

Redheaded Weaver

Rooikopwewer

Anaplectes rubriceps

The Redheaded Weaver is an insectivorous weaver of deciduous woodlands. In southern Africa, the range extends from northern KwaZulu-Natal northwards through eastern Swaziland, the Transvaal and Zimbabwe to eastern and northern Botswana and the adjacent Caprivi in Namibia. There are scattered records further west in northern Namibia. It is found locally in the drier interior of southern Mozambique (Clancey 1971c). Over the rest of Africa, it ranges from Angola through Zambia and southern Zaire to east Africa and Ethiopia, and right across the northern savanna belt to Senegal in West Africa (Hall & Moreau 1970). Although nowhere a common bird, this is a highly distinctive species (at least in summer), and its pendulous nests persist long after they have been abandoned, providing clear evidence of its presence in the area. Although four races are recognized, the species is monotypic in southern Africa.

Habitat: The reporting rates show its preference for broad-leaved woodland in hot, relatively moist areas. It forages primarily in trees.

Movements: The apparent seasonality of observations reflects the greater conspicuousness of breeding birds, especially males in their distinctive nuptial plumage. There is no evidence of seasonal movements between regions, but as some of its preferred deciduous habitat can become desolate in the dry season, local shifts between habitats occur seasonally (e.g. Brewster 1991). In Zimbabwe, there is some range contraction outside the breeding season (A.J. Tree *in litt.*).

Breeding: It is not colonial, and clusters of nests in a single tree most likely represent successive breeding attempts by a single pair. The present records indicate breeding mainly September–March (peak October–January) in the Transvaal (Zone 6) and August–February (peak

September–December) in Zimbabwe (Zone 5). This pattern agrees with the few previous records for the Transvaal (Tarboton *et al.* 1987b) and the larger sample from Zimbabwe (Irwin 1981). Nine records for Namibia were September–December (Brown & Clinning *in press*).

Interspecific relations: It is a regular member of mixed-species bird parties (Vernon 1980). Even when considered together with the ten *Ploceus* species in the region, the Redheaded Weaver takes a rather distinct ecological position as an insectivorous species of deciduous woodland. Its distribution is most similar to that of the Lesser Masked Weaver *P. intermedius*, which may ecologically be the closest species of the *Ploceus* group.

It is a host of the Diederik Cuckoo *Chrysococcyx caprius* (Maclean 1993b).

Historical distribution and conservation: There is no indication that the range in southern Africa has changed since it was first recorded. Although it is present at low density throughout its range, most of its habitat is not under threat and the Redheaded Weaver is thus secure at present.

