



Redcollared Widow

Rooikeelflap

Euplectes ardens

The Redcollared Widow occurs from the Algoa Bay area of the eastern Cape Province through Lesotho, the eastern Free State, Transkei, KwaZulu-Natal, Swaziland and the Transvaal, and in eastern and northeastern Zimbabwe. It is largely absent from the low-lying regions of Zimbabwe but there were scattered records throughout southern Zimbabwe. It is also absent or rare in the arid Limpopo River valley and eastern Transvaal lowveld which separate the nominate race to the south from *E. a. tropicus* in Zimbabwe (Clancey 1980b). There are no records from Namibia and only one from Botswana (Skinner 1986b). In southern Mozambique it is largely confined to the high-lying areas of the Lebombo Mountains in the south, Mount Gorongosa and the border with Zimbabwe (Clancey 1971c). The highland populations in Ethiopia, Kenya and Tanzania are morphologically distinctive (Craig 1993b), but it also occurs in the lowlands of Angola to Gabon and through Zaire to East Africa, and across to Sierra Leone in West Africa (Hall & Moreau 1970).

Within the region, adult males in nonbreeding plumage have plain black wings and could only be confused with the Firecrowned Bishop *E. hordeaceus*. Female and subadult birds, however, are frequently mistaken for other *Euplectes*, even as museum specimens (Craig 1992a). Records based on birds other than breeding adult males should be treated with caution (cf. Clancey 1971c).

Habitat: A mosaic of grass and bush is favoured by the Redcollared Widow in the region; therefore it is typical of grassland with scattered trees or bushes, from which the breeding males launch short display flights.

Movements: Reporting rates reflected the seasonality of breeding plumage in males; ringing data do not suggest large-scale seasonal movements. It uses the same roost sites throughout the year (Craig 1977), but one ringed bird was recovered 100 km from its ringing site (Craig 1982a).

Breeding: There is some indication that the southernmost birds nested earlier (October–February) than more northerly populations (November–April). Previous records for Zimbabwe (Zone 5) reported egg-laying December–April (Irwin 1981), and for the Transvaal (Zone 6) November–March (Tarboton *et al.* 1987b).

Interspecific relationships: While its breeding areas do not often overlap with those of other *Euplectes* species, it commonly mixes with them, and with other ploceids, throughout the year when feeding and roosting.

Historical distribution and conservation: In Lesotho, there is some suggestion that it is less common than formerly (Bonde 1993), but no other changes in status have been documented. The Redcollared Widow utilizes habitats which are under little threat and it is common within its range.

