



Cape Canary Kaapse Kanarie

Serinus canicollis

The Cape Canary is common in western Swaziland, Lesotho and the southern and eastern parts of South Africa. There were isolated records from the relatively mesic fynbos outlier area around Kamieskroon (3017BB). There is an isolated population in the eastern highlands of Zimbabwe which constitutes the subspecies *S. c. griseitergum*. The ranges of the two subspecies in South Africa (Clancey 1980b) are continuous. It occurs northwards to Ethiopia and has been introduced to some Indian Ocean islands (Skead 1960).

It is gregarious (Skead 1960), and gathers in nomadic flocks of 10–500 birds or more, mainly outside the breeding season. Aspects of its life history have been reported by Skead (1948, 1960) and Milewski (1978a, b). It shares its range with six other 'yellow' canaries, but the golden face and grey head of the male distinguish it from the others. The less boldly-marked females and streaky juveniles may be confused with those of other canaries, but misidentification is unlikely to have altered distribution patterns significantly.

Habitat: It frequents a broad spectrum of vegetation types, ranging from grasslands and fynbos to Karoo and woodland. Within each of these, however, it is as likely to occur in man-modified as natural habitats. It often frequents 'waste' and 'disturbed' ground; plantations of alien trees; parkland and playing fields; road verges; agricultural lands, particularly fallow fields, orchards and vineyards; coastal dunes and even the intertidal zone of rocky and sandy beaches. It may occur in treeless areas in the nonbreeding season but requires trees or shrubs in which to nest.

Movements: The models show a distinct spring increase in reporting rates in the south of the range. In spring and early summer, an increase in reporting rates towards the coast is also evident from the seasonal distribution maps. A drop in the interior at this time appears less marked. In the south-

western Cape Province it 'appears to move out of the arid north during summer' (Hockey *et al.* 1989). In January–June the reporting rates in the southern and eastern coastal belt were relatively low, with a minor increase in the interior. These reciprocal seasonal decreases and increases result in only marginal changes in overall distribution. Whereas some altitudinal or coastward movement does seem to occur, a decline in detectability when the birds stop singing and when they concentrate in flocks and become less widespread may also account for lowered reporting rates outside the breeding season.

A ringing recovery in the southwestern Cape Province, 80 km from the Cape of Good Hope Nature Reserve (3418AD) to Caledon (3419AB), is the only indication of the distance that may be covered in the nonbreeding season (Fraser 1986).

Breeding: Evidence for breeding was recorded in virtually all months in the atlas period, but mostly August–February, peaking in early to midsummer (October–December). Breeding peaks earlier in the south and southwest than elsewhere. This pattern is confirmed by data on egg-laying, which occurs mainly August–December and peaks earlier southwards (Winterbottom 1968a; Dean 1971; Irwin 1981; Tarboton *et al.* 1987b). The species sometimes breeds in loose colonies in indigenous and alien vegetation (Skead 1960; Wolff & Jacobsen 1980).

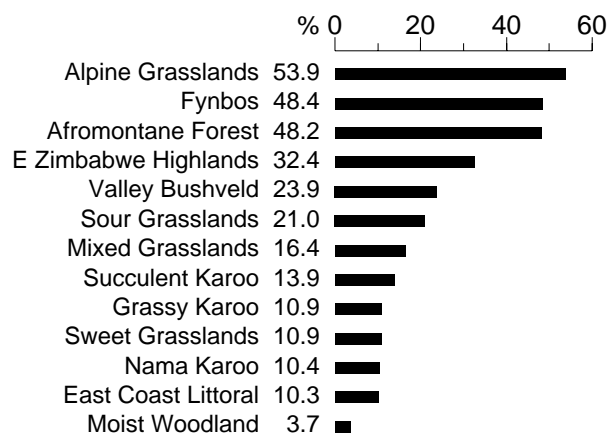
Interspecific relationships: It forms monospecific flocks, but may be joined by other seed-eating birds, such as waxbills and other canaries, at favoured feeding sites. There is, however, little overlap in the diets of the Cape Canary and other *Serinus* species, at least in the southwestern Cape Province (Milewski 1978a).

