

## Cape White-eye

### Kaapse Glasogie

#### *Zosterops pallidus*

The Cape White-eye is an abundant, widespread southern African endemic and is resident in much of South Africa, Lesotho, Swaziland, southeastern Botswana and parts of Namibia. However, there are areas of low reporting rates in much of the arid west and in parts of the southeastern Transvaal highveld, the Lesotho highlands, the lowveld of the Transvaal and Swaziland, and the Limpopo Valley. It occurs only marginally in southern Mozambique, along the frontier with Swaziland (V. Parker *in litt.*). Six subspecies have been recognized in the region (Clancey 1980b); their ranges appear mostly continuous on the present map, apart from the nominate race concentrated along the lower Orange River and in the northern Cape Province and Namibia, which is largely separated from the race *capensis* of the winter-rainfall region in the southwestern Cape Province.

Found in many different habitats, from sea-level to 2800 m, it has also adapted well to man-made environments (Skead 1967c; Ginn *et al.* 1989). This, together with its confiding nature, the tendency to form winter flocks, and considerable spring–summer vocal activity, renders it well-known and well reported. Confusion with the Yellow White-eye *Z. senegalensis* may have occurred in a few areas of sympatry. **Habitat:** It shows a catholic choice of habitat, from Drakensberg scrub vegetation to evergreen and coastal forest (Cyrus & Robson 1980), from tall fynbos (Ginn *et al.* 1989) to thickets and riverine bush. In more arid areas it associates with vegetation along drainage lines (Skead 1967c; Winterbottom & Winterbottom 1984), e.g. the Orange River. It is largely absent from the lowveld and semi-arid northwestern bushveld and southwestern highveld grasslands (Tarboton *et al.* 1987b). Associations with grasslands in the vegetation analysis indicate the availability of wooded habitat within those zones; it is commonly found in alien plantations, orchards, parks and gardens (Ginn *et al.* 1989; Maclean 1993b).

**Movements:** The models indicate it to be generally sedentary; peak reporting rates in spring probably result from increased song activity at the onset of breeding. A July peak in reporting rates in Zone 3 however, together with the trough in Zone 4 in mid-May, suggest some seasonal movements. May–August increases in reporting rate in Zone 3 suggest localized expansion into the arid interior (Karoo, Namaqualand) during winter, followed by a range contraction. These

areas fall within or border the winter-rainfall region where summers are hot and dry, winters cool and wet. The end of the dry summer (March–April) may represent an ecological ‘crunch’ period when this species’ range appears restricted to areas where water is readily available. An overall decrease in reporting rates in other core areas of its distribution at this time may indicate decreased song activity (and conspicuousness) at the end of the breeding season (compare with data for September–October). Reporting rate increases in other parts of the country May–June may result from the appearance of conspicuous winter flocks (Clancey 1964b; Lawson 1966; Skead 1967c; Pepler & Pepler 1992). Nonbreeding (winter) flocks appear to engage in localized movements (Lawson 1966; pers. obs), which may also be altitudinal (Clancey 1964b; Craig 1994b).

Ringed recoveries indicate some movements, ranging 10–164 km; the majority of recoveries, however, reveal it to be more sedentary (Winterbottom & Winterbottom 1984; SAFRING). Concerted seasonal ringing efforts in the areas discussed above should prove informative. **Breeding:** The models indicate an August–March season, peaking slightly earlier in the winter-rainfall western Cape Province (November) than in other regions (December). Atlas data agree with those previously published (Skead 1967c; Winterbottom 1968a; Dean 1971; Tarboton *et al.* 1987b; Maclean 1993b).

