

Green Pigeon

Papegaaiduif

Treron calva

The Green Pigeon occurs mainly in the eastern half of the subcontinent, being widespread in Zimbabwe and north-eastern South Africa, and extending southwards through Swaziland, where there are an estimated 3000 birds (Parker 1994), and into the coastal zone of KwaZulu-Natal and the eastern Cape Province, as far south as Bathurst (3326DB). It occurs marginally in eastern Botswana but is abundant in the Okavango and the adjacent Caprivi, while there are scattered records elsewhere in Namibia. It appears to be common in the lowveld of the northern and eastern Transvaal. Extralimitally, it extends northwards to Sudan in the east, and Senegambia in the west (Rowan 1983).

Seven subspecies have been recognized in the region (Clancey 1980b) and some of the gaps in distribution represent relative isolation of races: there is a break between *T. c. glauca* in the western Transvaal and *delalandii* along the escarpment and in the Transvaal lowveld; *damarensis* in the Okavango and Caprivi is separated from *schalowi* and *glauca* occurring to the east in Zimbabwe and *vylderi* to the southwest in Namibia. The latter race is poorly reported from its range in Namibia; it probably occurs more widely (Clancey 1980b) though scarcely there.

It is gregarious, found in small groups, or flocks of up to 50, occasionally more (Rowan 1983). It can be common in suitable habitat, but its habit of sitting tight and blending in with the vegetation, before suddenly exploding from cover, make it rather difficult to census.

Habitat: It occurs in well-wooded areas, particularly along permanent rivers (Rowan 1983). The importance of the fruit of various wild figs *Ficus* spp. in its diet is reflected in its distribution within the range of these trees in southern Africa (Von Breitenbach 1986), which excludes areas at high altitude which experience frost. The particularly high reporting rate for the Okavango coincides with an abundance of figs there; the next five vegetation types are the moister woodlands having one or more *Ficus* spp., and other suitable fruit-bearing trees. Although not a true forest species, it does use the dune forest of the East Coast Littoral (Skead 1967b; Rowan 1983). It appears to select

other habitats for nesting, especially drier woodlands, and rural gardens and parks, rather than riparian woodland (Tarboton & Vernon 1971; Kemp 1974; Vernon 1977).

Movements: While its diet makes flights in search of fruiting trees unavoidable, these nomadic movements are probably only local (Rowan 1983). However, the relatively large fluctuations in reporting rates in Zone 6 suggest movement of some birds out of northeastern South Africa *c.* January–May. Alternatively, the increase in reporting rates over late winter/early summer, which is the main fruiting period of many *Ficus* spp. (Von Breitenbach 1986), may reflect increased visibility of flocks congregating to feed.

Breeding: Breeding was recorded throughout its range, mainly during the warmer months, with a few winter records from Zones 1 and 6, but none from Zimbabwe where some winter breeding has been reported previously (Irwin 1981). Breeding of *damarensis* in the Okavango is almost throughout the year (Skinner 1996a).

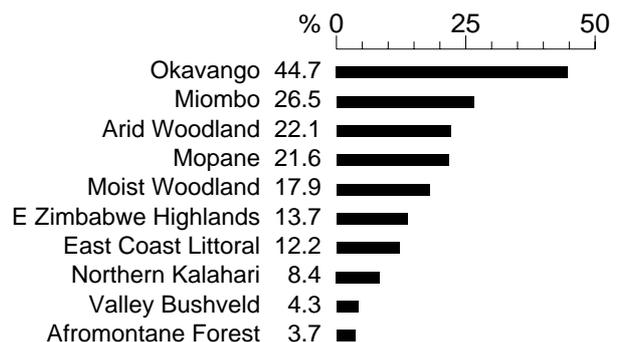
Interspecific relationships: There are several other frugivorous birds, including some other columbids (Rowan 1983), with ranges overlapping that of the Green Pigeon, and competition for food seems inevitable. As a strong-flying bird it probably has an 'explorative' advantage over most other frugivores.

