

Redshouldered Widow

Kortstertflap

Euplectes axillaris

A species of the moist grassland, the nominate race of the Redshouldered Widow occurs from the Algoa Bay region of the eastern Cape Province, through Transkei, KwaZulu-Natal and Swaziland, to the northeastern Free State and the southeastern Transvaal. Bonde (1993) reported a single record from Lesotho. Further north, the subspecies *E. a. bocagei* occurs in Zimbabwe along the Zambezi River west of Victoria Falls (1725DD), and in Namibia and Botswana it is restricted to the Okavango and Caprivi regions. In southern Mozambique it is common on the coast, extending inland in the lower-lying areas (Clancey 1971c). To the north it is found in Angola, southern Zaire and Zambia, through East Africa to Ethiopia. There are two isolated populations in West Africa: on the Cameroon highlands, and along the northern loop of the Niger River (Hall & Moreau 1970).

Habitat: Moist grassland is the preferred habitat of the nominate race which seldom utilizes bushes or other woody vegetation. In the Okavango and Caprivi *bocagei* also frequents reedbeds and papyrus swamp (M. Herremans pers. comm.). The association with some woodland types in the vegetation analysis is due to the presence of patches of suitable habitat in these regions. Nests are built in tall grass, usually in wet areas.

Movements: The seasonal plumage cycle in males, rather than any movements, is the main determinant of seasonal changes in reporting rates. Ringing data suggest that it is largely resident in KwaZulu-Natal (Craig 1977).

Breeding: The records during the atlas period indicate breeding activity mainly November–March. This is sup-

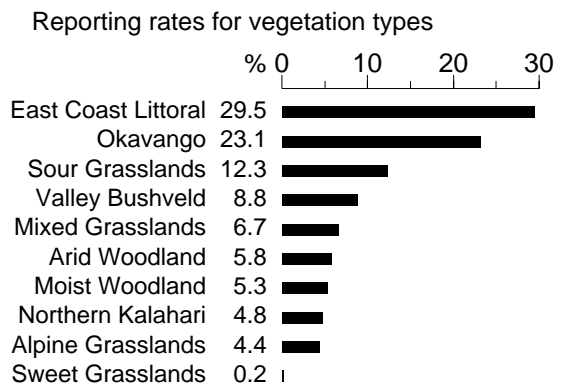
ported by data from the Transvaal and KwaZulu-Natal (Craig 1977; Tarboton *et al.* 1987b).