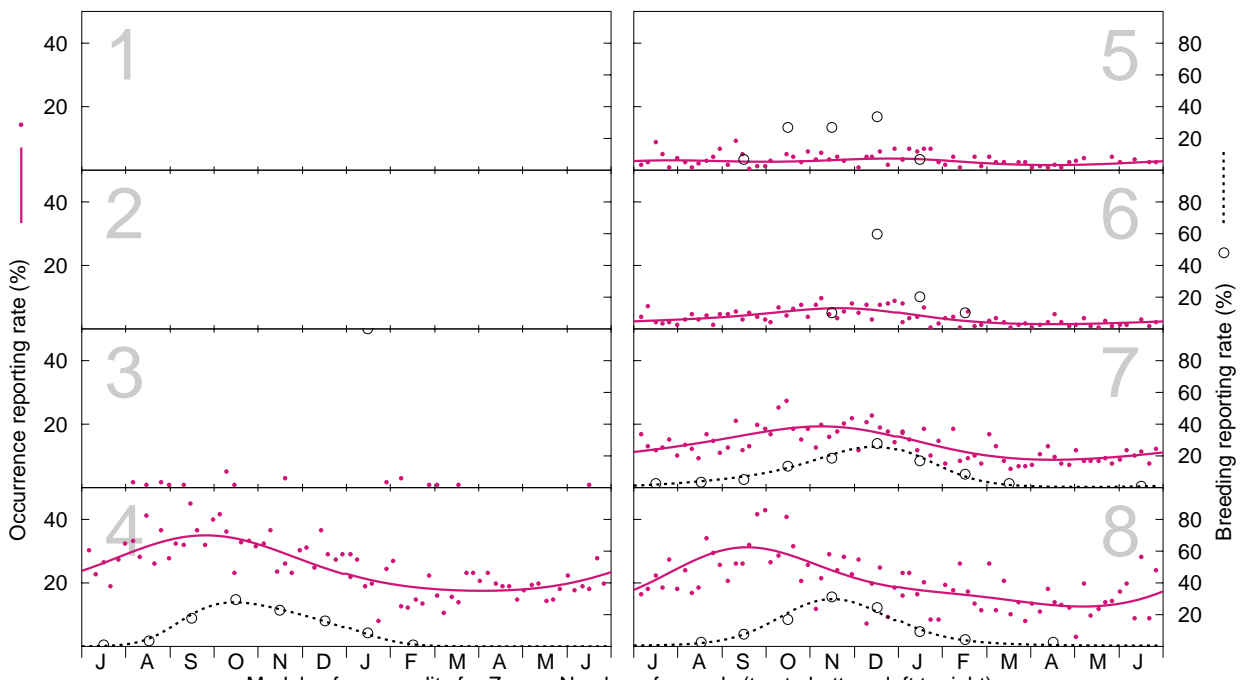
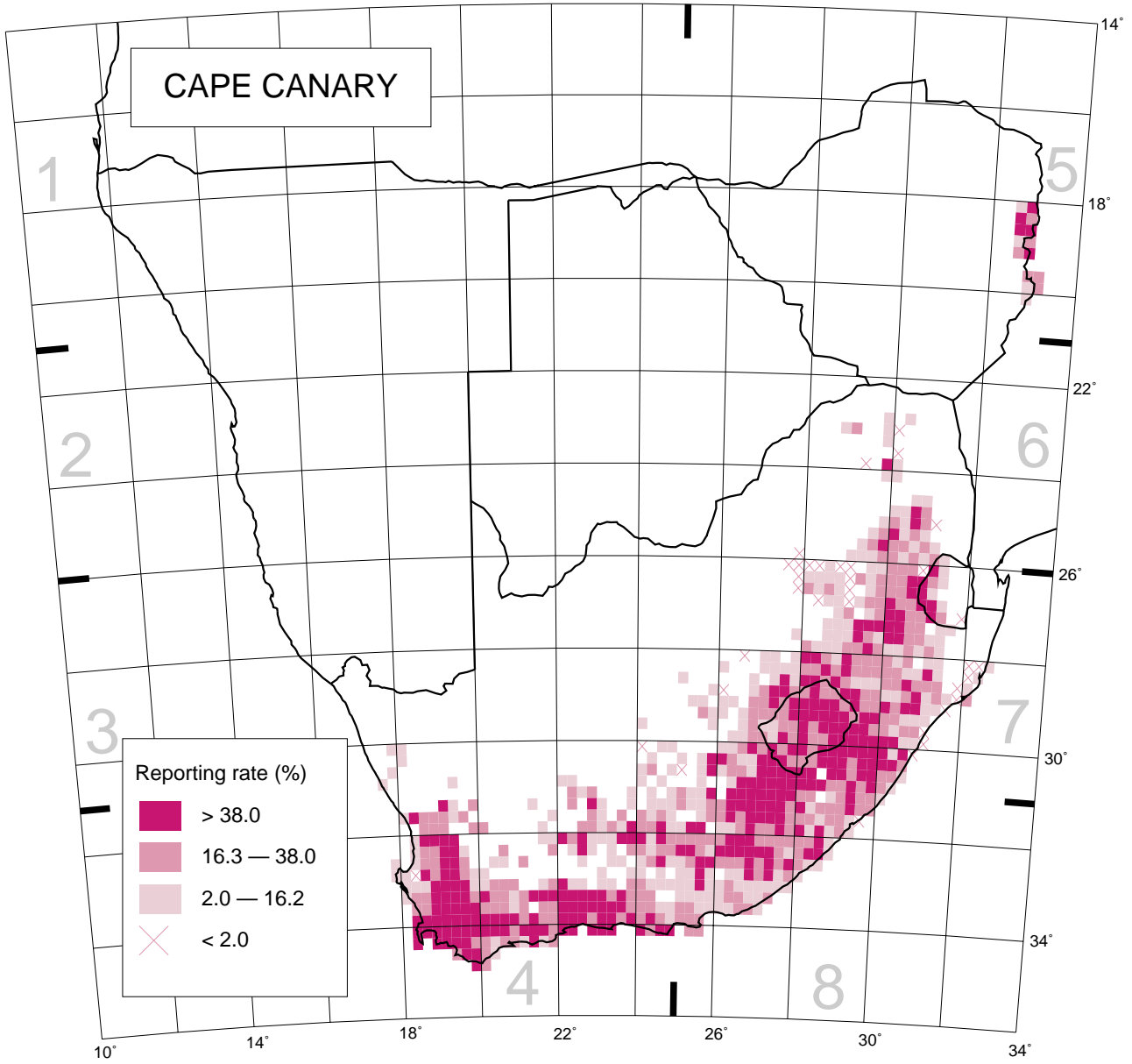
Historical distribution and conservation: The current distribution is not known to differ from the past, although it and the bird's abundance may have increased in response to habitat modification, e.g. transformation of renosterveld to orchards, and the proliferation in disturbed ground of alien weeds, the seeds of which are eaten. The distribution map is similar to that shown by Skead (1960) but shows marginally greater penetration into the Karoo. The Cape Canary has benefited from modification of the environment and is under no threat, although the use of agrochemicals in weed control may be detrimental.