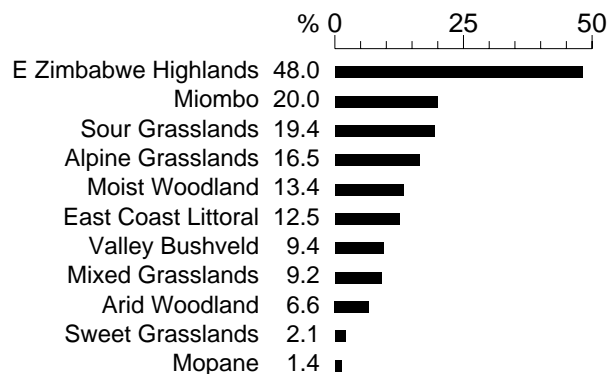
A.J.F.K. Craig

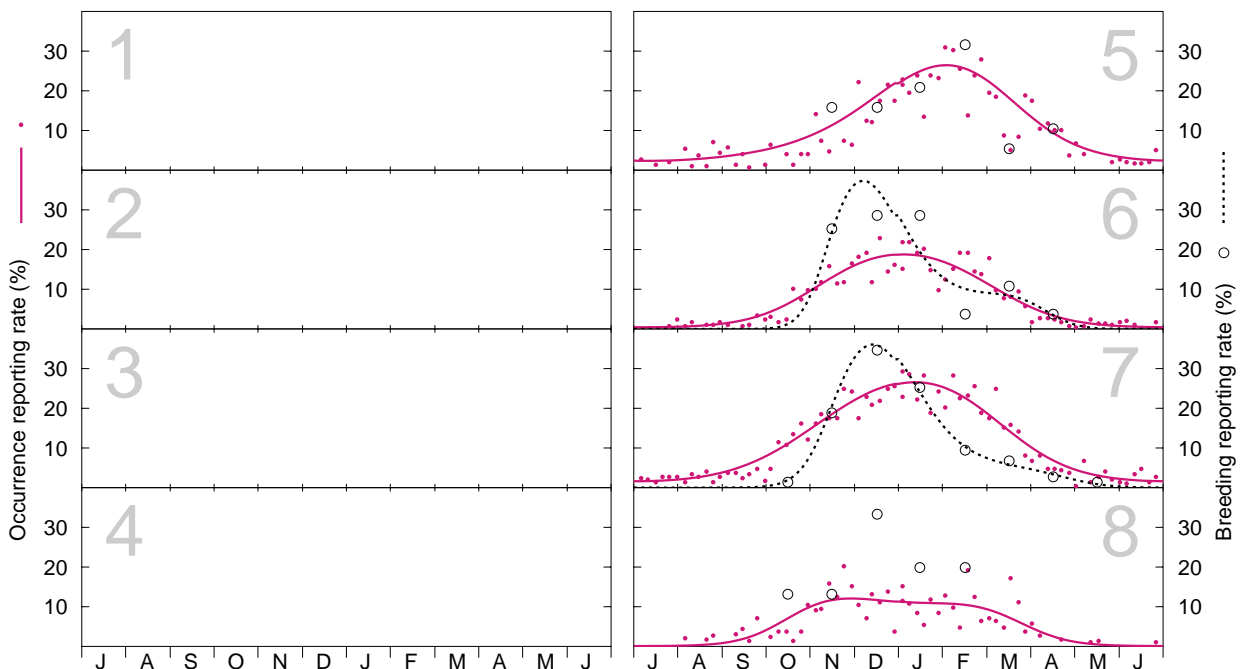
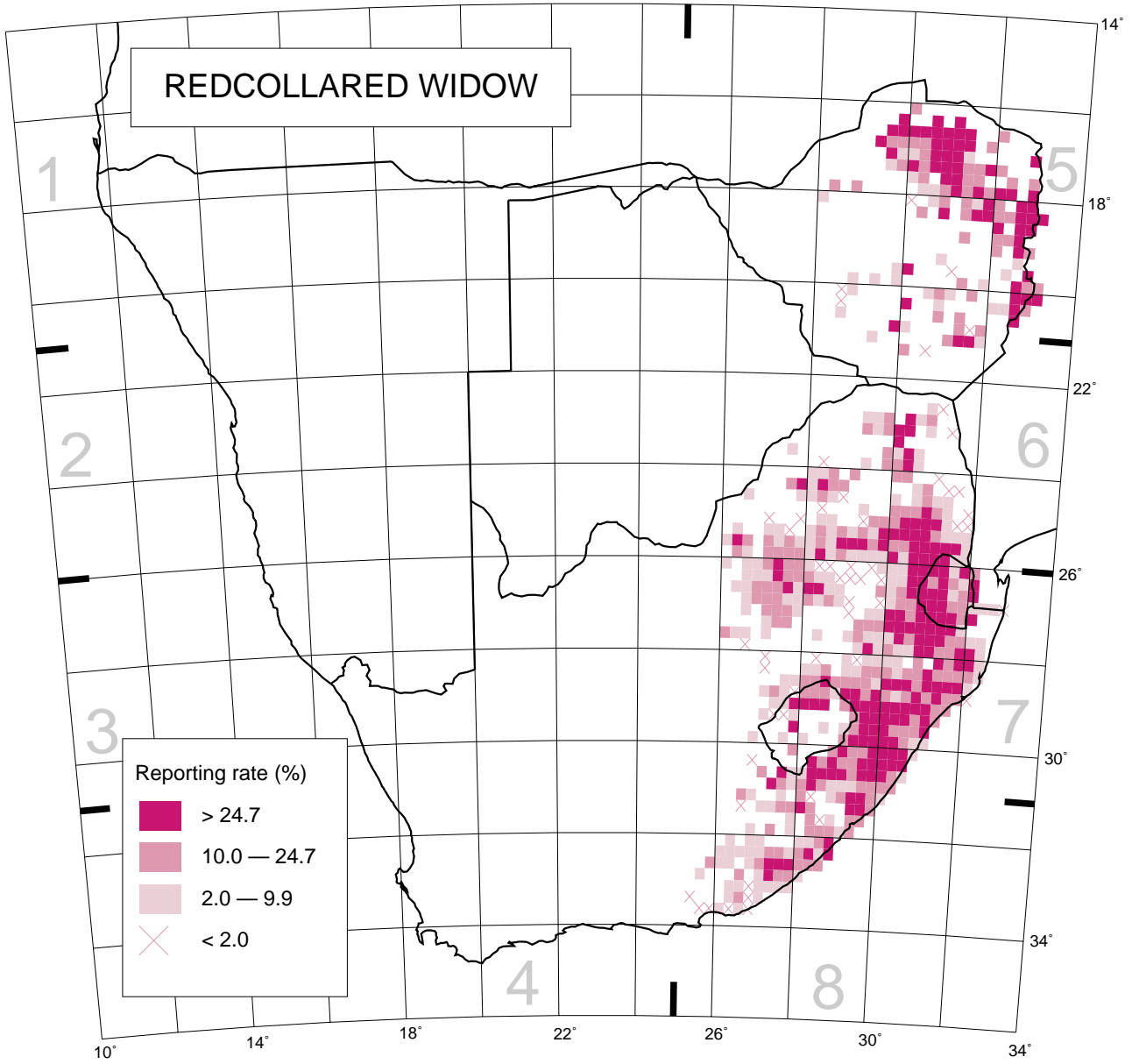
Recorded in 700 grid cells, 15.4%

Total number of records: 11 553

Mean reporting rate for range: 16.7%

Reporting rates for vegetation types





Models of seasonality for Zones. Number of records (top to bottom, left to right):
 Occurrence: 0, 0, 0, 0, 918, 826, 2298, 300; Breeding: 0, 0, 0, 0, 19, 28, 75, 15.