

## Greenshank

### Groenpootruiter

*Tringa nebularia*

The Greenshank breeds in the taiga zone between 55–67°N from Scotland and Scandinavia in the west to the Kamchatka Peninsula in the east. In central Siberia, it is the common and typical wader on the taiga, at densities of up to 3–5 birds/km<sup>2</sup>. Up to one million birds migrate to Africa south of the Sahara, 10 000–100 000 to India, and 40 000 to southeast Asia and Australasia (Hayman *et al.* 1986; Rogacheva 1992; Rose & Scott 1994).

Of the four common *Tringa* species occurring in southern Africa, the Greenshank is the most widespread. The high reporting rates across the Karoo are particularly striking. The highest reporting rates were in the Okavango Delta and adjoining Caprivi Strip. The discontinuity at 26°S in the Transvaal is the northern limit of the panveld (Allan *et al.* 1995c).

The largest concentrations in southern Africa are at Langebaan Lagoon (3318AA) and the Berg River estuary (3218CC), with over 400 birds regularly recorded at each (Underhill 1987a; Velasquez *et al.* 1991). Aggregations at inland wetlands seldom exceed 40 birds (Tree 1979b).

In southern Africa it may be confused with the less abundant Marsh Sandpiper *T. stagnatilis* (see text for latter species). The 'tjuu-tjuu-tjuu' call is slower than that of the Marsh Sandpiper, and is usually repeated three times.

**Habitat:** In southern Africa, a wide variety of aquatic habitats is utilized. It occurs both at coastal sites (exposed rocky shores, wave-cut platforms, rock pools, sandy and muddy estuaries, mangrove swamps) and at inland wetlands regardless of their size, provided they have shallow margins, e.g. reservoirs, farm dams, sewage works, saltworks, vleis, pans and rivers. At inland habitats it tends to prefer receding waterlines, promoting a degree of nomadism (Tree 1979b, 1987j). A cluster analysis of sections of the coastline of central Namibia, and between the Olifants River estuary (3118CA) and the Kei River (3228CB), revealed that the section of rocky shore Cape Hangklip–Betty's Bay (3418BD) was particularly favourable for Greenshanks, but the explanation for this is not known (Underhill 1981).

**Movements:** The models show that autumn departure is the earliest amongst waders, with reporting rates decreasing from

February. In all Zones it starts returning from late July, the middle of the dry season. It breeds early and leaves its breeding areas in the Palearctic in the height of the boreal summer. Many spend the austral winter in the region; for example, at Langebaan Lagoon the median count in winter is 25% of the summer population (Summers *et al.* 1995).

Although only 537 have been ringed in southern Africa, seven have been recovered in the northern hemisphere, four within the breeding grounds, all close to the White Sea in northwestern Russia (Tree 1987j, 1993). The other movements are from Port Alfred (3326DB) to Ain Ris (28°N 29°E), an oasis 400 km southwest of Cairo, from Port Alfred to Cyprus (33°N 35°E) on 10 May, and from Harare (1731CC) to Cuissy (48°N 2°E), France, on 8 August (Tree 1987j; SAFRING). An analysis of these and an assemblage of 23 other recoveries between Europe, Africa and India showed Greenshanks ringed as far apart as Mali, Morocco, Tunisia, Zaire and India, recovered in Finland and northwestern Russia within a radius of 500 km of the four birds from southern Africa (Tree 1987j). In spite of the westerly preponderance of the recoveries, a large proportion of the Siberian population must migrate to Africa because relatively few migrate to southern and south-eastern Asia and Australasia. While its migratory strategies remain unclear, there are numerous examples of birds returning to the same localities in subsequent nonbreeding seasons.