M.W. Fraser

Recorded in 867 grid cells, 19.1%
Total number of records: 22 706
Mean reporting rate for range: 29.3%

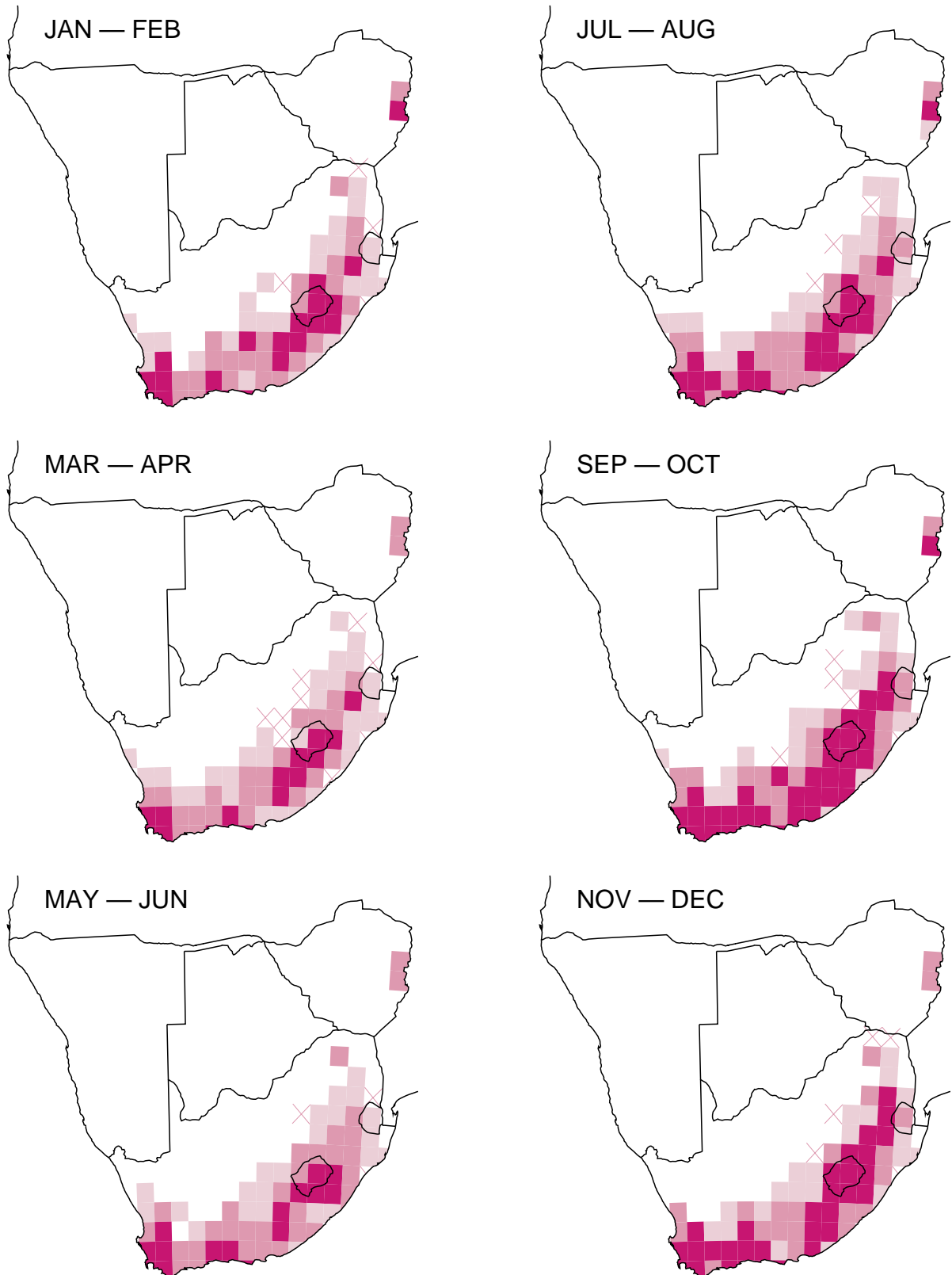
Reporting rates for vegetation types





Models of seasonality for Zones. Number of records (top to bottom, left to right):
 Occurrence: 0, 0, 16, 2159, 233, 395, 2638, 1109; Breeding: 0, 0, 1, 190, 15, 10, 112, 65.

CAPE CANARY



Seasonal distribution maps; one-degree grid.