

Maccoa Duck

Bloubekeend

Oxyura maccoa

The Maccoa Duck has two disjunct populations, one in southern Africa, the other in East Africa from Tanzania to Ethiopia. It is generally sparsely distributed in southern Africa, as shown by its overall low reporting rates, and it tends to avoid the dry regions and the Lesotho highlands. It is locally fairly common in the southwestern Cape Province in some years, but scarce in others. Up to 500 birds gathered at the Strandfontein Sewage Works (3418BA) in the early 1980s (Hockey *et al.* 1989). Earlé & Grobler (1987) showed that it is scarce in the Free State, which Geldenhuys (1976a) ascribed to a lack of suitable habitat but also mentioned its 'stronghold' as the pans of the goldfields. In KwaZulu-Natal it is confined to the upland parts (Cyrus & Robson 1980), where it is uncommon. The Transvaal populations are similarly scarce but concentrations of up to 200 birds may occur on the highveld and it is a vagrant elsewhere in that province (Tarboton *et al.* 1987b). It is also mainly a highveld species in Zimbabwe and nowhere abundant (Irwin 1981). In Botswana it is localized and mainly confined to the southeast where concentrations of 440 birds have been recorded at the Phakalane Sewage Works near Gaborone (2425DB) (Bishop 1994a). It is absent from the oligotrophic waters of the Okavango system and Caprivi. In Namibia it is thinly scattered and localized.

The Maccoa Duck is easily overlooked because of its habit of skulking in emergent vegetation. It is usually quite easy to identify, however, although both the males and the females may be confused with those of the Southern Pochard *Netta erythrophthalma*.

Habitat: It prefers deep, highly nutritious inland waters with emergent vegetation. Sewage ponds and saline pans are also favoured.

Movements: Fluctuating numbers indicate considerable movements, but the nature of these movements is poorly known. Regular movements may occur from the Witwatersrand in winter (Clark 1974b), probably to the pans of the Free State goldfields (Tarboton *et al.* 1987b), but most movements seem to be nomadic or dispersive (Clark 1964). It is an erratic visitor in Zimbabwe (A.J. Tree pers. comm.). The models indicate an influx into the southwestern Cape Province during the spring and early summer, the period when water-levels are highest. There is a similar increase in reporting rates in the northwest (Zone 2) also during the spring and summer. Para-

doxically the relatively few records from Zone 1, just to the north, seem concentrated during the late summer, perhaps because ephemeral wetlands are exploited in this region, compared with permanent wetlands, e.g. dams and sewage works at Windhoek (2217CA), Swakopmund (2214DA) and Walvis Bay (2214DC) in Zone 2. In the eastern Zones 5–8, there is little evidence for substantial fluctuations in reporting rates, although it appears to occur more commonly July–December in the eastern Cape Province (Tree 1987b).

Breeding: Egg-laying occurs August–January (peak October–November) in the southwestern Cape Province, throughout the year in the Transvaal but mostly September–April and apparently at any time in Zimbabwe (Winterbottom 1968a; Irwin 1981; Tarboton *et al.* 1987b). A winter trough and spring/summer peak in breeding is broadly apparent from the models, but there is a marked absence of

synchrony in breeding between the various Zones.

Interspecific relationships: It may roost in loose rafts with Southern Pochard and Blacknecked Grebe *Podiceps nigricollis* (Hockey *et al.* 1989).

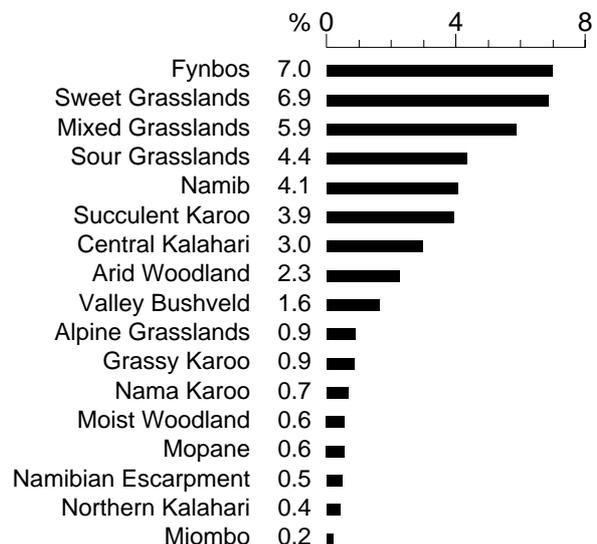
Historical distribution and conservation: The Maccoa Duck has always been rare in South Africa, but may have spread in recent years since Stark & Sclater (1906) wrote that 'it has not yet been met with in Natal, Rhodesia [Zimbabwe] or German South-west Africa [Namibia]'; it occurs in all three of these territories today. Smithers (1964) did not record it from Botswana, but expected it to occur. The atlas map shows that it has had relatively high reporting rates from southeastern Botswana, and Bishop (1994a) commented on the recent increase in that region.

