

Hottentot Teal

Gevlekte Eend

Anas hottentota

The Hottentot Teal is largely a tropical to subtropical species occurring through much of eastern Africa to Ethiopia. Isolated populations also occur in Madagascar and in northern Nigeria (Maclean 1993b). In southern Africa it has become increasingly widespread in the Transvaal highveld where it is still uncommon and localized; the Witwatersrand population probably numbers no more than 100 birds (Tarboton *et al.* 1987b). It is an uncommon visitor to Swaziland (Parker 1994). It is rare in the southwestern Cape Province (Hockey *et al.* 1989) and it occurs only sparsely in the rest of the Cape Province. It is thinly distributed in KwaZulu-Natal (Cyrus & Robson 1980) and even more so in the Free State, though some resident populations occur around Memel (2729DA) and the goldfields (2726D) (Earlé & Grobler 1987). It becomes increasingly regular in Mozambique, mainly along the littoral (Clancey 1971a), and in parts of Zimbabwe but not in the Zambezi Valley (Irwin 1981). In Botswana and the Caprivi it is most abundant in the Okavango–Chobe system in flocks of up to 50 birds (Smithers 1964); elsewhere in Namibia it is a scarce and irregular straggler, while in Botswana it is regular in the Makgadikgadi pans in wet years (Penry 1994).

Confusion with the Redbilled Teal *A. erythrorhynchos* is possible because of their black caps, but the blue bill, green speculum and generally more yellowish body plumage of the former are good field characters. Because of its rather retiring habits, it may often be overlooked as it lurks at the edge of emergent water plants.

Habitat: The Hottentot Teal favours permanent and semi-permanent quiet inland waters with emergent vegetation, such as floodplains, vleis, marshes and sewage ponds (Maclean 1993b). There appears to be a strong association with bulrushes *Typha* sp., except in the Okavango and Makgadikgadi where no *Typha* occurs.

Movements: It is usually considered to be sedentary, with some local movements (Maclean 1993b). Clark (1969) indicated that, at least on the Witwatersrand, numbers do not fluctuate significantly. However, considerable movements occur in Zimbabwe from as far afield as Lake Ngami (2022B) (Irwin 1981); it is mainly a dry-season visitor to the Zimbabwean plateau with wet-season occurrence only

in drought years (A.J. Tree pers. comm.). The model for Zone 1 (Okavango and associated wetlands) clearly suggests a summer influx, but the patterns for the other Zones does not suggest regular migration.

Breeding: Egg-laying occurs throughout the year, but mainly April–May in Zimbabwe, December–April in the Transvaal, and May–June in KwaZulu-Natal (Cyrus & Robson 1980; Irwin 1981; Tarboton *et al.* 1987b). The atlas data are few but confirm breeding throughout the year (at least in Zone 7), with a poorly defined winter peak.

Interspecific relationships: The Hottentot Teal may gain some advantage from its association with the larger Redbilled Teal with which it is often seen (Smithers 1964; Irwin 1981), but the nature of this advantage is not apparent.

Historical distribution and conservation: The distribution has probably changed little since Stark & Sclater (1906) recorded the Hottentot

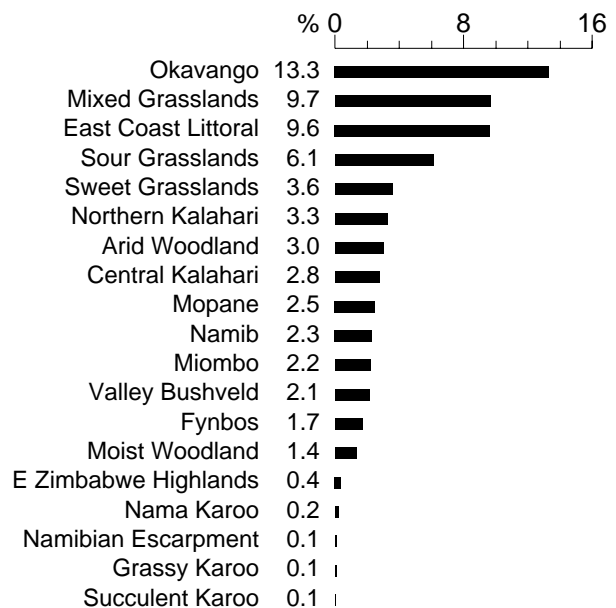
Teal from throughout its present southern African range, except for Zimbabwe where it is widely but sparsely distributed today. It seems, however, to have spread considerably in the Transvaal highveld, probably as a result of the provision of suitable quiet waters with *Phragmites* reedbeds, *Typha* and other emergent vegetation, especially on the Witwatersrand (Clark 1969). Numbers might have increased in other parts of its range too, since Stark & Sclater (1906) stated that it was ‘everywhere a scarce bird’.

