



Rednecked Francolin

Rooikeelfisant

Fracolinus afer

The Rednecked Francolin has a broad band of distribution across subequatorial Africa, from Angola (with a minor extension into far-northern Namibia) and Zaire, across to Tanzania and Kenya, and extending southwards through Mozambique, eastern Zimbabwe, the eastern Transvaal, KwaZulu-Natal midlands and the eastern and southern Cape Province. It is generally confined to the relatively high-rainfall eastern parts of southern Africa, but the distribution is fragmented with the southern and south-eastern Cape Province apparently constituting its stronghold within the region.

It is found in pairs or small family groups. Its presence is usually revealed by its harsh calls. It may have been overlooked in some areas because of its similarity, especially vocally, to Swainson's Francolin *F. swainsonii*.

Habitat: It is usually confined to dense cover and moist habitats, most frequently occurring on the edges of evergreen forests, in riparian thickets or marsh edges. In places it feeds in nearby cultivated land where this species and Swainson's Francolin may be seen together in KwaZulu-

Natal, the Transvaal and Zimbabwe. The vegetation analysis shows a strong association with Afromontane Forest, one of the dominant habitat types within the Eastern Zimbabwe Highlands, and with Valley Bushveld.

Movements: Variation in conspicuousness, possibly related to calling frequency, is presumably responsible for fluctuations in reporting rate, as it is not likely to undertake seasonal movements.

Breeding: Egg-laying in Zimbabwe occurs in the summer months, November–April (Brooke 1971f; Irwin 1981; Hartley & Mundy 1992) and young have been recorded in the Transvaal in February (Tarboton *et al.* 1987b). The atlas data support a late-summer/early-winter breeding season in Zimbabwe (Zone 5), and suggest earlier breeding further south (Zones 4, 7 and 8).

Interspecific relationships: Rednecked and Swainson's Francolins are each other's closest relatives (Crowe *et al.* 1992), and hybridization is not uncommon (Irwin 1971). Although the Rednecked Francolin tends to occur in regions of higher rainfall than Swainson's Francolin, they often occur in partial sympatry.

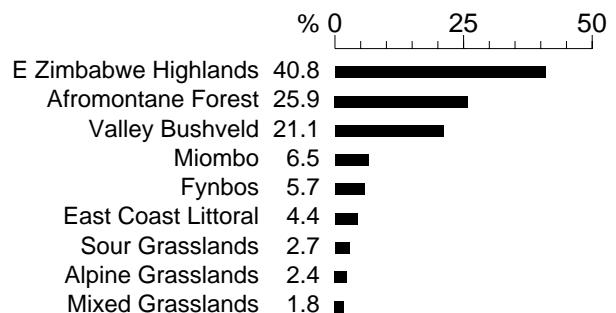
Historical distribution and conservation: Although there is no quantitative evidence of any change in distribution, the atlas data reflect gaps and areas of low reporting rates where it may have suffered local extinctions. Judging by the relatively high reporting rates both to the north and the south, the population on the Transvaal escarpment may be in decline. It has certainly decreased in the southwestern Cape Province (Hockey *et al.* 1989), where it was previously known from Wellington (3319CA) and Swellendam (3420AB), although it still persists at Grootvadersbosch Nature Reserve (3320DC), just east of Swellendam (C.J. Martens pers. comm.).