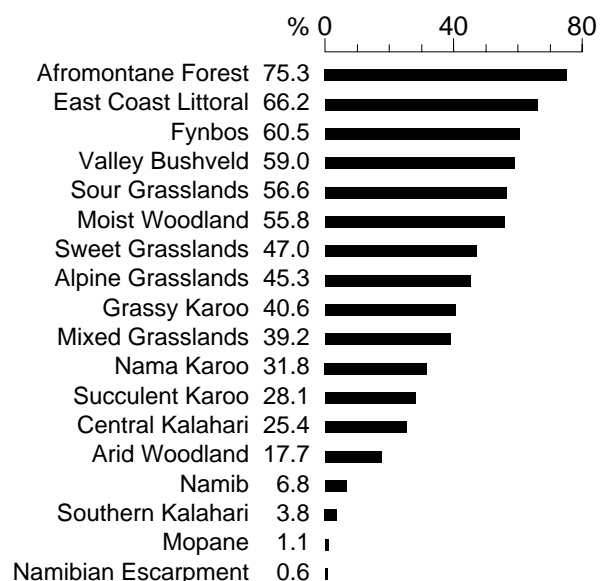
**Interspecific relationships:** Cape and Yellow White-eyes sometimes occur in sympatry on the periphery of their ranges, e.g. in eastern Botswana and at Lake St Lucia (2832CB), where birds of both species feed and flock together (Lawson 1966; Clancey 1980b; Hunter 1986a; Penry 1994).

