

## Yellowthroated Warbler

### Geelkeelsanger

#### *Phylloscopus ruficapillus*

The Yellowthroated Warbler is a common but localized species with a discontinuous distribution in temperate forest in southern and eastern South Africa, Swaziland, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, and northwards to Malawi, Tanzania and Kenya. It occurs in the Eastern Highlands of Zimbabwe (Irwin 1981) and adjacent Mozambique highlands, and on Mount Gorongosa in Mozambique (Clancey 1971). North of Zimbabwe it is confined to montane forests. Its present range is highly fragmented and it is difficult to judge the relative isolation of the four subspecies recognized in the region, except for *P. r. alacris* which is isolated in the eastern Zimbabwe Highlands and adjacent Mount Gorongosa (Clancey 1980b).

In the southern and eastern Cape Province and KwaZulu-Natal, it occurs on or near the coast but is absent from the tropical lowlands of northern KwaZulu-Natal and Mozambique. It occurs up to 1600 m in the Drakensberg (Little & Bainbridge 1992), higher than 2000 m in eastern Zimbabwe (Irwin 1981), and is described as commonest above 1500 m in Mozambique (Clancey 1971).

It usually occurs singly or in pairs or in mixed foraging groups, particularly with Cape White-eyes *Zosterops capensis*. It is relatively inconspicuous although it forages actively and calls frequently, and is not readily misidentified if a good view is obtained. Observers familiar with the call should be able to detect it wherever it occurs commonly; atlas records are probably reasonably accurate. **Habitat:** It occurs in the mid-stratum and canopy of mature evergreen temperate forest, and is able to live in fairly small patches of this habitat. It was most commonly reported from the Afromontane forest vegetation type.

**Movements:** It is regarded as resident. Small seasonal fluctuations in reporting rate are probably related to changes in behaviour and conspicuousness. It is not known to undertake altitudinal migration in the eastern Transvaal or KwaZulu-Natal (Tarboton *et al.* 1987b; Johnson & Maclean 1994). However, Irwin (1981) reported limited

winter movement to lower altitudes in eastern Zimbabwe, with most birds remaining on the breeding grounds.

**Breeding:** Few breeding records exist for southern Africa. There are four Transvaal breeding records October–January (Tarboton *et al.* 1987b), three Zimbabwean records October–December (Irwin 1981) and four records from KwaZulu-Natal October–November (Dean 1971). The atlas records agree with a midsummer breeding season.

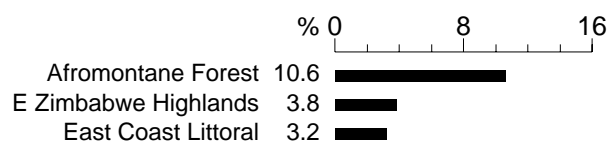
**Interspecific relationships:** Once regarded as a flycatcher in the genus *Seicercus*, it is now accepted as a *Phylloscopus* warbler (Hall & Moreau 1970; Clancey 1991c). This is the only breeding southern African *Phylloscopus*, and has no close relatives in this region. Its closest ecological competitor would appear to be the Cape White-eye which also forages for insects in the foliage but which has a broader diet spectrum, including fruit. None of the migrant Palearctic warblers occupy the evergreen forests.