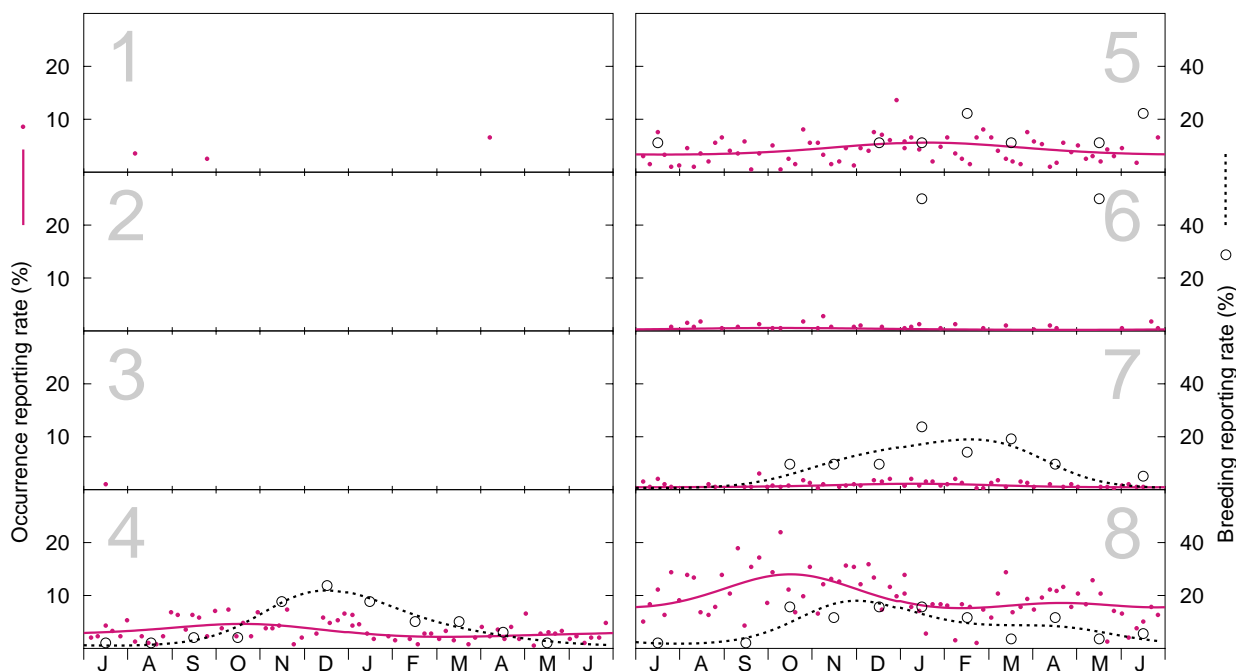
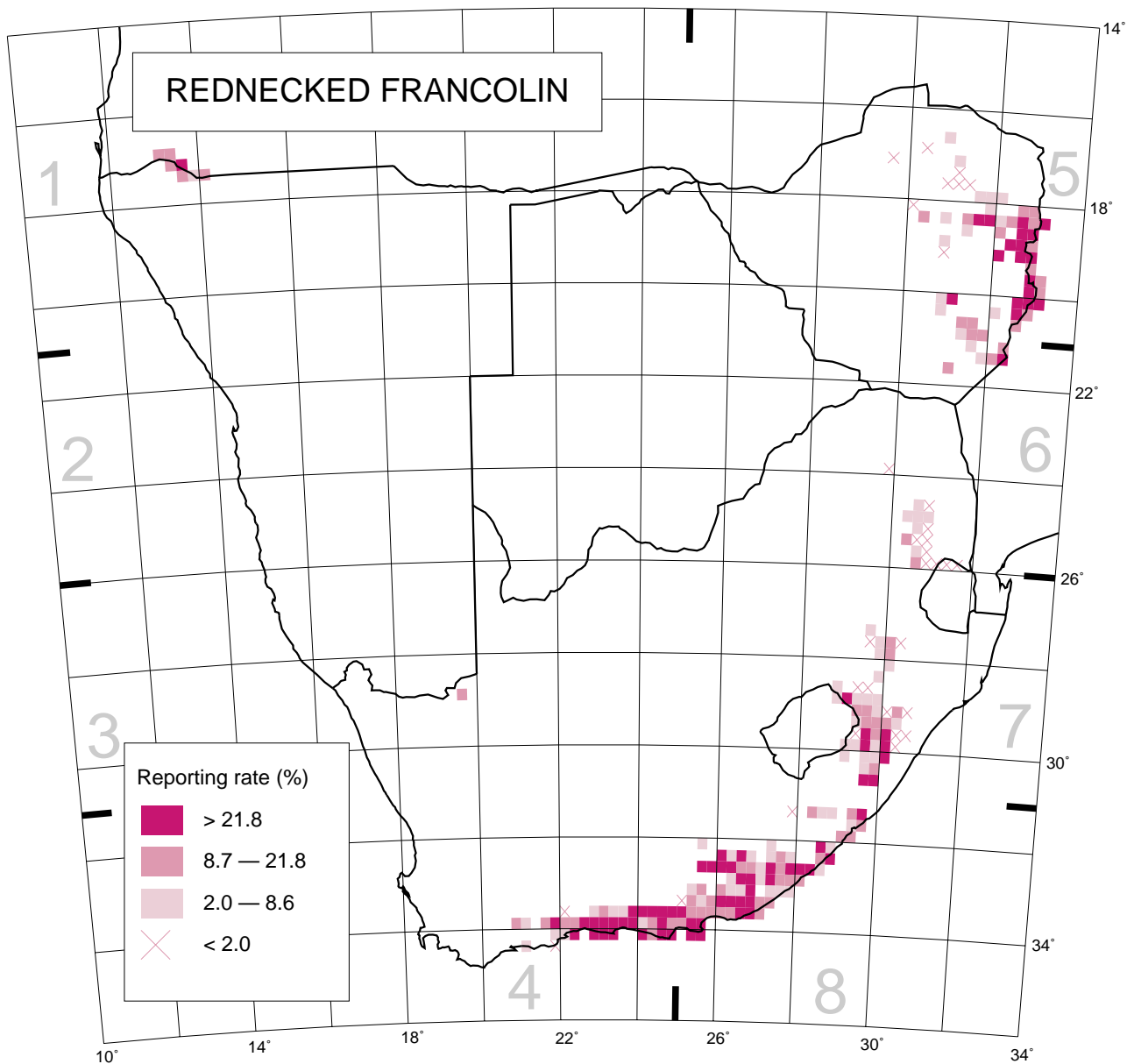
The greatest influence on the well-being of the Rednecked Francolin is modification and fragmentation of habitat, particularly the degradation and removal of forest-edge ecotones by burning, cultivation and afforestation with alien trees.

R.M. Little

Recorded in 250 grid cells, 5.5%
Total number of records: 4677
Mean reporting rate for range: 19.0%

Reporting rates for vegetation types





Models of seasonality for Zones. Number of records (top to bottom, left to right):
 Occurrence: 7, 0, 1, 278, 371, 40, 138, 535; Breeding: 0, 0, 0, 50, 18, 2, 21, 51.