

## Cape Shoveller

### Kaapse Slopeend

*Anas smithii*

The Cape Shoveller is fairly widespread in southern Africa, but is absent from the Kalahari sandveld, the driest parts of Namibia, the Lesotho massif, the northern Transvaal and lowveld, and much of Zimbabwe, including the Zambezi Valley and most of Mozambique. Relatively high reporting rates were obtained in the southwestern Cape Province and the South African highveld. It is endemic to southern Africa, extending only slightly into southern Angola (Maclean 1993b). It is most abundant in the southwestern Cape Province, where it is a common resident and partial migrant with a major concentration (up to 1500 birds) at the Strandfontein Sewage Works (3418BA) (Hockey *et al.* 1989), and on the Free State and Transvaal highveld, with up to 10 000 birds (Earlé & Grobler 1987; Tarboton *et al.* 1987b). Larger numbers occur on the highveld after good rains. It is patchy in KwaZulu-Natal and irregular in Swaziland (Cyrus & Robson 1980; Parker 1994). It is irregular and scarce in Zimbabwe, usually occurring after rain; but breeding records have accumulated during the 1980s and 1990s (e.g. Tree 1994c, 1995c). It is common in the Makgadikgadi system of northeastern Botswana under favourable conditions (Smithers 1964; Penry 1994), but it is generally absent from the Okavango, except along the western fringe where muddy backwaters occur (Brewster 1991).

The species is easily distinguished by its large black bill and, in flight, the distinctive light greyish blue forewing combined with a green speculum. The legs and feet are bright orange.

**Habitat:** In the southwestern Cape Province it is concentrated at shallow, lowland, plankton-filled fresh waters (Hockey *et al.* 1989). In the Transvaal it favours shallow pans, especially with saline waters, and dams in open grassland (Tarboton *et al.* 1987b). It avoids rivers, streams and unproductive acid waters, such as occur in fynbos habitats of the southwestern Cape Province (Siegfried 1965c). It may also be found on tidal estuaries and saline lagoons, and is common on highly alkaline and brackish waters (Siegfried 1965c).

**Movements:** Movements occur between the southwestern Cape Province and the Transvaal and northern Namibia (Hockey *et al.* 1989), but it is largely resident. The models appear to confirm these statements.

**Breeding:** In the Transvaal (Zone 6) it breeds throughout the year with a small spring peak in July–September (Siegfried 1965c; Tarboton *et al.* 1987b). Breeding in the southwestern Cape Province (Zone 4) is more seasonal with a marked August–December peak and only a few records in other months (Siegfried 1965c).

**Interspecific relationships:** The Cape Shoveller's liking for saline pans brings it into contact with the Cape Teal *A. capensis* but the nature of any potential interaction is not documented. Generally the Cape Shoveller keeps to itself and seldom forms mixed flocks with other species (Maclean & Darroll 1986).

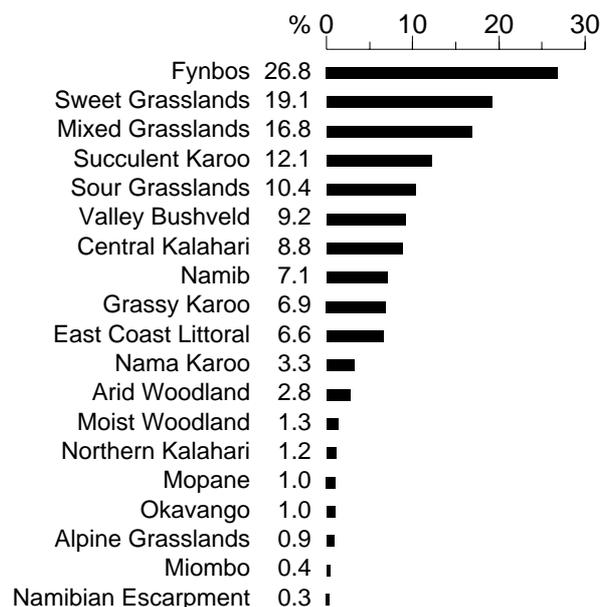
**Historical distribution and conservation:** Siegfried (1965c) indicated that the Cape Shoveller is most abundant within the 18°C isotherm and extremely uncommon elsewhere, yet the atlas data show its current distribution to include Namibia, Botswana and Zimbabwe, so it appears to have extended its range in the past 30 years.