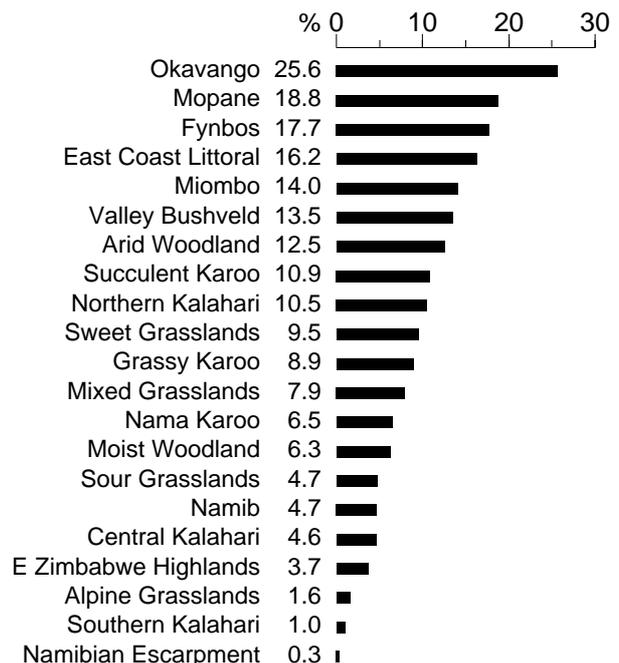
**Interspecific relationships:** It usually roosts in single-species flocks, but will mix with Marsh Sandpipers *T. stagnatilis*, Wood Sandpipers *T. glareola*, Whimbrels *Numenius phaeopus* and Ruffs *Philomachus pugnax* (Tree 1979b).

