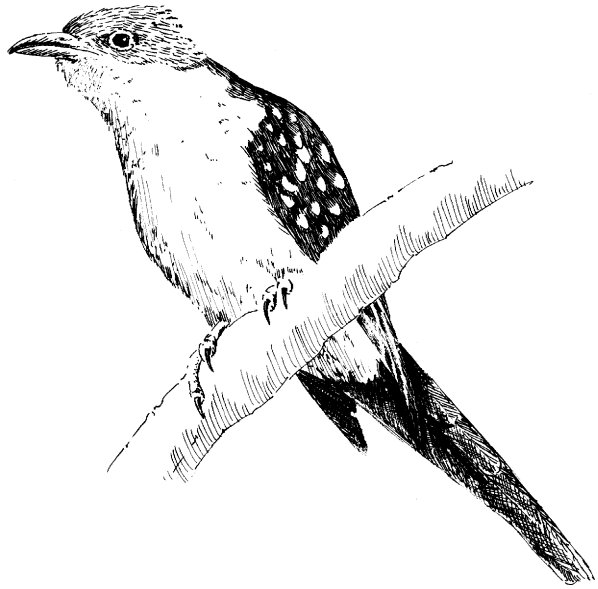

Great Spotted Cuckoo

Gevlekte Koekoek

Clamator glandarius

The Great Spotted Cuckoo occurs widely across the African savannas and into the southern Palearctic (Fry *et al.* 1988). It occurs across southern Africa, except the arid west and most of the Karoo. Its stronghold is in the thornbelt of the eastern Cape Province. Reliable records were also received from the western Cape Province and the Orange River estuary (2816CB).

Two populations occur in southern Africa; nominate *C. g. glandarius* is a nonbreeding visitor from north of the equator, and possibly the Palearctic, during the austral summer (Irwin 1981; Fry *et al.* 1988; Maclean 1993b), and race *choragium* is a breeding intra-African migrant during the same season. The proportions of the two races in different parts of southern Africa are not clear, but in Botswana nonbreeding migrants possibly dominate (Herremans 1994d).

Although unobtrusive when silent, this cuckoo does not pose identification problems and the atlas data can be considered reliable.

Habitat: The distribution pattern is similar to that of the savanna biome (Rutherford & Westfall 1986); the species occurs in open woodland and drier savanna, especially thornveld (Rowan 1983; Fry *et al.* 1988). The vegetation analysis shows an association with dry woodland, both *Acacia* and broadleaved, with highest reporting rates from the Okavango, Mopane, Northern Kalahari, and Namibian Escarpment. The association with Nama and Grassy Karoo is an artefact resulting from the stronghold in the eastern Cape Province, an area with a complex vegetation mosaic and more intense fieldwork than in the remainder of the Karoo.

Movements: Arrival starts in September (Zone 5), with the most rapid increase in reporting rate in late October–November (Zones 4–8). In the southwestern Cape Province (Zone 4), virtually all records were made in the three-month period October–December, while in Zimbabwe (Zone 5) the average period of presence is about five months.

In the west, the southern Zones are vacated first; there is a difference of over two months between departure in Zones 1 and Zone 4. In the arid western Zone 2 arrival is slow and departure fast, fitting the normal pattern for nonbreeding migrants (Underhill *et al.* 1992b); race *glandarius* may therefore be the more common race in the west (Herremans 1994d).

The atlas provides no records of overwintering (May–August); Rowan (1983), in contrast, reported 'occasional overwintering'.

Breeding: It is a brood parasite of nine crow and starling species (Rowan 1983). Egglaying in the Transvaal, the eastern Cape Province and Zimbabwe is October–January, with a peak October–November (Dean 1971; Irwin 1981; Rowan 1983; Tarboton *et al.* 1987b), but November–May with a February peak in Botswana and Namibia (Skinner 1996a; Brown & Clinning in press). The atlas data show breeding activity October–May, later than the egglaying season recorded in the literature; this results from a bias towards records of recently fledged young with their hosts.

