring in West Africa from Sierra Leone to Ghana, throughout the equatorial forest belt, and northwards to the mountain forests of Ethiopia (Fry *et al.* 1988). Its southern African distribution has its southwestern limit at Grootvadersbos Forest (3320D), with sight records from Worcester (3319CB), c. 135 km further west (Hockey *et al.* 1989). In the northwest it occurs regularly, though locally, in riverine forest along the Kwando and Linyanti rivers in the Caprivi Strip and northern Botswana. Remarkably, it does not occur regularly in the Okavango Delta.

It perches for long periods in the forest midstratum, sallying forth to catch or glean on the wing various prey items. Its silent flight and bottle-green upperparts make it cryptic. Captive trogons deliberately turn their backs to an approaching observer, thereby hiding the crimson underparts which might otherwise draw attention (Harcus 1976). During the breeding season, the males are attracted to imitations of their hooting call.

Habitat: It is primarily a bird of evergreen forest, but also lowland or montane forest communities. It occurs in riverine forest in savanna areas, closed woodlands and forest-woodland mosaics. Gardens in well-wooded suburbs are also visited, especially those adjacent to patches of natural forest. The overall low reporting rate is due to its ability to escape detection, especially outside the breeding season when it is virtually silent.

Movements: It is thought to be mostly sedentary (Fry *et al.* 1988). However, Clancey (1959, 1980b), who recognized three races within the southern African subregion, inferred migration on the basis of specimens with the characteristics of one race being collected within the range of other races, with one race moving northwards in winter to eastern Zimbabwe, Mozambique and Malawi as a partial migrant. Irwin (1981) also considered the species to show seasonal movements in Zimbabwe; Taylor (1979) was ambivalent about the migratory status in Zambia. One was found dead under the clock tower of the Bulawayo City Hall (2028BA) (Barbour & Steyn 1972), presumably having

collided with the tower during a nocturnal flight. A trogon was seen by a group of hikers near Cathedral Peak (2829CC) in KwaZulu-Natal, flying low over grassland out of sight of any forest or *Protea* woodland (C. Holliday pers. comm.). These incidents, and similar ones reported by Taylor (1979) in Zambia, show that both diurnal and nocturnal movements are undertaken by adults, but do not provide evidence for regular seasonal movements.

The models can be interpreted as showing a partial exodus in the dry season in Zones 1 and 5–8. There is an influx into the middle Zambezi Valley (in Zone 5) during the summer wet season (Irwin 1981), but the models show no compensatory efflux elsewhere in another Zone, so they may move beyond the atlas region. High reporting rates in summer in Zone 4, where there is no marked dry season within the trogon's range in the southern coastal forests, suggests an alternative explanation: increases in reporting rates are due to trogons being vocally conspicuous at that time. The movement patterns of this species remain unclear.

Breeding: The breeding season is October–January in South Africa (Dean 1971; Tarboton *et al.* 1987b; Maclean 1993b) and December–January in Zimbabwe (Irwin 1981).

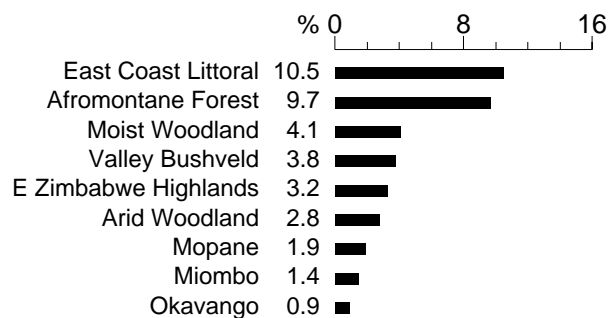
Interspecific relationships: It has been observed to defend territories against intruding louries, cuckoos, and a squirrel (Fry *et al.* 1988). In the eastern Cape Province M.A. du Plessis (pers. comm.) observed frequent agonistic encounters during the breeding season between trogons and other hole-nesting birds, especially the Redbilled Woodhoopoe *Phoeniculus purpureus* and Blackbellied Starling *Lamprotornis corruscus*.

