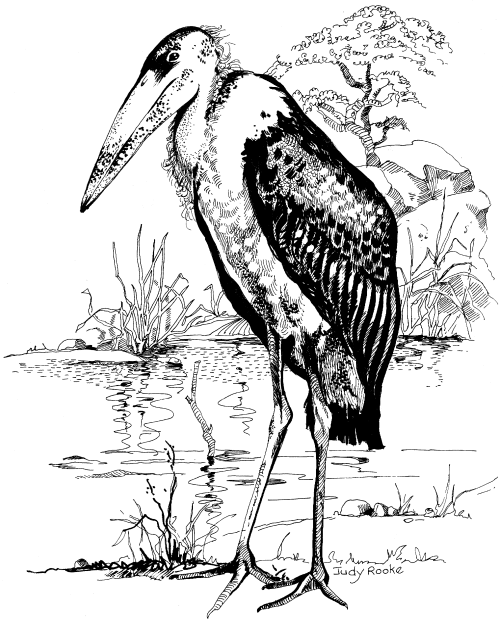


Marabou Stork

Maraboe

Leptoptilos crumeniferus

The Marabou Stork is widespread in sub-Saharan Africa, occurring from Senegal to Ethiopia and Somalia southwards (Hancock *et al.* 1992). It occurs widely in Zimbabwe, particularly along the Zambezi Valley, and in the Caprivi Strip. It is regular in Etosha and less common in central Namibia. In Botswana it is common north of 22°S (Penry 1994). In South Africa its range is principally in the eastern Transvaal lowveld and northern KwaZulu-Natal; in the Kruger National Park adults and immatures aggregate at rubbish dumps near restcamps (Tarboton *et al.* 1987b; Whyte *et al.* 1993). It is scarce elsewhere in South Africa and in Swaziland.

Large numbers breed in the Okavango Delta, mainly in *Ficus verruculosa* thickets, particularly in the Moremi Game Reserve (1923A) (Berry 1968; Steyn 1970; Fraser 1971a; Child 1972; Ginn 1974; Fothergill 1983) and on the flats west of Chief's Island (1922B,C) (Newman 1985; M.H. pers. obs); breeding has also been reported from the Linyanti Swamps (Child 1972; Koen 1988). In Zimbabwe it has been known to breed along the middle Zambezi Valley, usually in Baobabs *Adansonia digitata* (Irwin 1981). There are two Namibian breeding records (Brown & Clinning in press). The statement by Brooke (1984b) that it breeds only opportunistically in the extreme south of its range in Africa seems to apply only to South Africa, where there are indeed only a few confirmed breeding records for the Kruger National Park and Swaziland (Reilly & Wasdell 1965; Whyte *et al.* 1993).

It is usually gregarious, but sometimes solitary, and is unmistakable.

Habitat: It frequents both aquatic and terrestrial habitats, preferring open and semi-arid areas (Brown *et al.* 1982; Hancock *et al.* 1992). It readily associates with humans and is often common near fishing villages, garbage dumps and abattoirs; elsewhere in Africa it sometimes even breeds in villages (Brown *et al.* 1982). It uses natural wetlands, favouring conditions where fish become concentrated in pools when water-levels are dropping. Large numbers can appear at emergences of termites, irruptions of locusts, mice, army worms and Mopane caterpillars, Redbilled Quelea *Quelea quelea* breeding colonies, concentrations of carrion, and at grass-fires. It was most common in four woodland vegetation types, viz. Okavango, Mopane, Arid Woodland and Northern Kalahari.

Movements: In the northwestern Zone 1, a resident breeding population centred on permanent wetlands is supplemented by large numbers of nonbreeding migrants during the wet season (October–February). The species wanders widely in flocks over the arid savannas of northern Botswana and Namibia in search of food concentrations which are dependent on local rains (e.g. Herremans *et al.* 1996); e.g. 3000 birds were observed in the Nata delta (2026A) in February 1981 (Carter 1981). In wet years these visitors range further south in the region and may reach the upper Limpopo River catchment and the southern Kalahari. In Zimbabwe (Zone 5), numbers decline in mid- to late summer, coinciding with an increase in the more arid areas to the southwest. Many of the rains-migrants, however, probably originate from further north in Africa. Birds in the lowveld of South Africa and Swaziland (Zones 6–7) are apparently resident, but it is likely that they wander erratically to areas of temporarily abundant prey.