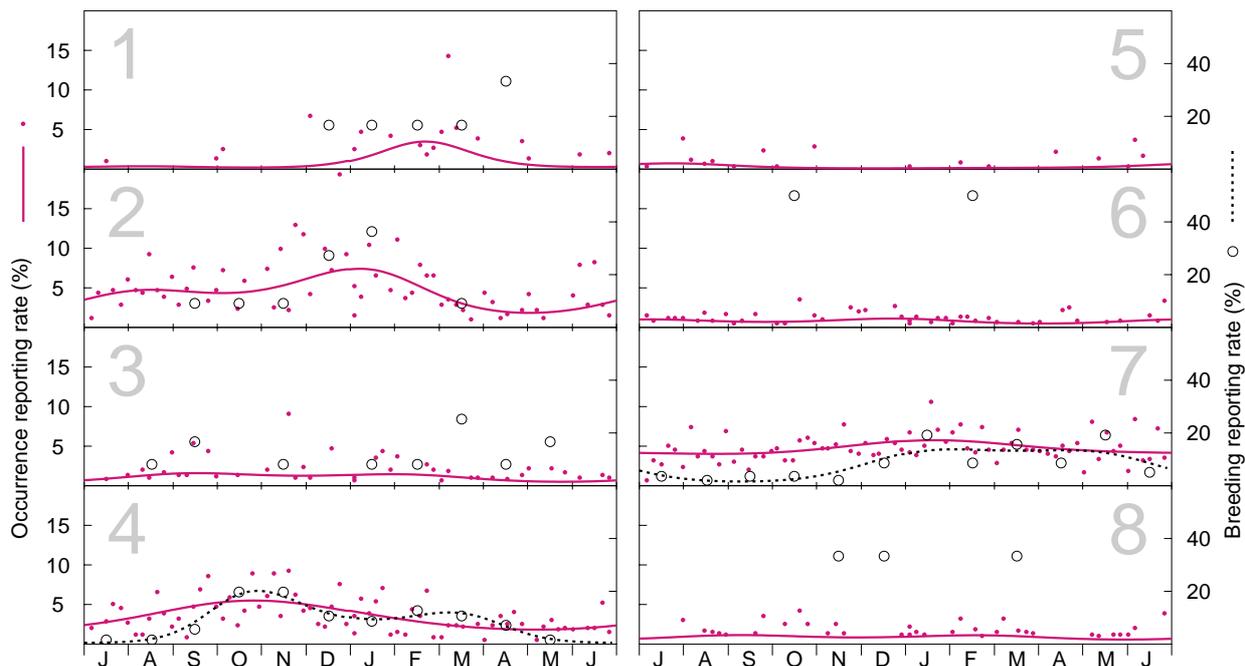
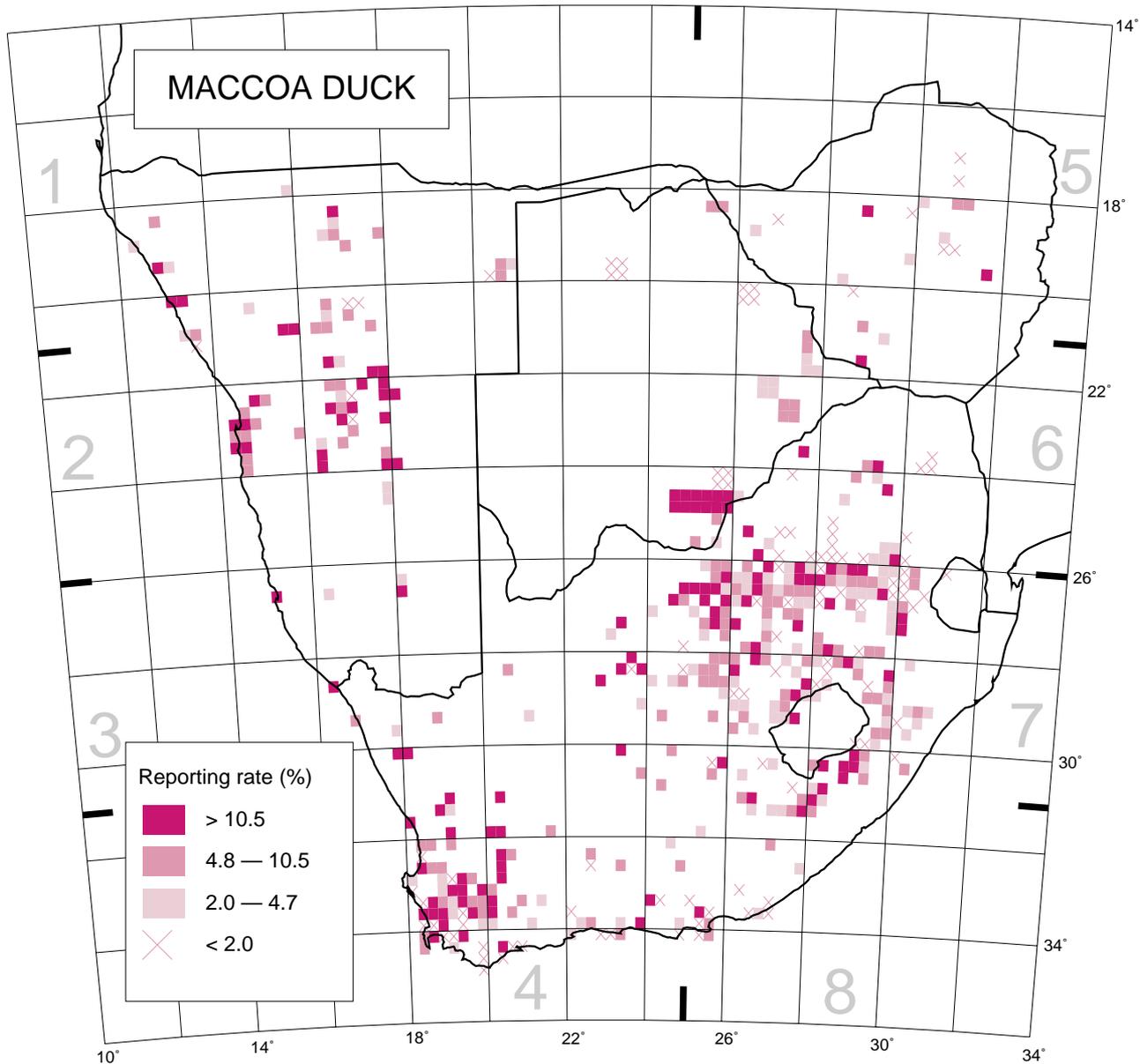
No conservation measures are proposed specifically for the Maccoa Duck, apart from the need to conserve southern Africa's wetlands in general.

