

Yellowrumped Widow

Kaapse Flap

Euplectes capensis

In southern Africa, there are several distinct populations of Yellowrumped Widow which differ strikingly in bill morphology (Craig 1993a); four subspecies have been recognized (Clancey 1980b). This suggests that there is limited interchange between birds in different geographical areas. It ranges from Namaqualand on the west coast, southwards through the Cape fold mountains and the coastal belt, and eastwards broadly along the line of the escarpment through the eastern Cape Province, Transkei, Lesotho, KwaZulu-Natal, Swaziland and the Transvaal. It is absent from the northern and central Cape Province, and from most of the Free State (cf. Earlé & Grobler 1987). It is also rarely found on the coast east of Port Elizabeth (cf. Cyrus & Robson 1980) and in Mozambique occurs primarily in higher areas adjacent to Zimbabwe (Clancey 1971c). It is widespread in Zimbabwe, but does not occur in Namibia or in Botswana, except perhaps occasionally on the border with Zimbabwe (Smithers 1964). To the north of southern Africa it is found in the Angolan highlands, in southern Zaire and Zambia through to East Africa, where it inhabits montane grasslands as well as habitats at lower altitudes. In addition, there are two isolated montane populations in the highlands of Ethiopia and Cameroon (Hall & Moreau 1970).

This is the only *Euplectes* species with a coloured rump in all plumages (Craig 1992a), but nonbreeding birds are still prone to being misidentified while breeding males might be mistaken for Yellowbacked Widows *E. macrourus* in Zimbabwe, or even for Golden Bishops *E. afer* elsewhere.

Habitat: The vegetation analysis shows high reporting rates for the Eastern Zimbabwe Highlands, Fynbos, Miombo and Alpine Grassland vegetation types. This reflects the interesting heterogeneity of habitats and altitudes inhabited by this species in different parts of its range. It also exploits cultivated areas, e.g. in the southwestern Cape Province (Hockey *et al.* 1989), and it is often found on the scrubby fringes of Afromontane forest. It is common at high altitudes, ranging up to 3000 m in the Drakensberg, and breeding above 2700 m (Bonde 1993), but occurs at sea-level in the southernmost parts of its range.

Movements: Patterns of seasonal occurrence are primarily an artefact of moult into and out of breeding plumage by males; breeding plumage renders them more conspicuous and recognizable. Seasonal records of birds at roosts in KwaZulu-Natal suggest possible altitudinal migration (pers. obs.) but this has not been confirmed.

Breeding: Breeding is markedly earlier in the southwestern Cape Province (mainly September–November; Zone 4) than in the eastern Zones (mainly December–March), and this reflects the respective winter and summer-rainfall regimes in these two regions.

Interspecific relationships: Yellowrumped Widows will join other ploceids in flocks and at roosts, but they are often found in small flocks not associated with other bishops or widows, and they seldom nest in close association with other species.

Historical distribution and conservation: There are no data to suggest that the historical distribution differed from the present pattern. The Yellowrumped Widow is an unprotected species in the Cape Province and is reported to cause damage to cereal crops there. However, much of its preferred habitat lies outside of areas under cultivation.