Breeding: Egglaying is mainly in the dry season, June–September (Irwin 1981; Brown & Clinning in press; N.J. Skinner *in litt*.). Its breeding biology is well documented elsewhere in Africa (Kahl 1966; Pomeroy 1978a,b).

Interspecific relationships: It often feeds in the company of White *C. ciconia*, Abdim's *C. abdimii* and Woolly-necked *C. episcopus* Storks (e.g. Herremans *et al.* 1996).

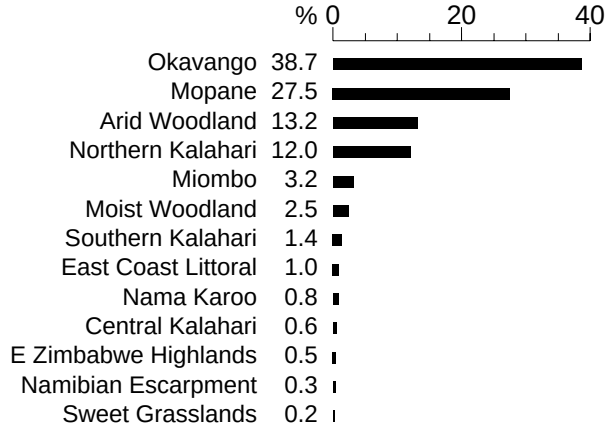
Historical distribution and conservation: Its range has probably not changed significantly in southern Africa (Brooke 1984b). It still breeds at the southern edge of its regular range at Hlane Nature Reserve (2631BB) in Swaziland (Parker 1994), although at another site near Siteli (2631BD) 10 breeding pairs were lost when the area was cleared for crop-farming (Elwell 1970).

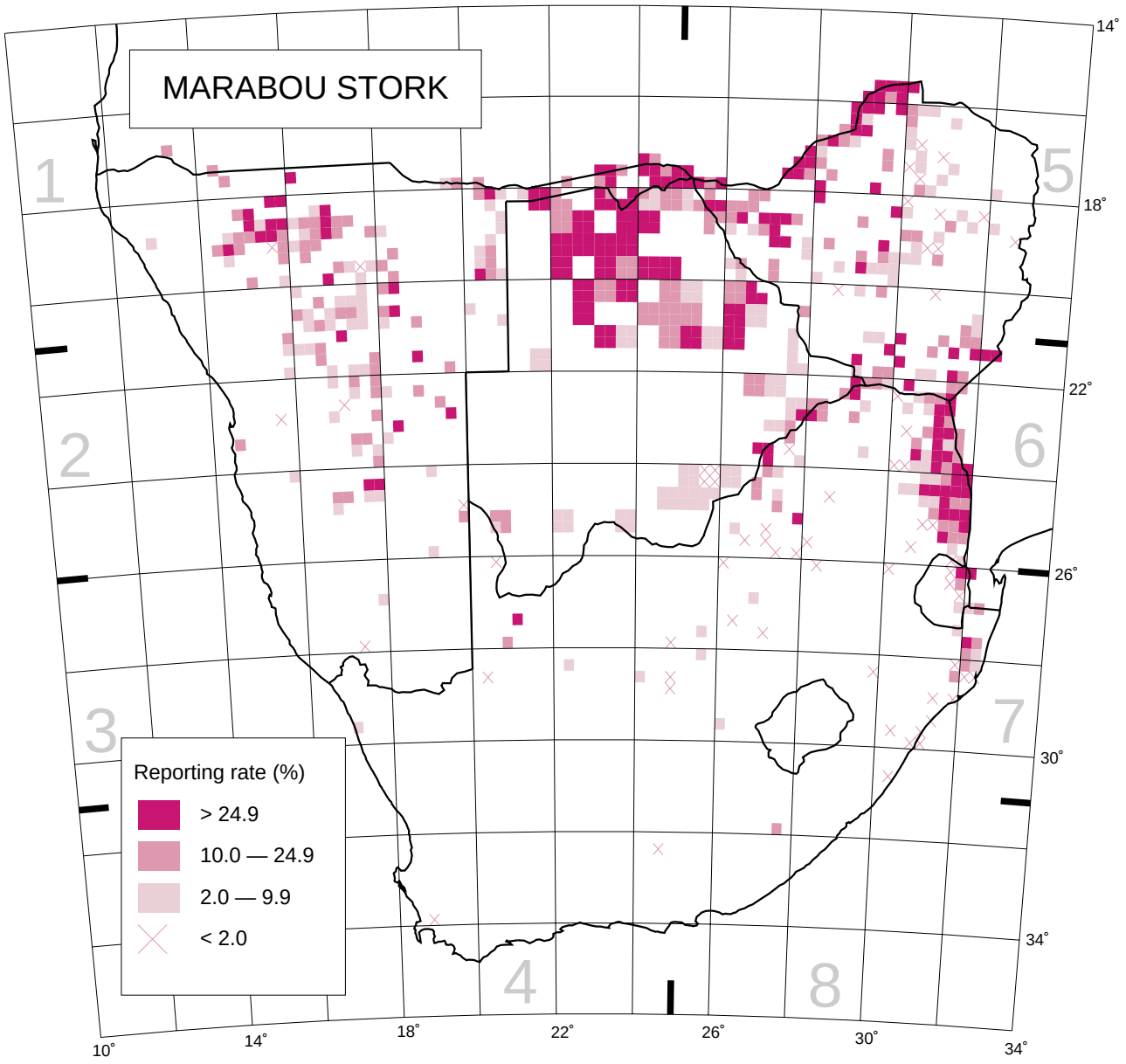
Although classified as 'rare' in South Africa (Brooke 1984b), and mostly confined to large conservation areas, the Marabou Stork is common to abundant elsewhere in its range, and appears to benefit from its association with humans and the proliferation of rubbish dumps (Brown *et al*. 1982; Hancock *et al.* 1992). But as sanitation improves, its population will probably decline.