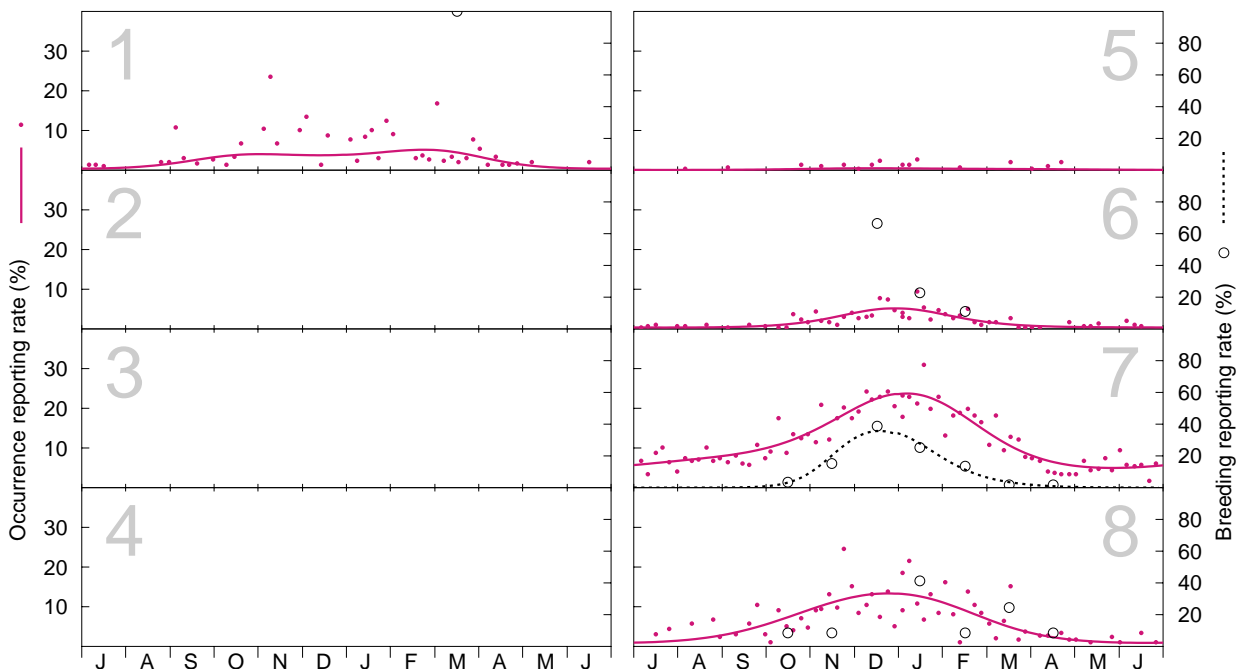
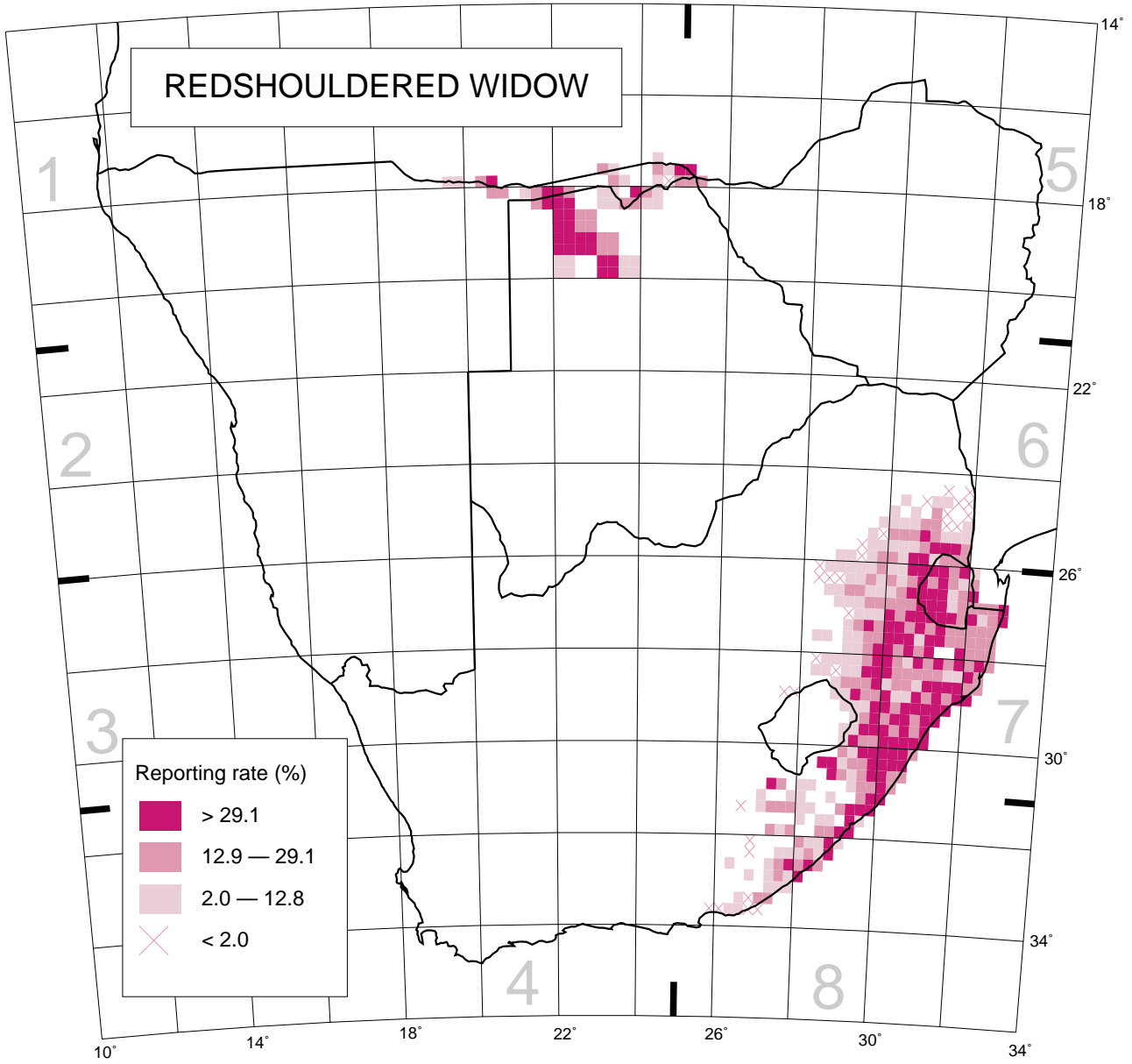
Interspecific relationships: Like other bishops and widows, it will feed and roost in mixed flocks. Its breeding territories may overlap those of other species, in which case interspecific aggression may be seen between the male territory-holders.

Historical distribution and conservation: The distribution described here does not differ from the historical distribution. Although localized in southern African, the Redshouldered Widow is common where it occurs and its current conservation status appears secure.

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Recorded in 459 grid cells, 10.1%
Total number of records: 8784
Mean reporting rate for range: 21.5%





Models of seasonality for Zones. Number of records (top to bottom, left to right):
 Occurrence: 82, 0, 0, 0, 21, 191, 2327, 319; Breeding: 1, 0, 0, 0, 0, 9, 52, 12.