Interspecific relationships: Its distribution shows overlap with, yet is quite different from, that of its most frequent host, the Pied Crow *Corvus albus* (Maclean 1993b). The stronghold in the eastern Cape Province coincides with a concentration of the Pied Crow, but other hosts, such as Pied *Spreo bicolor* and Redwinged *Onychognathus morio* Starlings are also common (Hockey *et al.* 1989; Maclean 1993b). In the Transvaal lowveld and along the middle Limpopo River on the Botswana–Transvaal border, where the cuckoo is common, Pied Crows are relatively scarce and glossy starlings *Lamprotornis* spp. may be used as alternative hosts. Particularly Burchell's Starling *L. australis* and Greater Blue-eared Starling *L. chalybaeus* are relatively abundant in these areas. In Swaziland the range overlaps with that of Burchell's Starling rather than with crows (Parker 1994). The range in central Namibia overlaps more strongly with Burchell's, Glossy *L. nitens* and Palewinged *Onychognathus nabouroup* Starlings than with crows, but this is not important if most of the birds in this region (Zone 2) are nonbreeding migrants.

Historical distribution and conservation: The distribution map differs in detail from those presented by Rowan (1983) and Maclean (1993b), but the differences may reflect improved knowledge rather than changes in distribution. The scattered records from the western Cape Province, where the Pied Crow and Pied Starling are abundant, may offer opportunities for expansion.