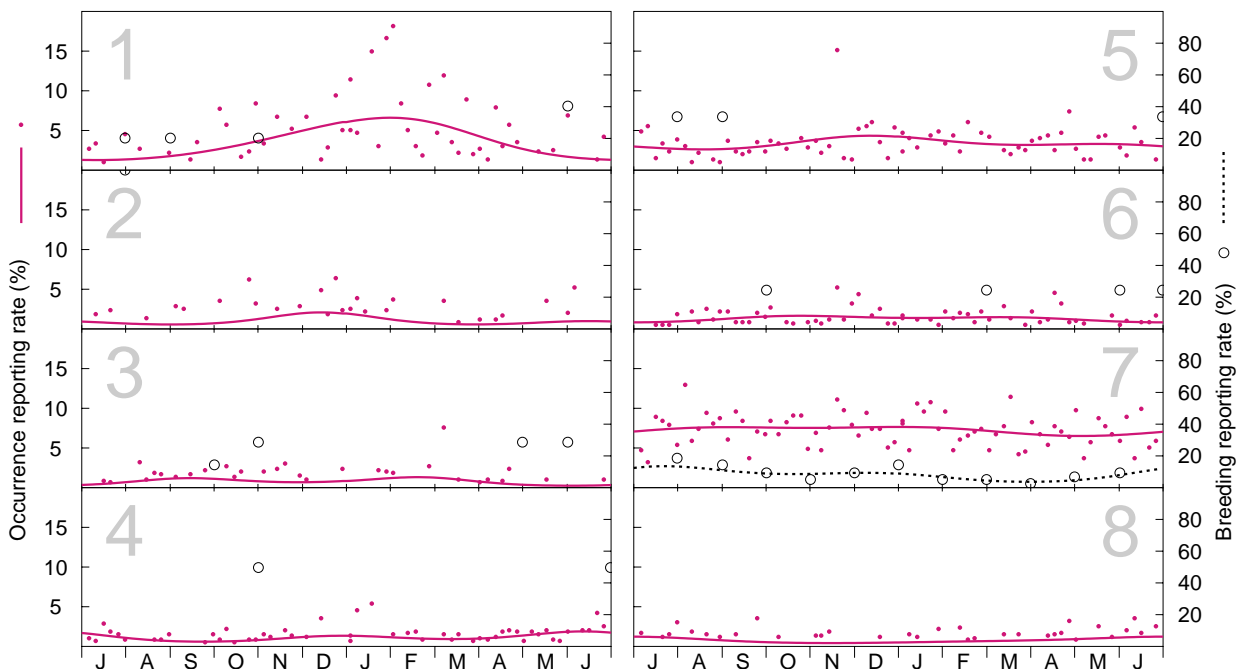
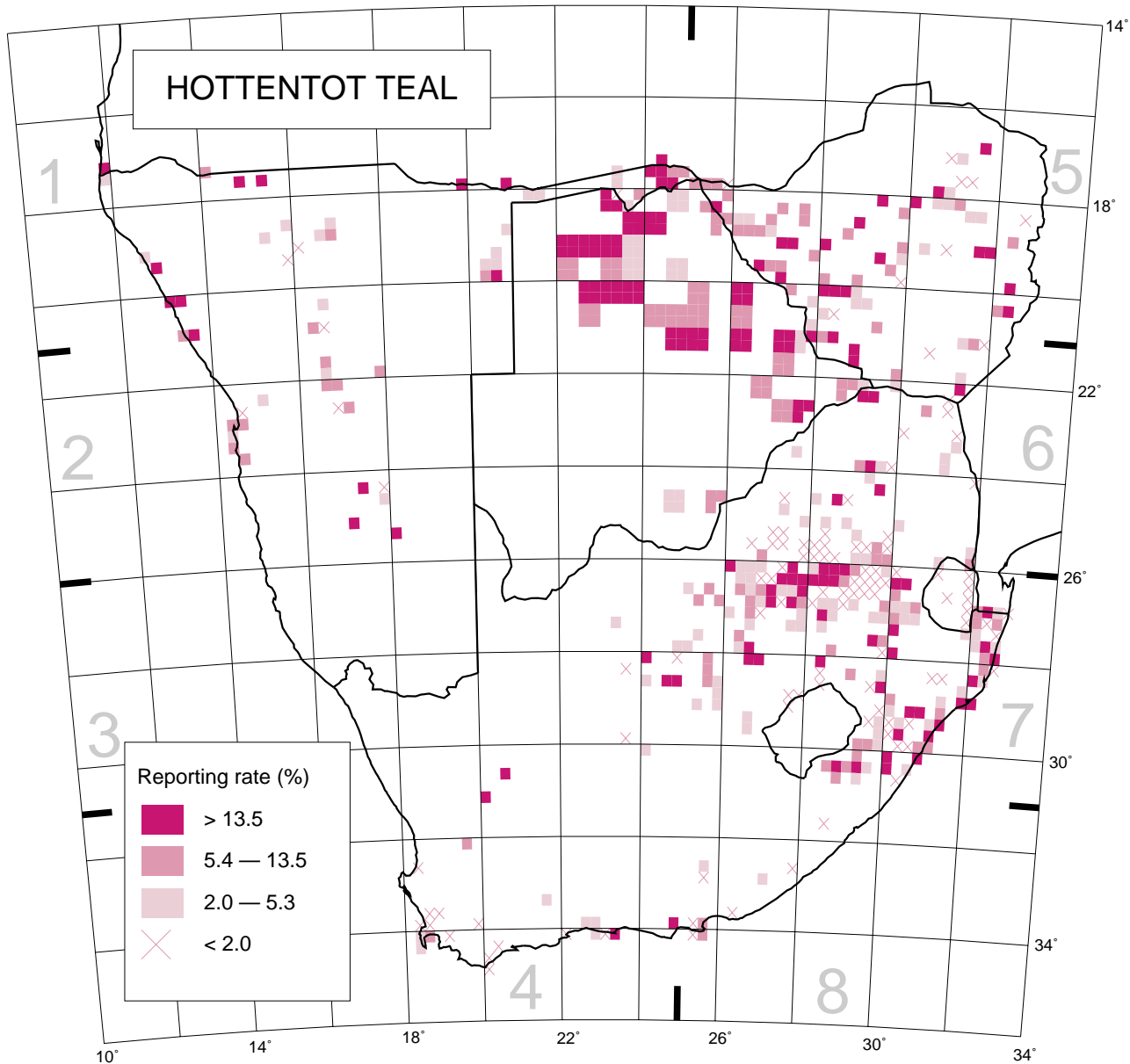
Because of its ability to adapt to artificial waterbodies, the Hottentot Teal is not threatened and may be increasing in numbers in southern Africa.

G.L. Maclean

Recorded in 553 grid cells, 12.2%
Total number of records: 5664
Mean reporting rate for range: 9.8%

Reporting rates for vegetation types





Models of seasonality for Zones. Number of records (top to bottom, left to right):
 Occurrence: 108, 34, 42, 99, 291, 148, 1419, 41; Breeding: 5, 1, 7, 2, 3, 4, 42, 0.