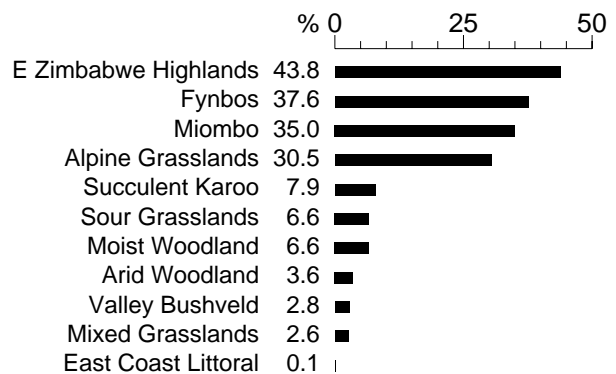
A.J.F.K. Craig

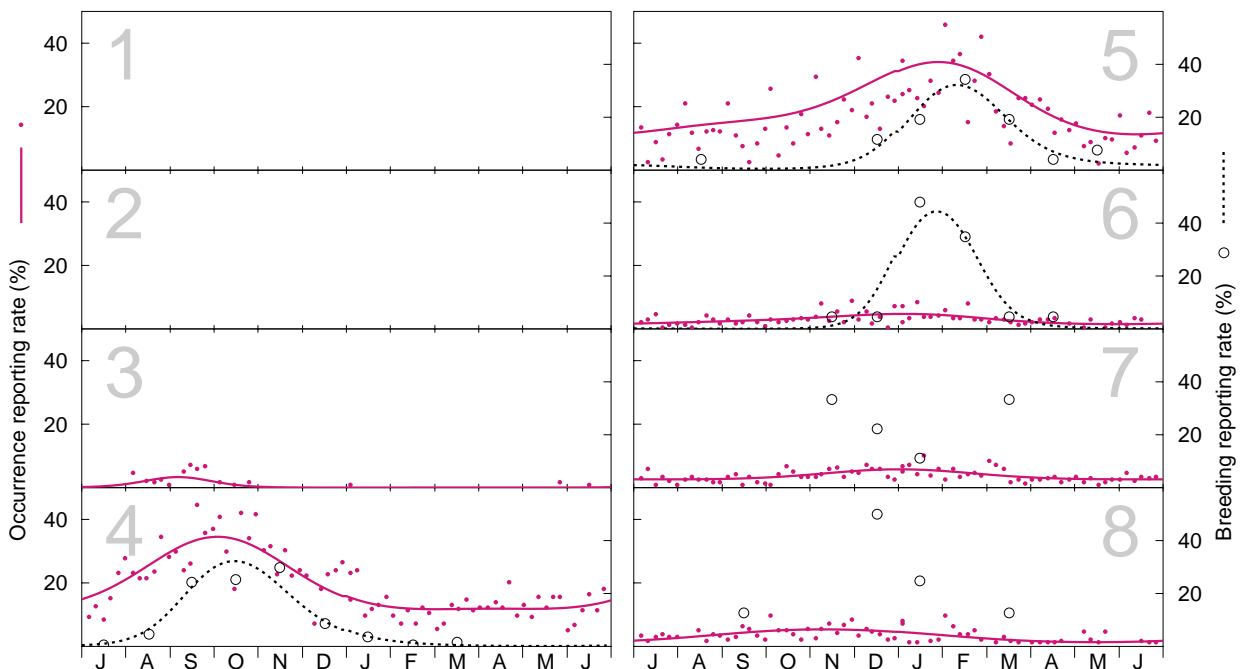
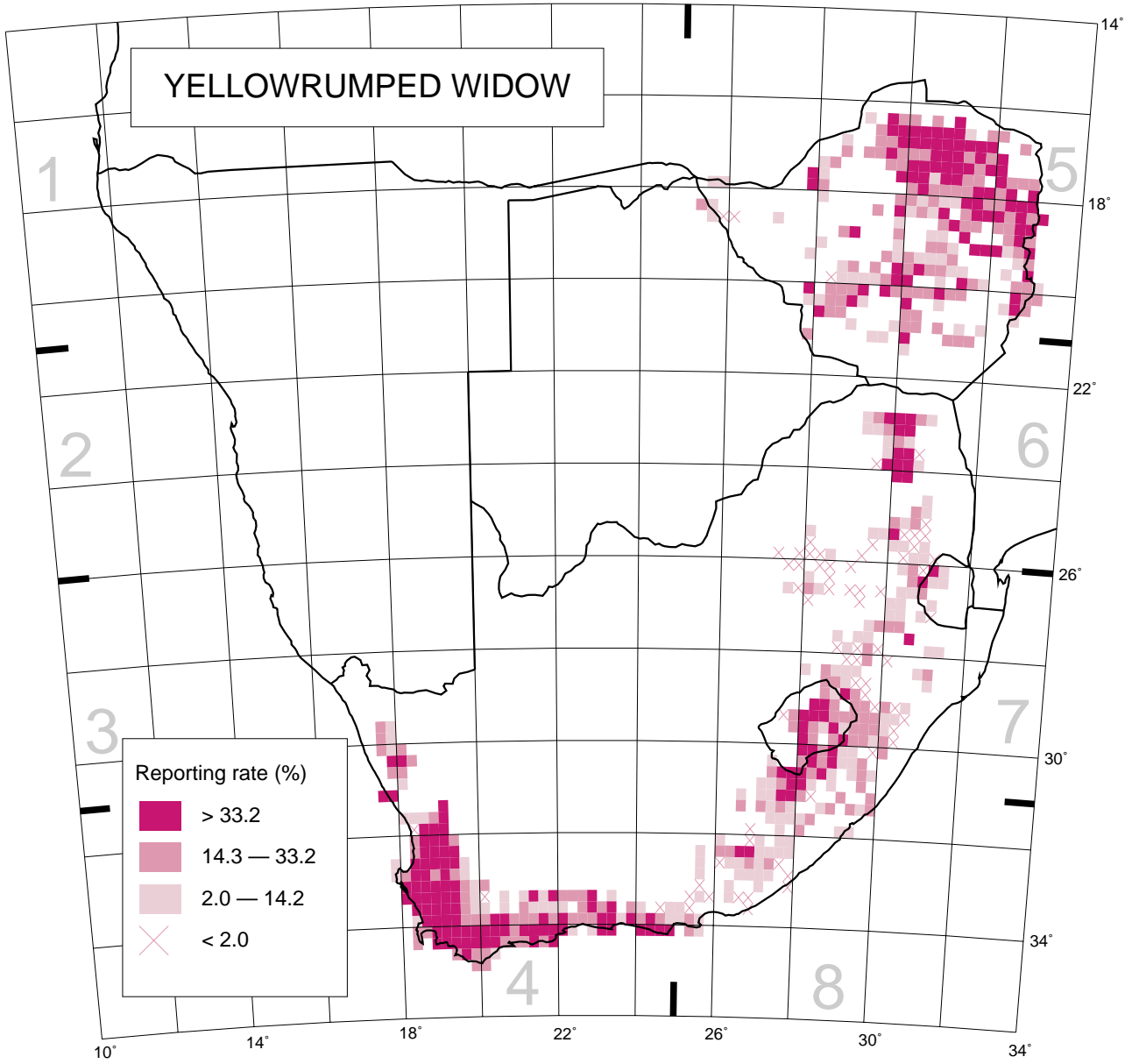
Recorded in 679 grid cells, 15.0%

Total number of records: 14 256

Mean reporting rate for range: 23.3%

Reporting rates for vegetation types





Models of seasonality for Zones. Number of records (top to bottom, left to right):
 Occurrence: 0, 0, 35, 1678, 1732, 326, 726, 178; Breeding: 0, 0, 0, 123, 26, 23, 9, 8.