

## Blackcrowned Tchagra

### Swartkroontjagra

#### *Tchagra senegala*

The Blackcrowned Tchagra ranges throughout the more humid parts of Africa. Within the atlas region it has been recorded in northern Namibia, Botswana, Zimbabwe, the Transvaal, Swaziland, KwaZulu-Natal and the eastern Cape Province. The four subspecies in the region (Clancey 1980b) appear to have continuous ranges, except for a break of lower reporting rates through the Transvaal which probably separates *T. s. kalahari* in the west from the race *mozambica* to the east.

Its density has been estimated at 1 pair/25 ha at Nylsvlei (2428DA) (Tarboton *et al.* 1987b) but the size of a breeding territory may be 4 ha (Harris & Arnott 1988). It is usually encountered in pairs. Although it remains hidden in the foliage much of the time, it is extremely vocal and its presence is easily detected by observers who are familiar with its distinctive calls. Confusion with the similar-looking Southern Tchagra *T. tchagra* and Threestreaked Tchagra *T. australis* is possible.

**Habitat:** It is present in a wide range of scrub and woodland habitats (avoiding the more arid regions with an average annual rainfall below 300 mm) and occurs within exotic timber plantations, but only where dense undergrowth is present. The vegetation analysis shows that, although it is present in most woodland types, it is most common in mesic, broadleaved woodlands such as Miombo and Moist Woodland, and is considerably less common in Mopane and Valley Bushveld. Although a fairly high reporting rate is shown for forest biomes, it is found only in the fringes and surrounding areas rather than in the forest interior. Similarly, it is found only in thickets and patches of alien trees in the grassland biome. It is common in large gardens and parks.

**Movements:** It is suspected of undertaking some short-range seasonal movements (Harris & Arnott 1988) but the resolution of the atlas data is too coarse to reveal positive evidence of such minor movements. The models show that it was reported more frequently in the summer months, but this may simply indicate that it is more vocal and more

conspicuous then. A single ringed adult was recovered within 1 km of the ringing site (SAFRING).

**Breeding:** The breeding data indicate a long summer-breeding season. Egg-laying in the Transvaal spans September–January with an October–December peak (Tarboton *et al.* 1987b), and August–April with an October–November peak in Zimbabwe (Irwin 1981).

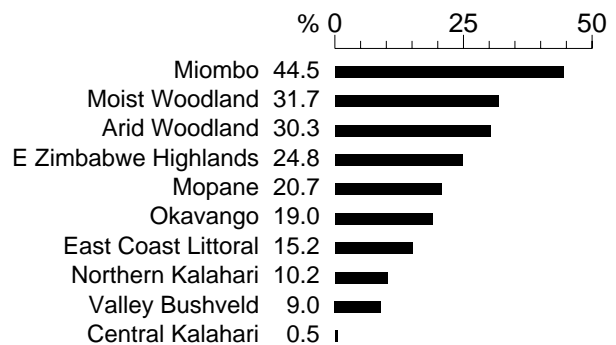
**Interspecific relationships:** It is sympatric over a large area with the Threestreaked Tchagra and over a smaller area with the Southern Tchagra. The ecological separation of the three species is unclear and this species is often encountered in close proximity to, and in the same habitat as, the other two, although the Blackcrowned Tchagra tends to be restricted to denser bush.