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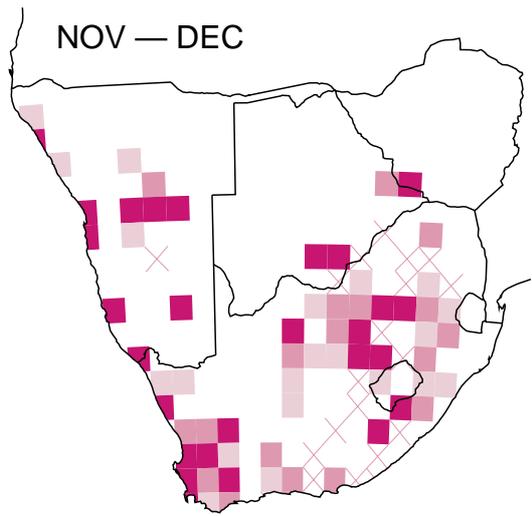
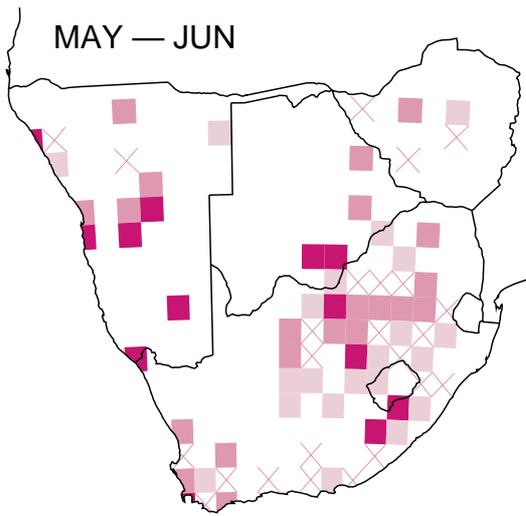
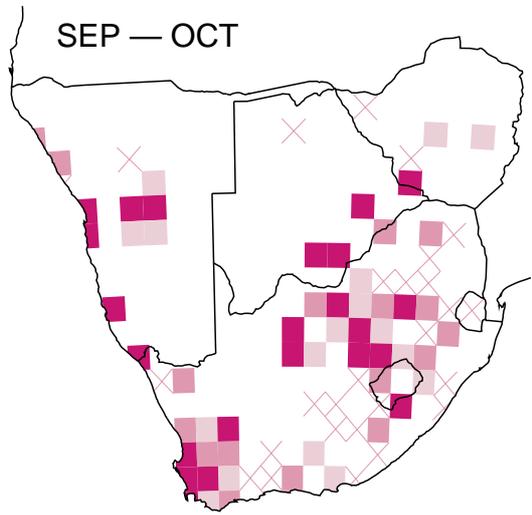
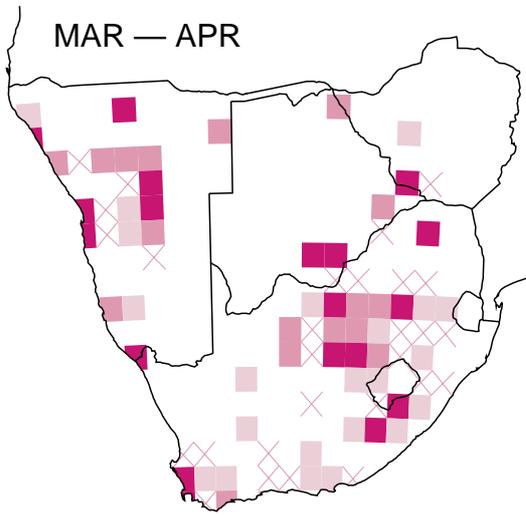
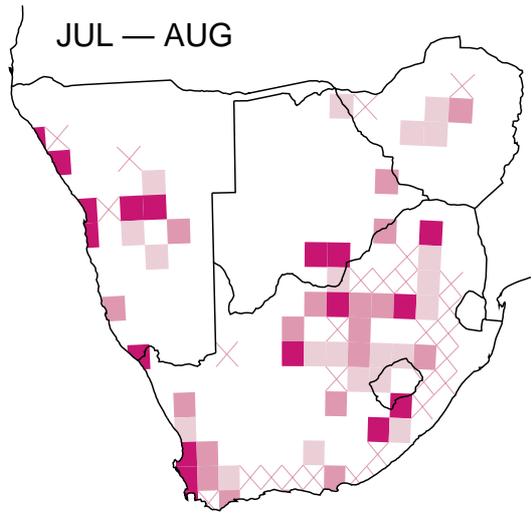
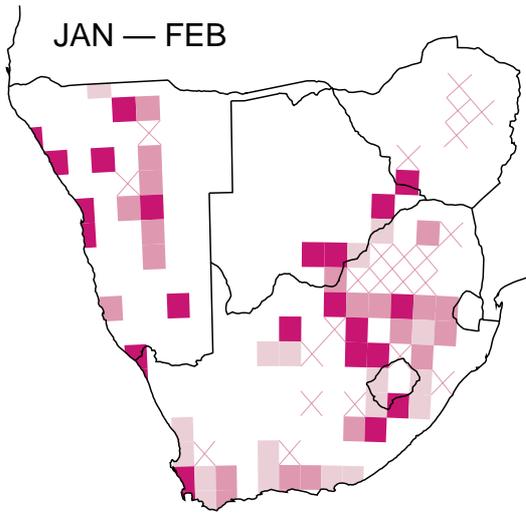
Recorded in 504 grid cells, 11.1%
Total number of records: 4863
Mean reporting rate for range: 8.4%

Reporting rates for vegetation types





MACCOA DUCK



Seasonal distribution maps; one-degree grid.