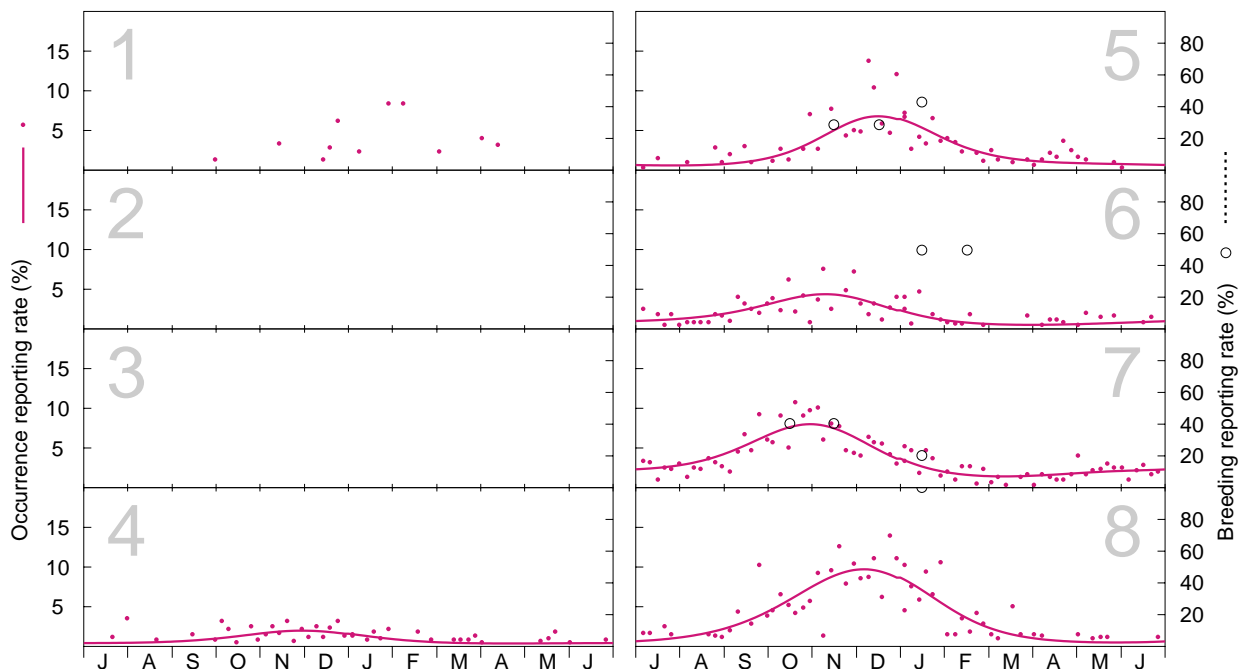
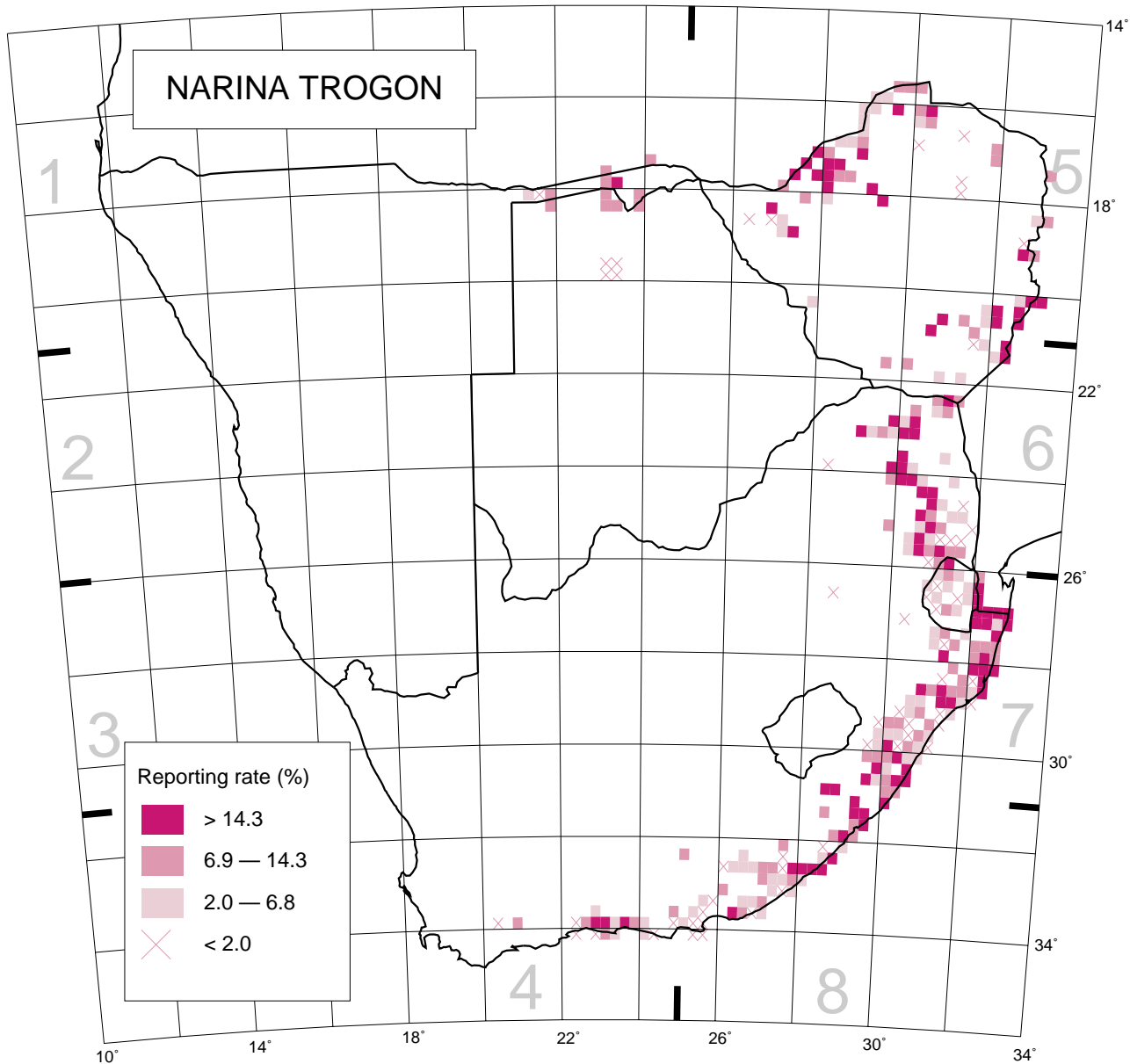
Historical distribution and conservation: Owing to their habits and dietary requirements, trogons are difficult to trap and are not suited to captivity; therefore they are not sought after by the cage-bird trade. They are impacted by habitat loss through forest destruction. Riverine forest is more sensitive to clearing, and the tiny population of Narina Trogons in northern Botswana and the Caprivi Strip is at risk because of elephant and human impact on the riparian habitat (M. Herremans pers. comm.).

T.B. Oatley

Recorded in 323 grid cells, 7.1%
Total number of records: 3121
Mean reporting rate for range: 9.1%

Reporting rates for vegetation types





Models of seasonality for Zones. Number of records (top to bottom, left to right):
 Occurrence: 16, 0, 0, 72, 197, 201, 698, 201; Breeding: 0, 0, 0, 0, 7, 2, 5, 1.