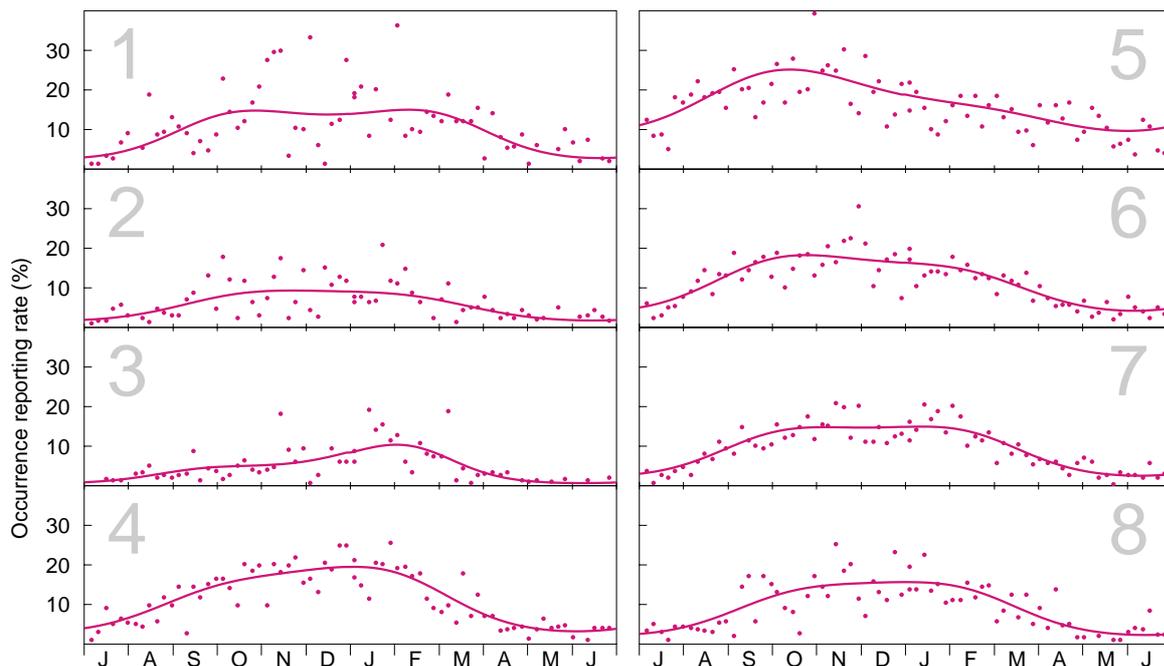
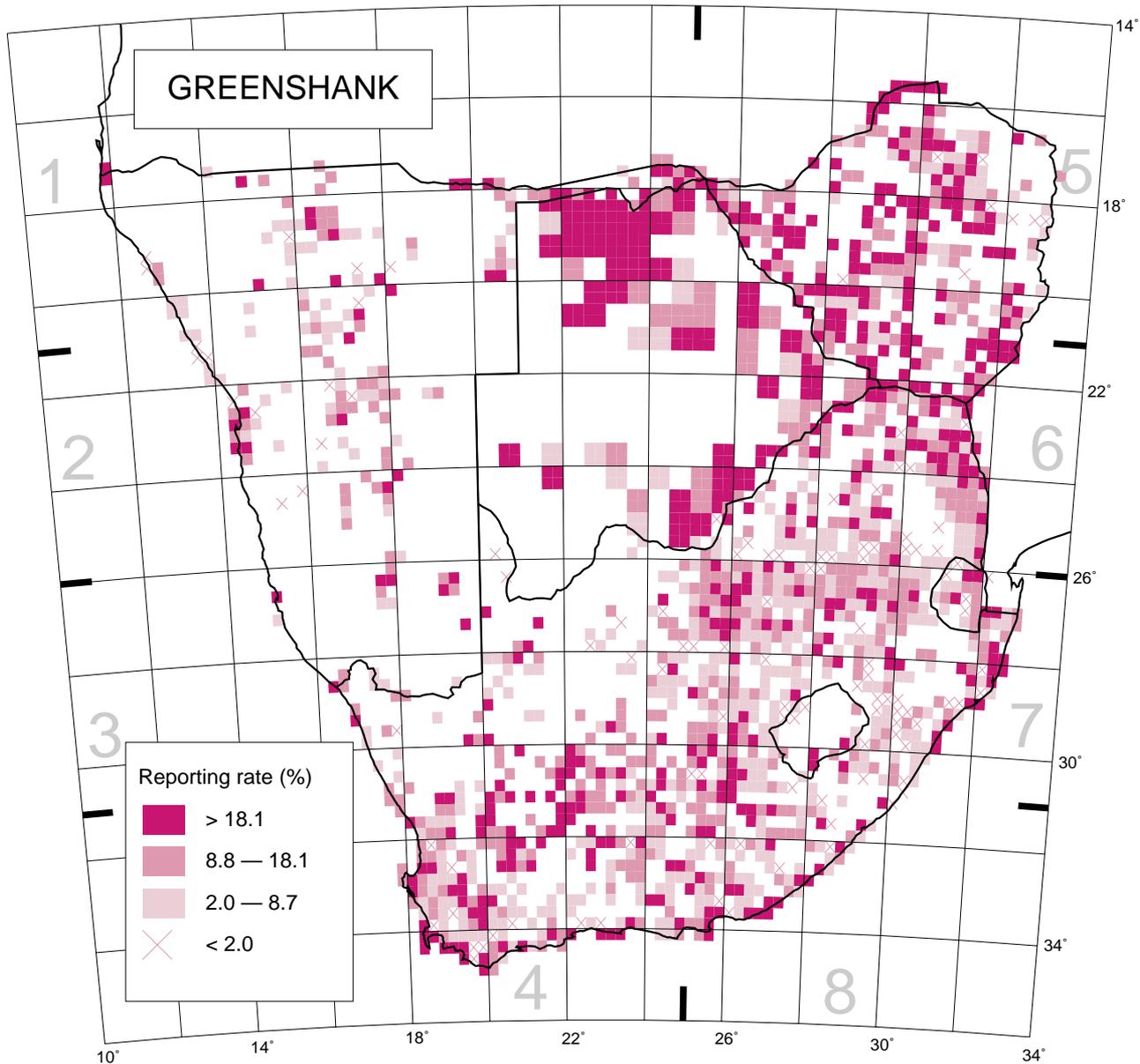
**Historical distribution and conservation:** The construction of many small artificial wetlands has provided habitat in otherwise unsuitable areas. In contrast, ongoing wetland loss has reduced natural habitat. Because of its adaptability to artificial wetlands, the Greenshank is not currently a species of conservation concern in southern Africa.

L.G. Underhill

Recorded in 1796 grid cells, 39.6%  
Total number of records: 15 912  
Mean reporting rate for range: 13.7%

#### Reporting rates for vegetation types





Models of seasonality for Zones. Number of records (top to bottom, left to right):  
 Occurrence: 304, 188, 221, 969, 1489, 1337, 1888, 515.