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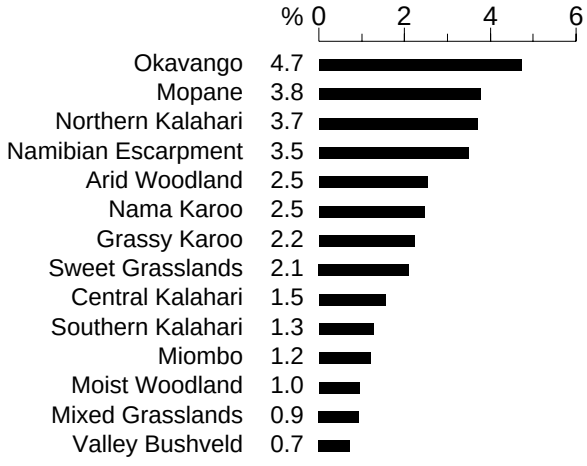
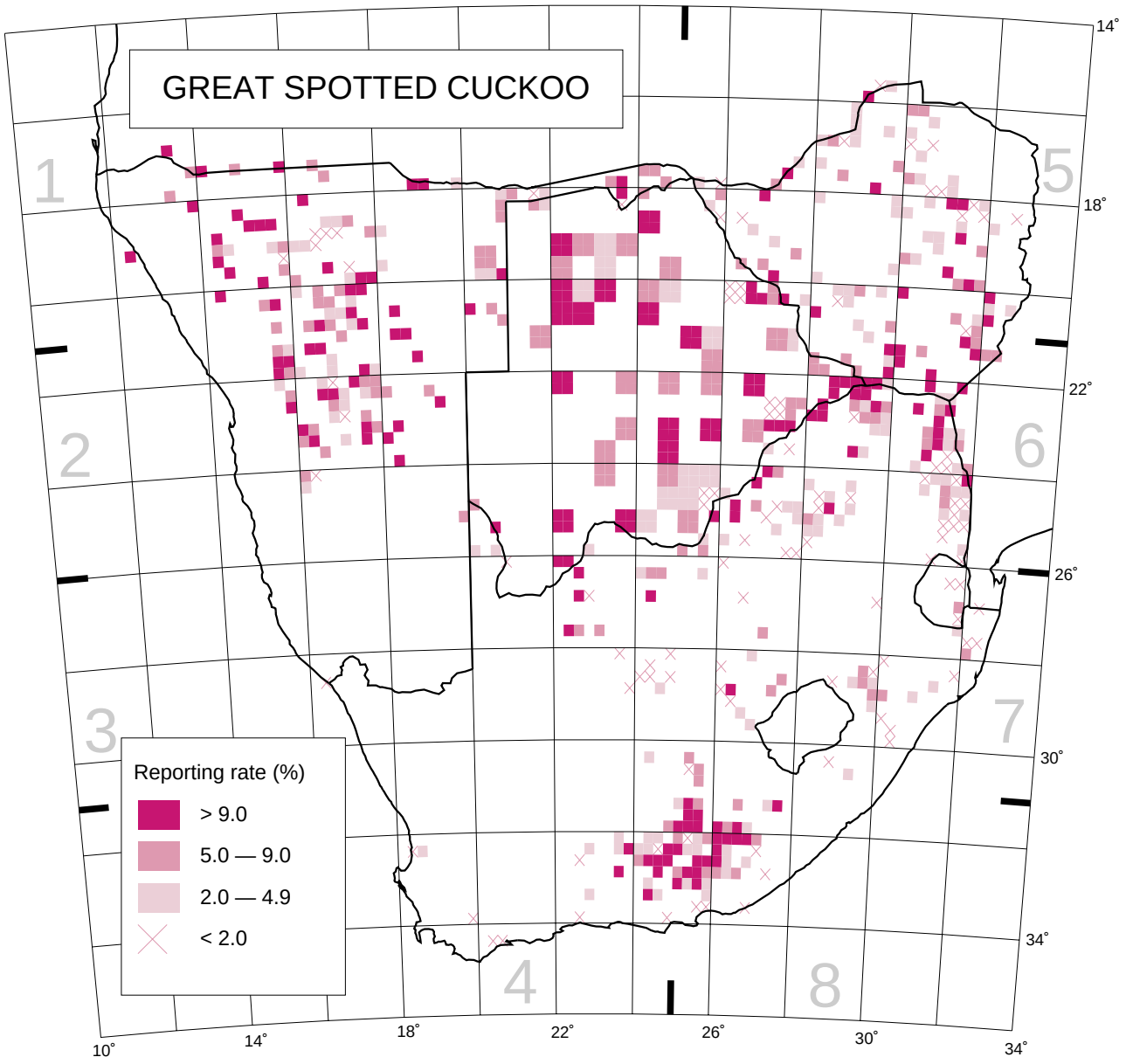
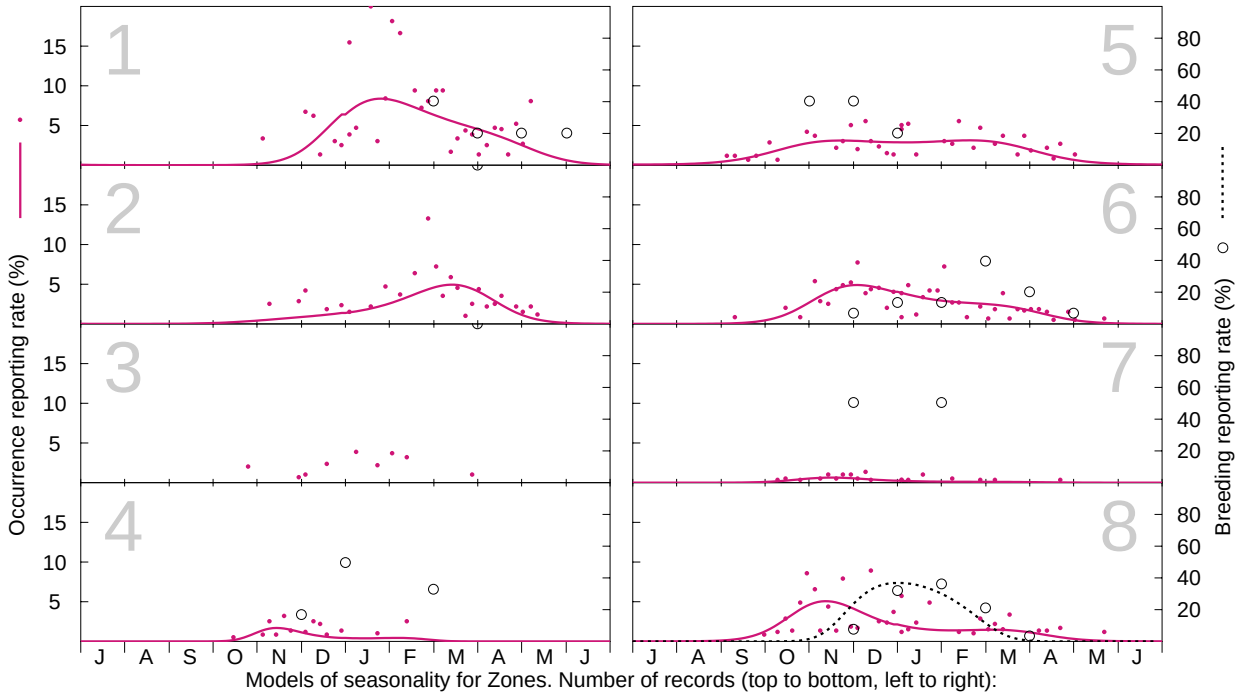
Recorded in 707 grid cells, 15.6%
Total number of records: 1813
Mean reporting rate for range: 4.8%

Reporting rates for vegetation types







Models of seasonality for Zones. Number of records (top to bottom, left to right):
Occurrence: 76, 53, 10, 22, 139, 187, 29, 79; Breeding: 5, 1, 1, 6, 5, 15, 2, 28.