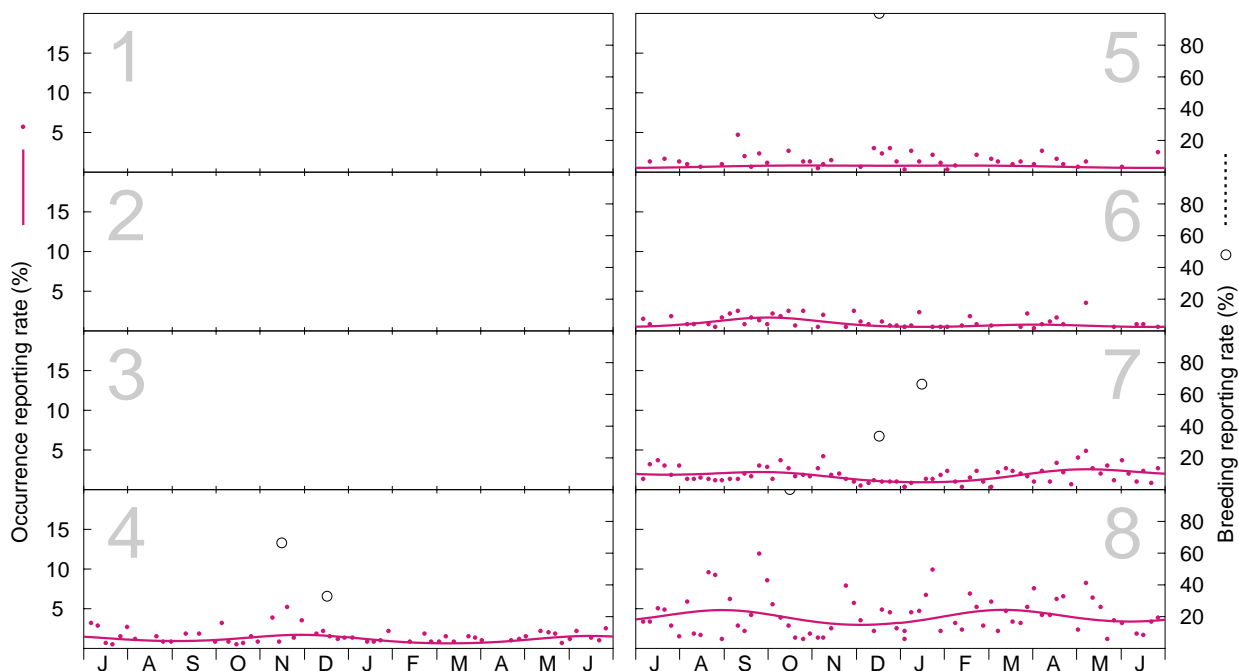
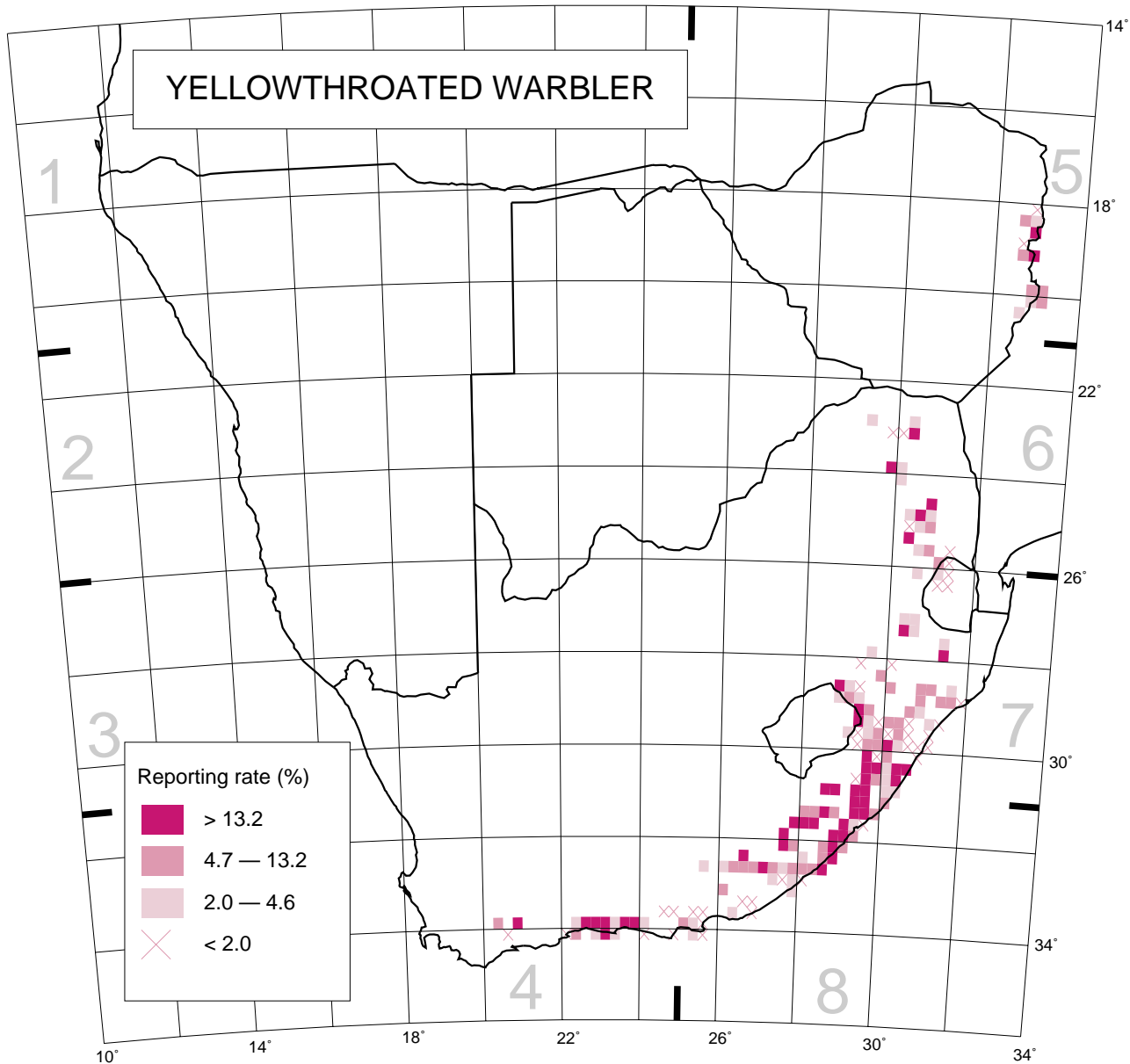
**Historical distribution and conservation:** Not known to have differed from the present distribution, although the loss of forest habitat will presumably have resulted in a reduction in abundance and possibly range. The Yellowthroated Warbler is dependent on evergreen forest, and destruction of this habitat will result in increased fragmentation and isolation of populations. It is not presently regarded as threatened in South Africa (Brooke 1984b).

A. Berruti

Recorded in 186 grid cells, 4.1%  
Total number of records: 1500  
Mean reporting rate for range: 6.0%

#### Reporting rates for vegetation types





Models of seasonality for Zones. Number of records (top to bottom, left to right):  
 Occurrence: 0, 0, 0, 101, 64, 97, 352, 217; Breeding: 0, 0, 0, 3, 1, 0, 3, 1.