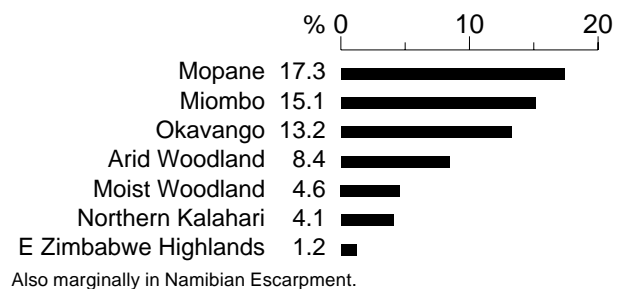
A.J.F.K. Craig

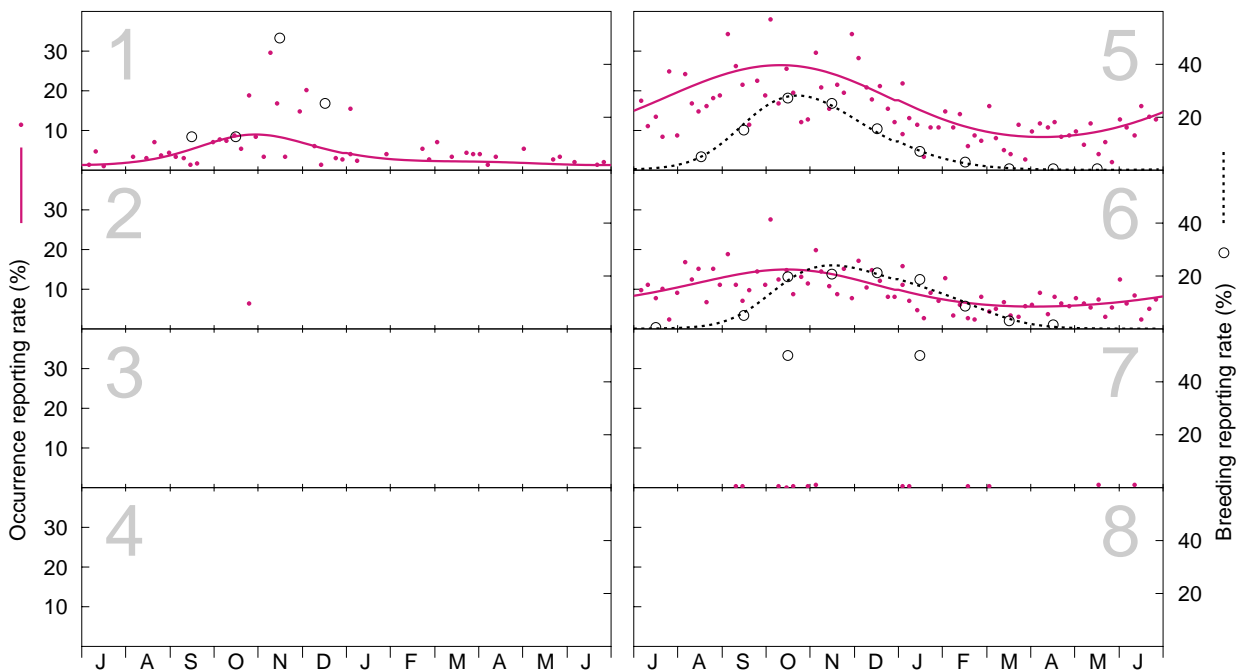
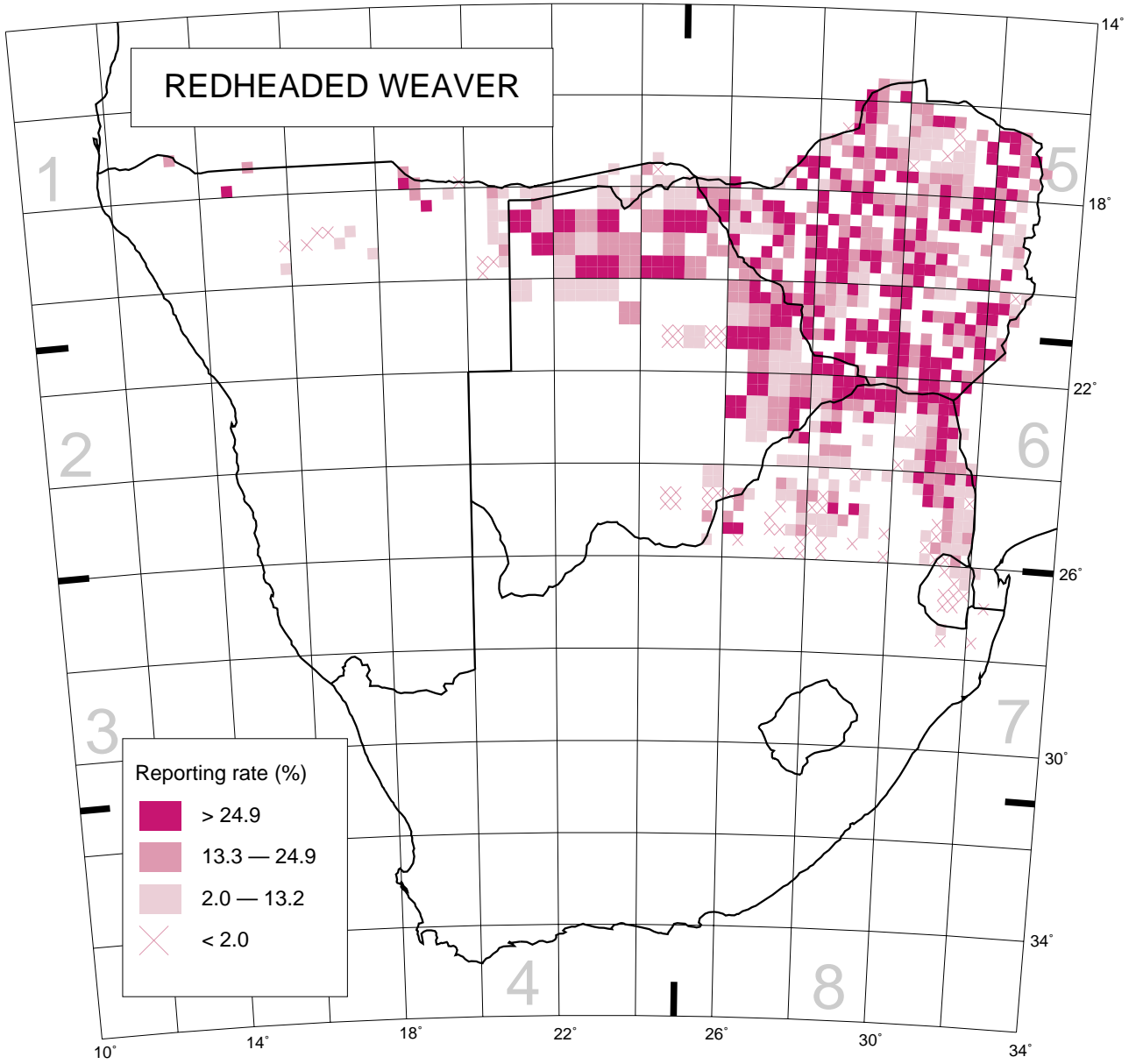
Recorded in 838 grid cells, 18.5%

Total number of records: 4455

Mean reporting rate for range: 14.0%

Reporting rates for vegetation types





Models of seasonality for Zones. Number of records (top to bottom, left to right):
 Occurrence: 112, 1, 0, 0, 1492, 1088, 14, 0; Breeding: 8, 0, 0, 0, 243, 220, 2, 0.