

Whitewinged Widow

Witvlerkflap

Euplectes albonotatus

The Whitewinged Widow is widespread in KwaZulu-Natal, Swaziland, the Transvaal, Zimbabwe and the Limpopo drainage in eastern Botswana. It also occurs sparsely in northern Botswana (e.g. Okavango, Chobe River), while in Namibia it is apparently restricted to the Okavango and Caprivi regions, where the race *E. a. asymmetrurus* marginally penetrates the region. There are no records from Lesotho (Bonde 1993) and in the Free State it is limited to the extreme northern and northeastern areas (Earlé & Grobler 1987). There are interesting gaps in distribution in the northern Transvaal and Zimbabwe. In the former region at least, these cannot be attributed to poor atlas coverage and indicate avoidance of parts of the arid Limpopo Valley. Clancey (1971c) described it as highly localized in southern Mozambique. Further north in Africa there is an isolated western population found from Angola to Gabon (and also on the island of São Tomé). From Zimbabwe it extends northwards to Ethiopia, with outlying records from the Jebel Marra in the western Sudan (Hall & Moreau 1970).

Even in the nonbreeding season, adult male Whitewinged Widows are easily identified, but females and sub-adult birds may be confused with other *Euplectes* species.

Habitat: While the reporting rates are highest for woodland, followed by grassland, vegetation types, it favours the rank growth on the margins of open grassy areas, usually near water, and the bushy and overgrown fringes of cultivated fields. In arid areas of Botswana and Namibia it is confined mainly to seasonally inundated floodplains and tall grasslands.

Movements: The seasonal pattern of changes in reporting rates reflects seasonal changes in the plumage in males, rather than any large-scale movements. However, in both KwaZulu-Natal (Zone 7) and Zimbabwe (Zone 5), ringing and other studies suggest local movements in these popu-

lations, and the birds were periodically absent from one study area (Craig 1977).

Breeding: The atlas data show breeding October–April, which accords with egg-laying data from Zimbabwe and the Transvaal (Irwin 1981; Tarboton *et al.* 1987b).

Interspecific relationships: It frequently joins mixed flocks and roosts which may include any of the other *Euplectes* species occurring in the same area, as well as *Ploceus* and *Quelea* species.

Historical distribution and conservation: The current distribution is not known to differ from the historical range. The Whitewinged Widow favours disturbed habitats and is likely to benefit from human activities, especially small-scale clearing for agriculture and the construction of dams and sewage ponds.