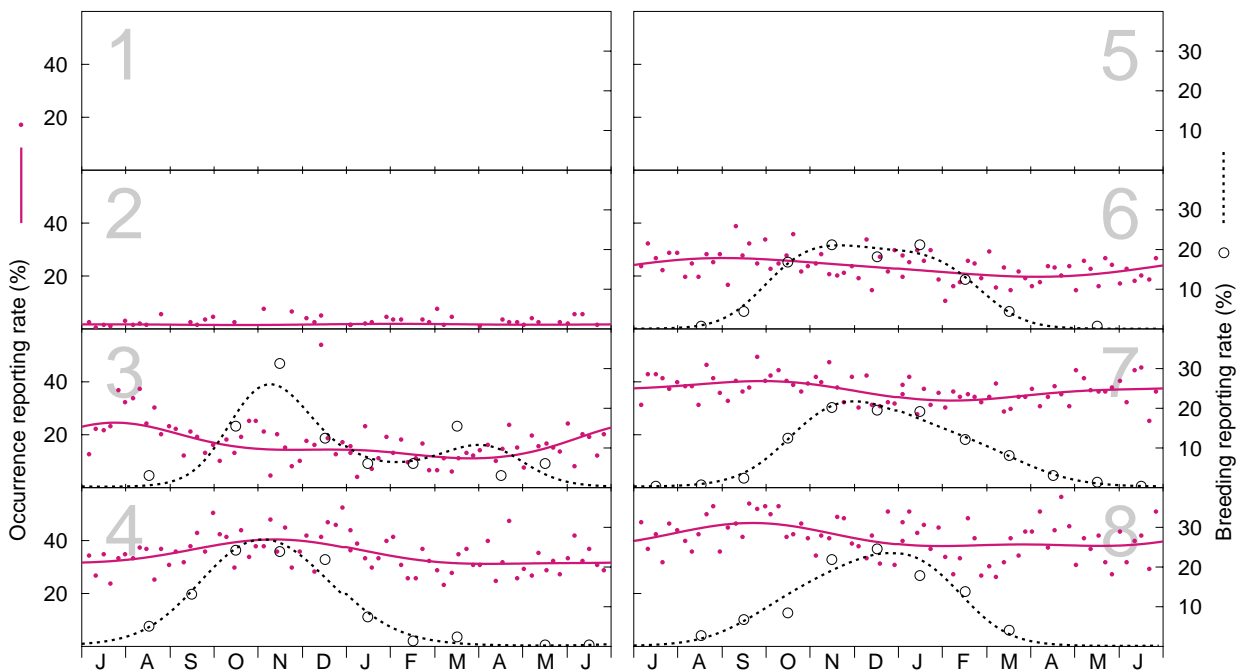
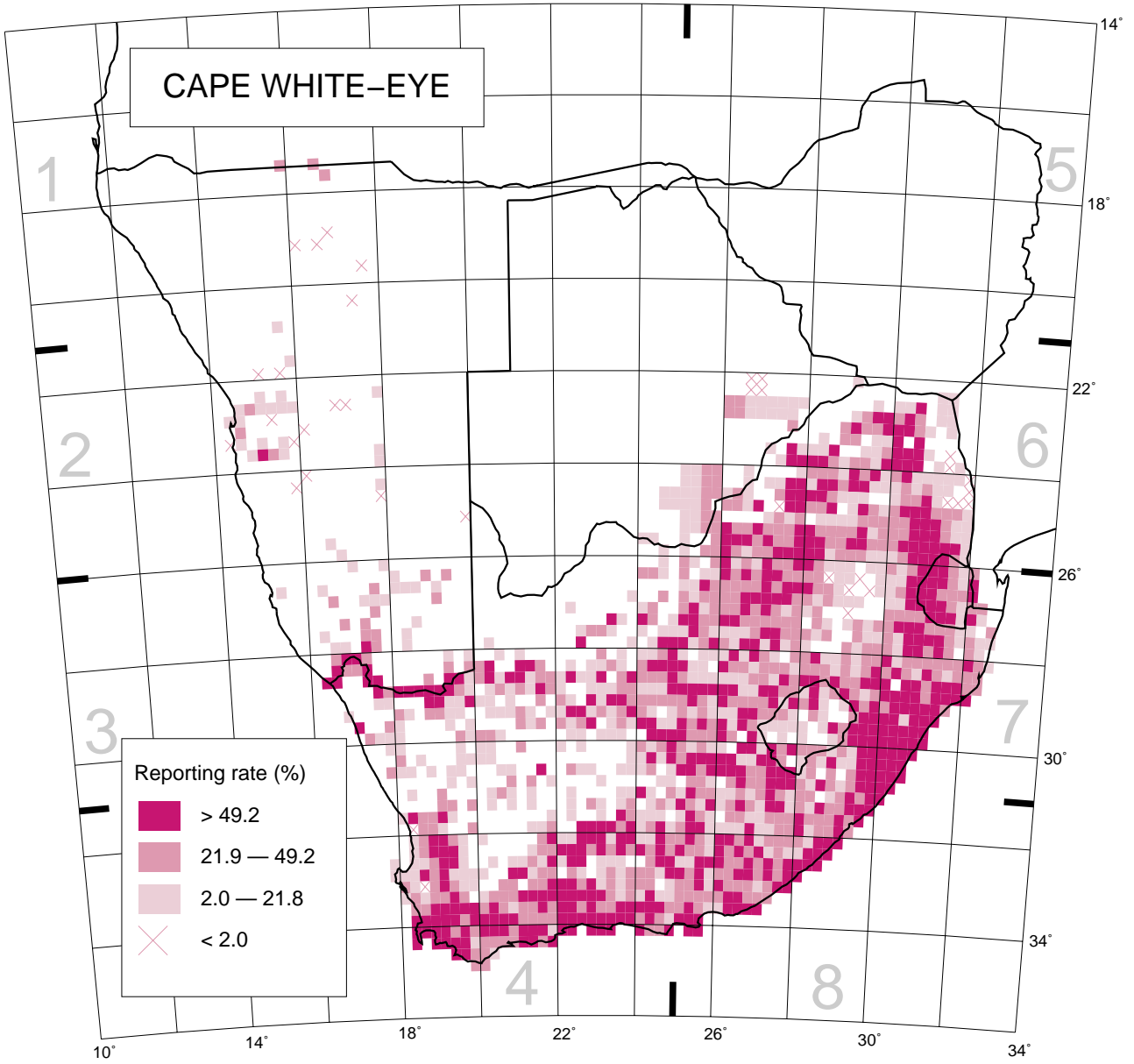
**Historical distribution and conservation:** The range may have undergone changes locally, particularly expansion into arid areas, because of its adaptability to anthropogenic environmental changes such as tree-planting etc. (Skead 1967c; Ginn *et al.* 1989). The Cape White-eye is abundant, widespread and not threatened.

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Recorded in 1591 grid cells, 35.1%  
Total number of records: 56 814  
Mean reporting rate for range: 50.1%

#### Reporting rates for vegetation types





Models of seasonality for Zones. Number of records (top to bottom, left to right):  
 Occurrence: 0, 61, 919, 3011, 0, 2641, 7182, 2247; Breeding: 0, 0, 32, 231, 0, 137, 323, 73.