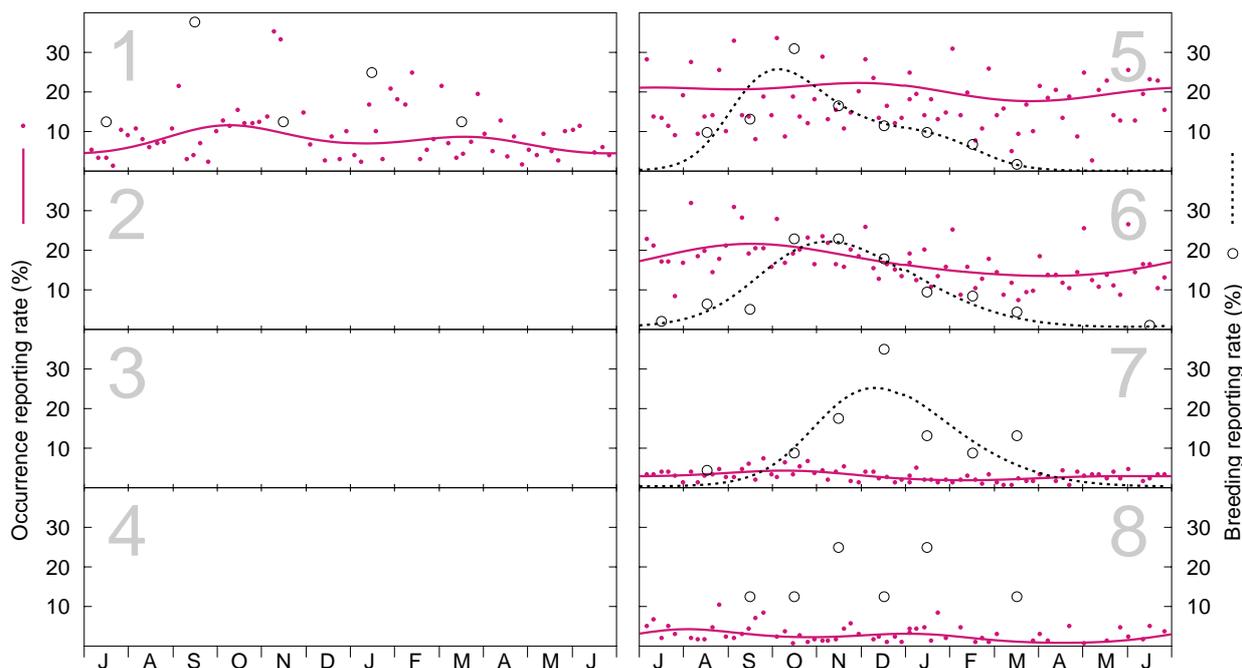
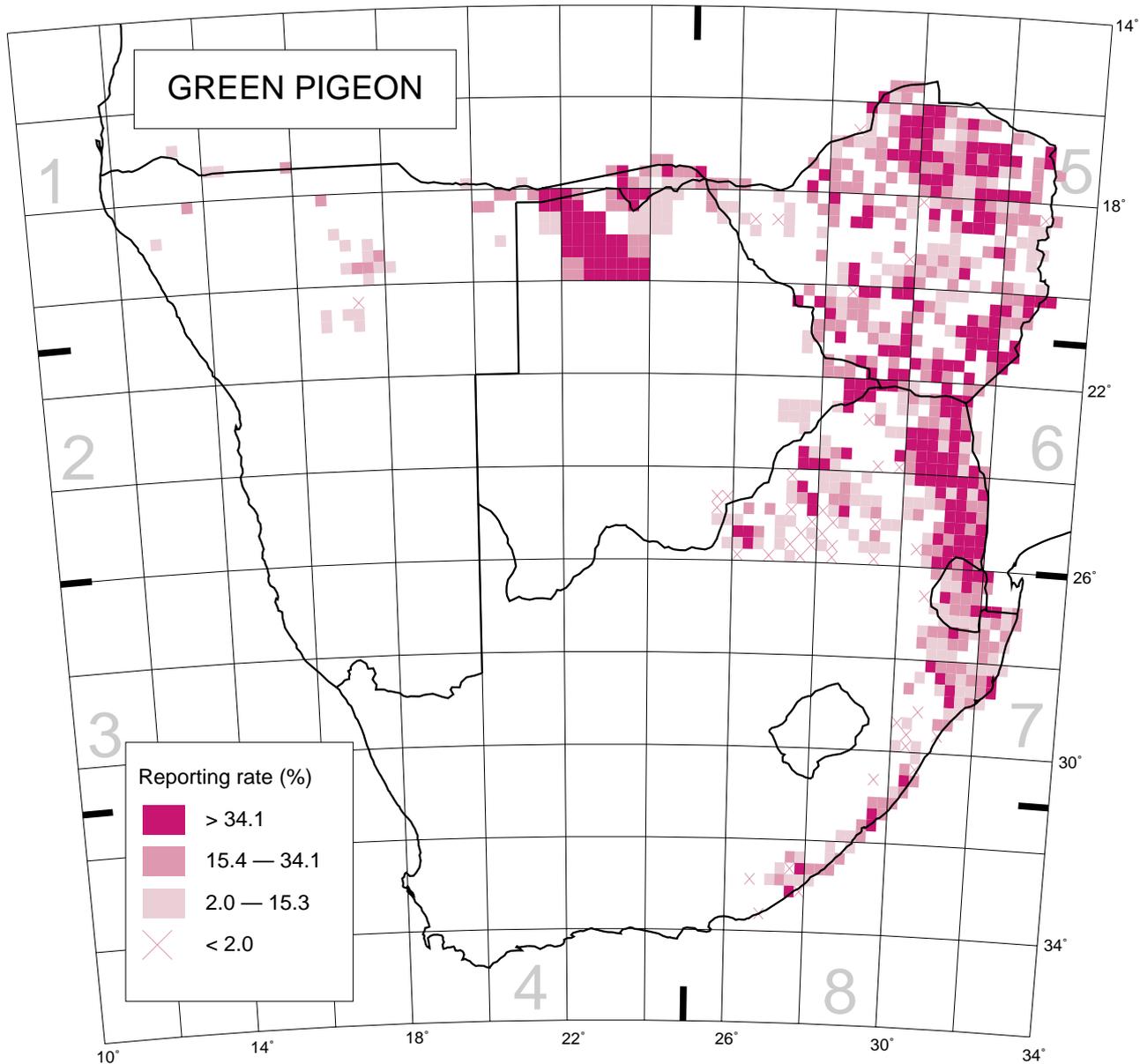
Historical distribution and conservation: Early in the 20th century it was reported to be common in the forests at Humansdorp (3424BB) (Masterson 1916), about 200 km west of its present limit. Its total habitat must have been reduced through the clearing of coastal scrub forests, and of woodlands elsewhere. Some orchards may have partly compensated for this, with mulberries, loquats and peaches reportedly taken (Rowan 1983; Ginn *et al.* 1989), while flocks of up to 80 birds have been recorded in guava orchards in the eastern Transvaal (Hall 1983). The Green Pigeon is not considered threatened.

B.D. Colahan

Recorded in 783 grid cells, 17.3%
Total number of records: 11 583
Mean reporting rate for range: 24.5%

Reporting rates for vegetation types





Models of seasonality for Zones. Number of records (top to bottom, left to right):
 Occurrence: 255, 0, 0, 0, 1774, 1943, 581, 129; Breeding: 8, 0, 0, 0, 61, 96, 23, 8.