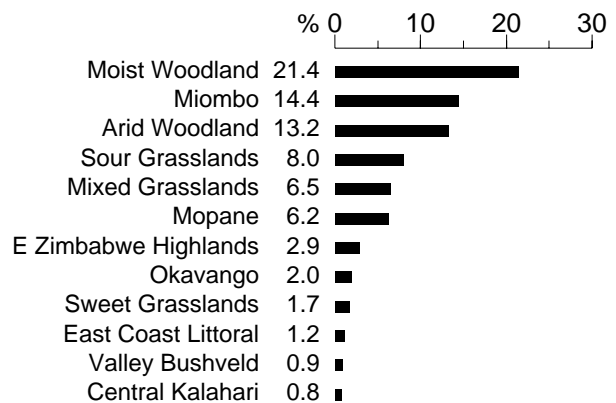
A.J.F.K. Craig

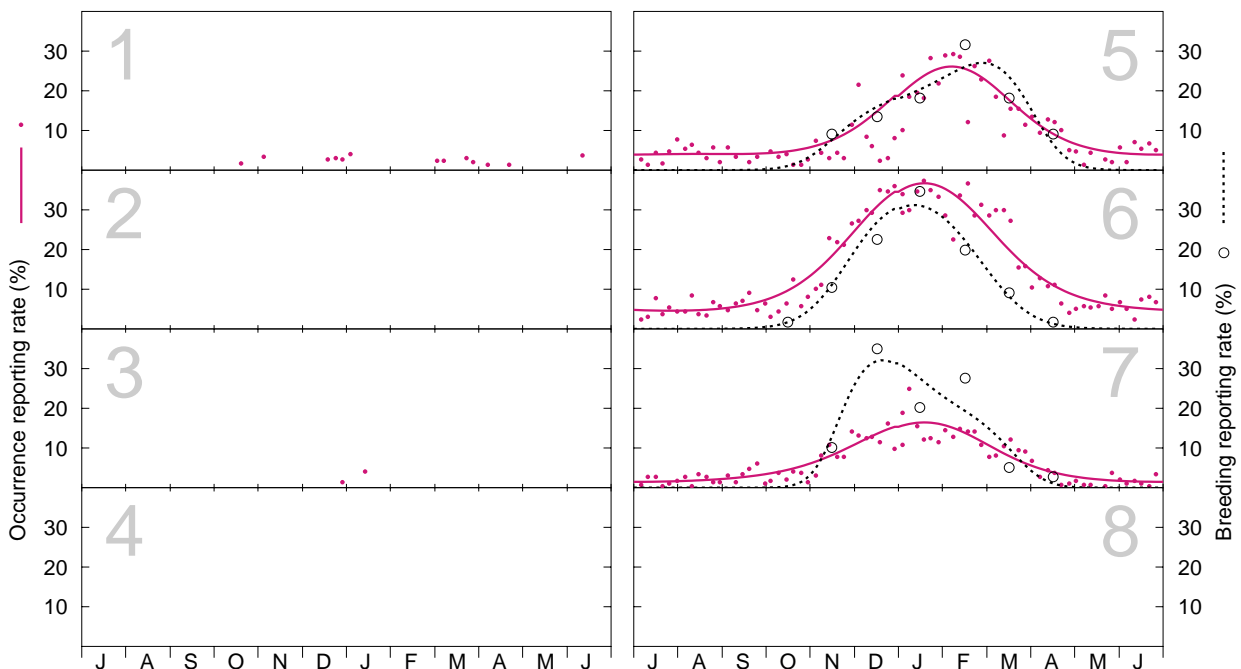
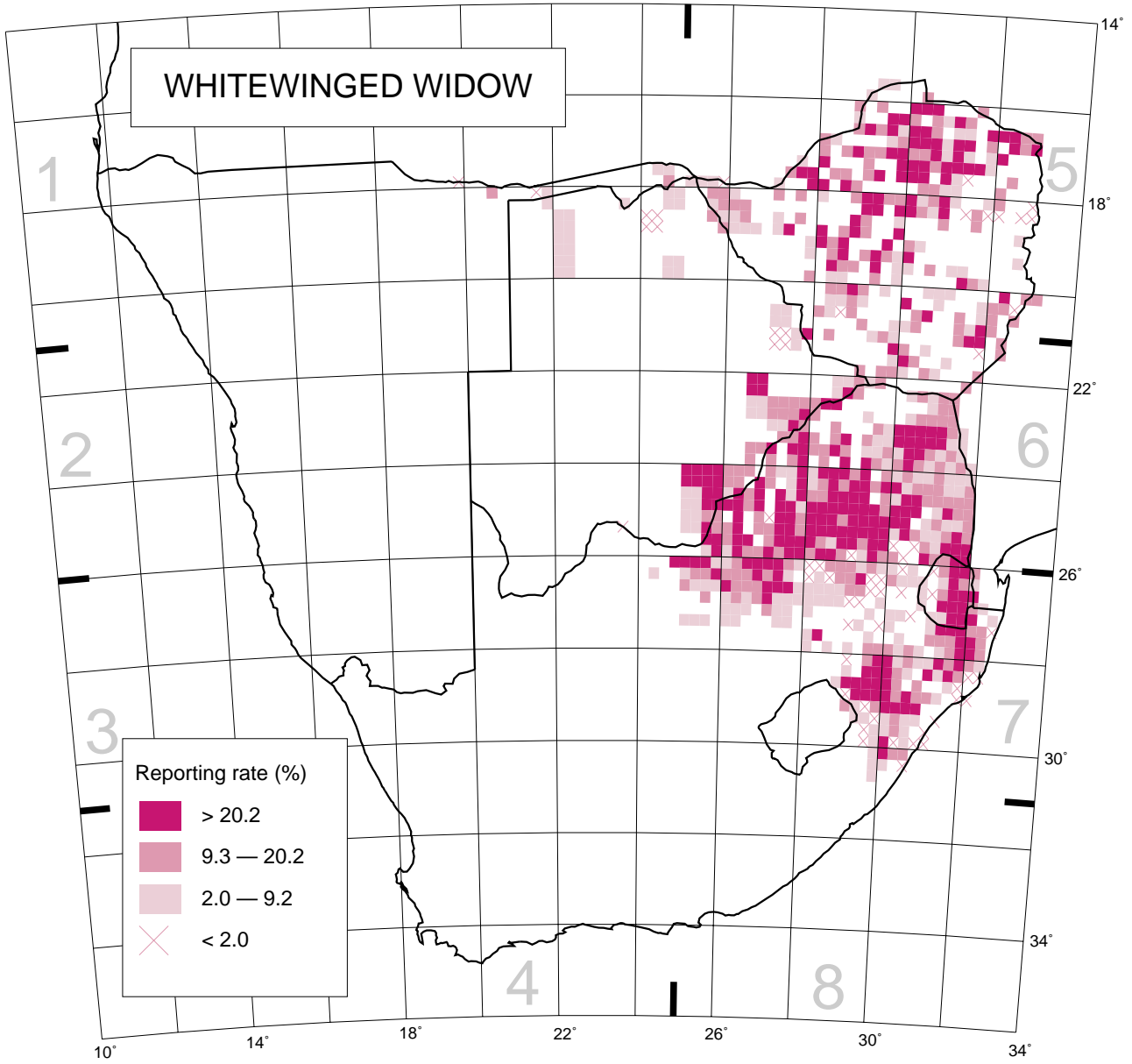
Recorded in 866 grid cells, 19.1%

Total number of records: 8916

Mean reporting rate for range: 13.6%

Reporting rates for vegetation types





Models of seasonality for Zones. Number of records (top to bottom, left to right):
 Occurrence: 14, 0, 2, 0, 869, 1763, 1280, 0; Breeding: 0, 0, 0, 0, 22, 66, 40, 0.