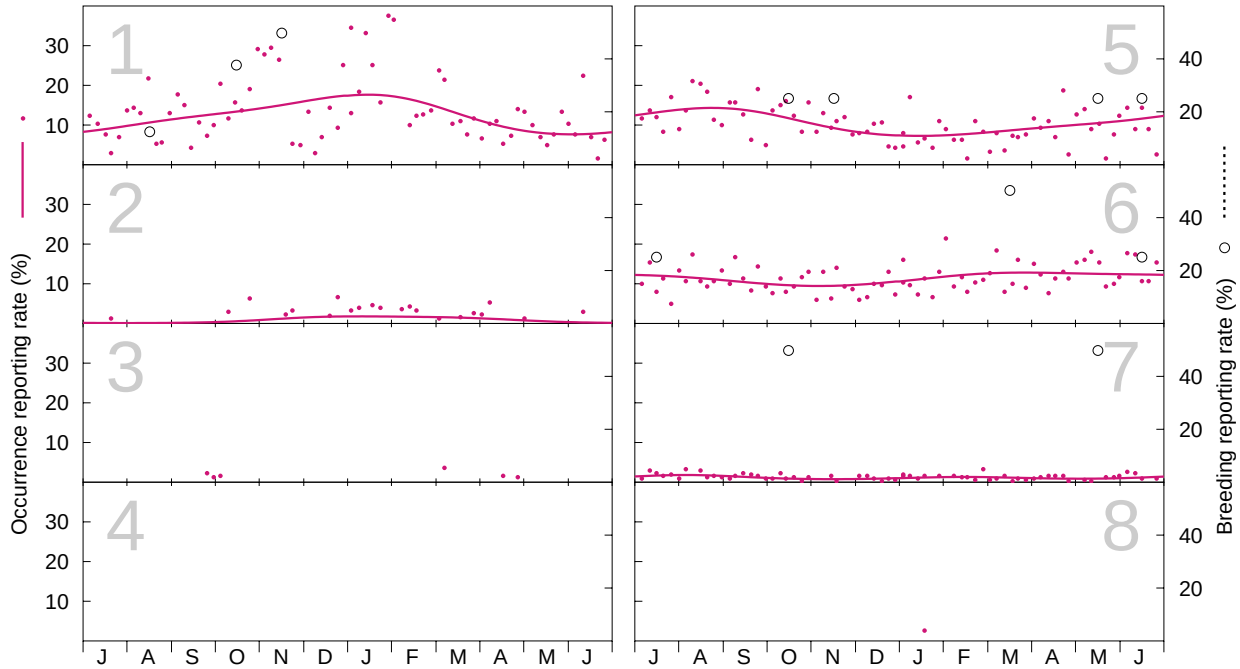
M.D. Anderson and M. Herremans

Recorded in 679 grid cells, 15.0%
Total number of records: 5775
Mean reporting rate for range: 14.8%

Reporting rates for vegetation types







Models of seasonality for Zones. Number of records (top to bottom, left to right):
Occurrence: 386, 31, 8, 0, 929, 1304, 227, 2; Breeding: 8, 0, 0, 0, 4, 4, 2, 0.