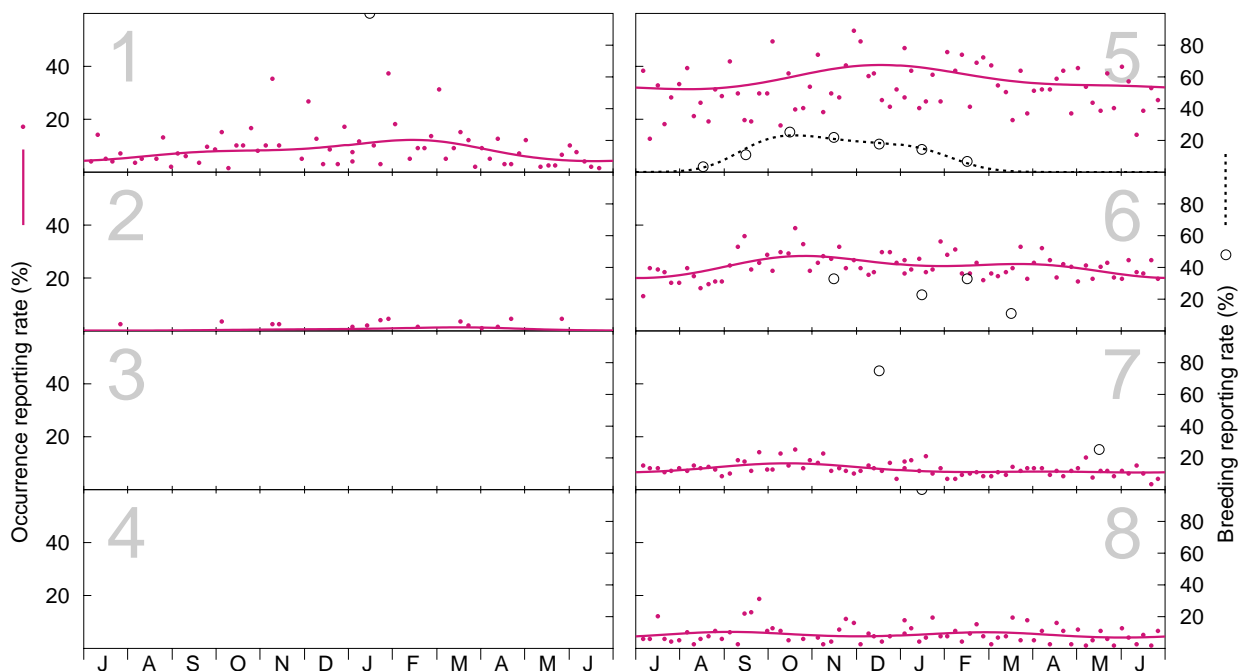
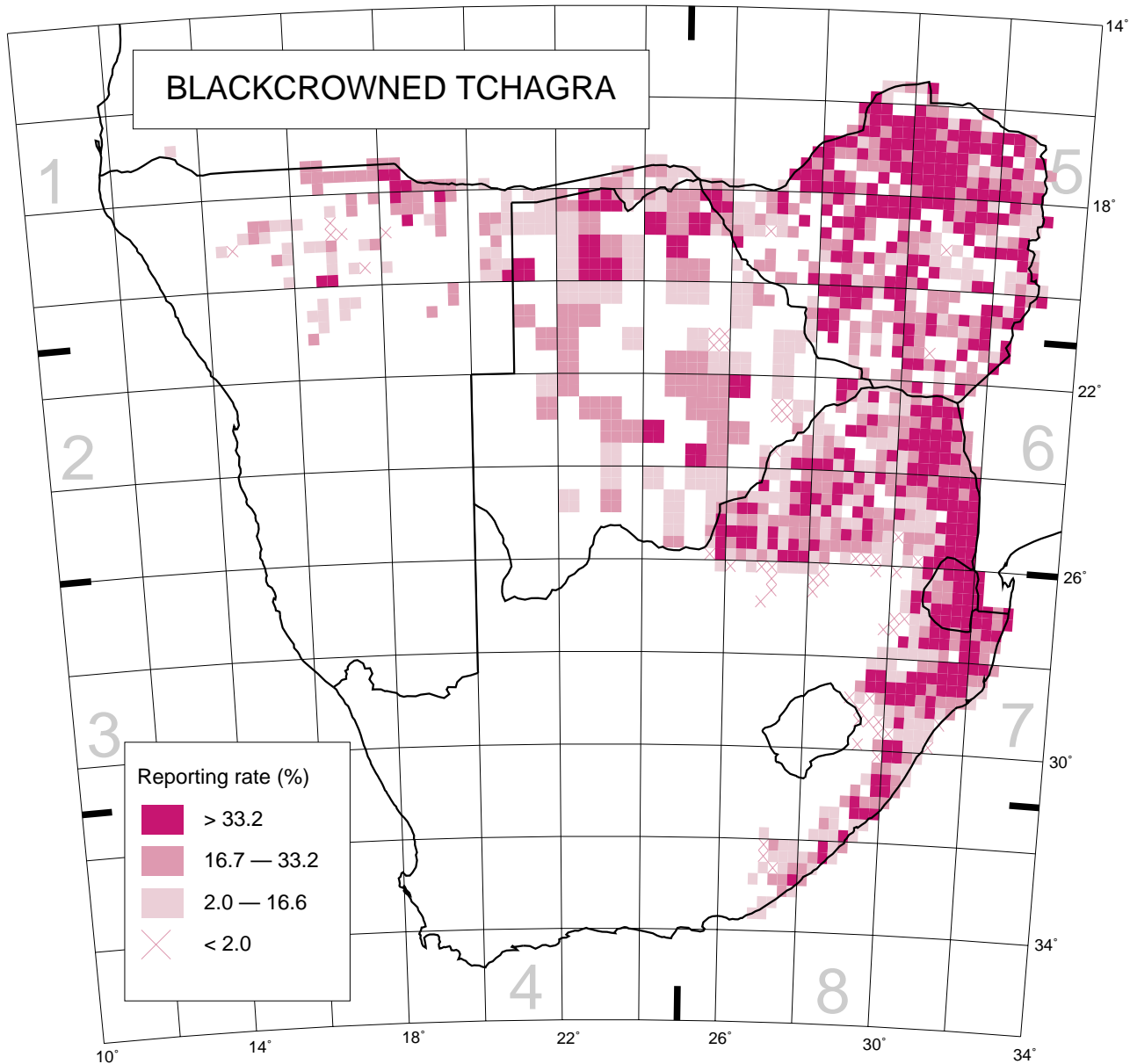
**Historical distribution and conservation:** The Blackcrowned Tchagra is likely to have decreased in areas where intensive agriculture and urbanization have replaced natural vegetation, but its present distribution is not believed to differ significantly from that of the past. The distribution shown in KwaZulu-Natal is very similar to that reported in Cyrus & Robson (1980).

V. Parker

Recorded in 1382 grid cells, 30.5%  
Total number of records: 17 763  
Mean reporting rate for range: 24.9%

#### Reporting rates for vegetation types





Models of seasonality for Zones. Number of records (top to bottom, left to right):  
 Occurrence: 250, 23, 0, 0, 3050, 2786, 1496, 286; Breeding: 1, 0, 0, 0, 28, 9, 4, 1.