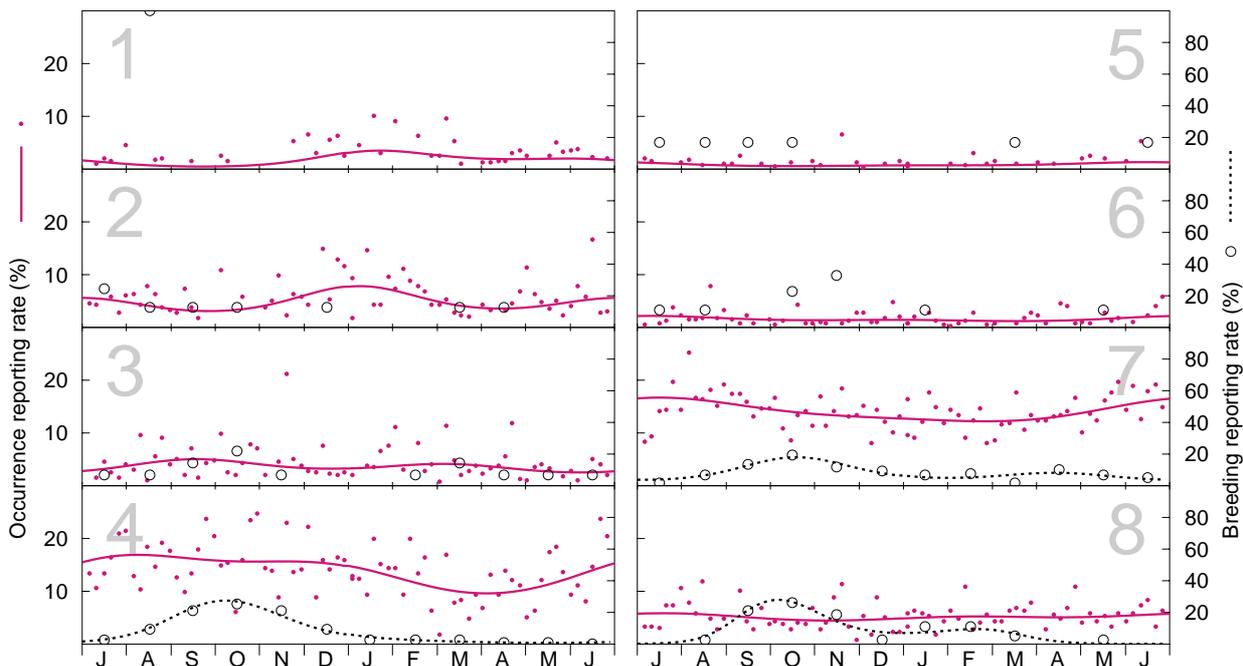
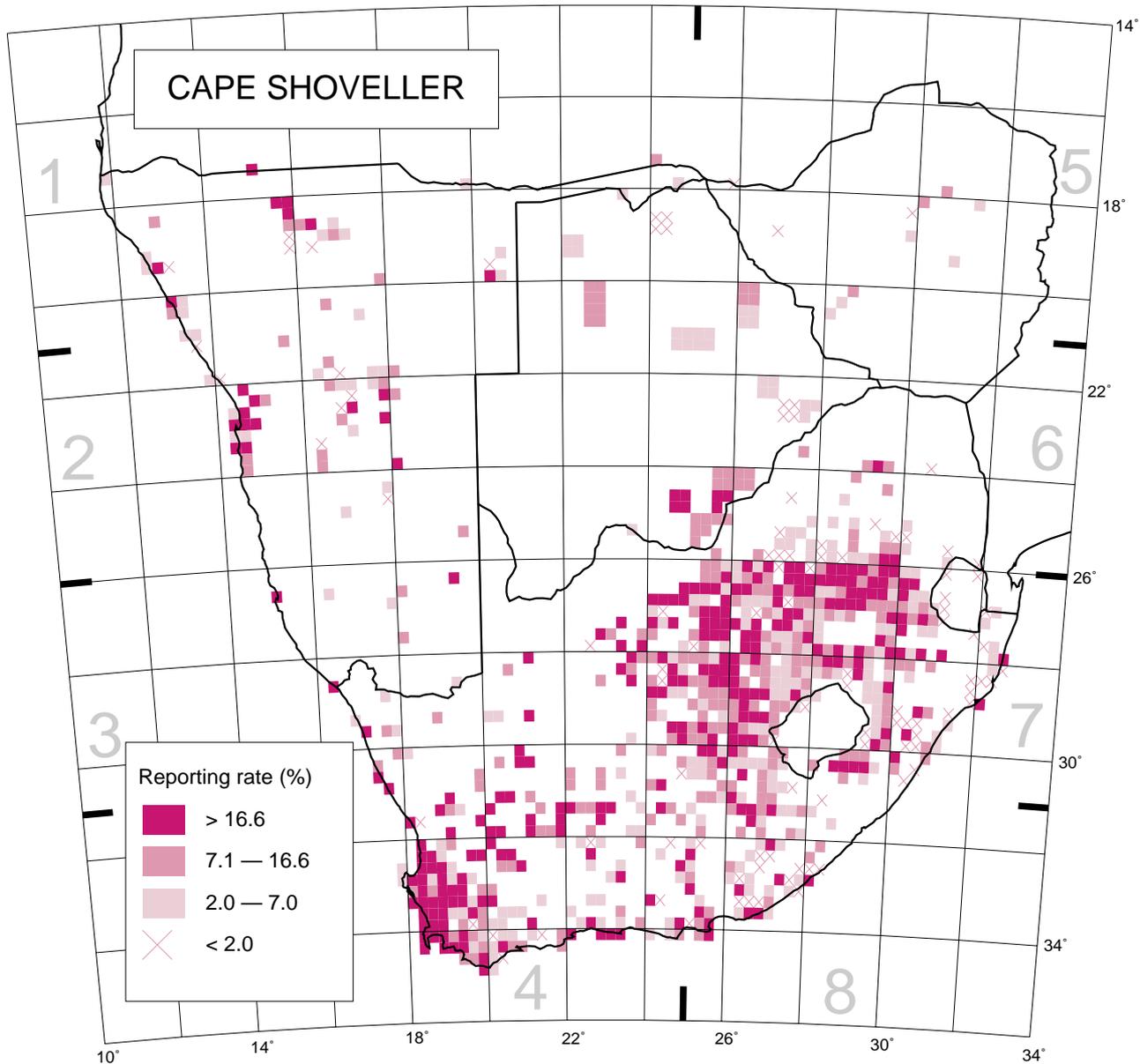
Because of its liking for farm dams, the Cape Shoveller is not of conservation concern and it has increased in numbers. It is not popular as a gamebird, nor is it favoured by aviculturists (Maclean & Darroll 1986).

G.L. Maclean

Recorded in 886 grid cells, 19.5%  
Total number of records: 14 663  
Mean reporting rate for range: 17.3%

#### Reporting rates for vegetation types





Models of seasonality for Zones. Number of records (top to bottom, left to right):  
 Occurrence: 56, 175, 203, 1205, 73, 177, 2749, 281; Breeding: 2, 8, 14, 475, 6, 9, 264, 38.