Pied Kingfisher

Bontvisvanger

Ceryle rudis

The Pied Kingfisher is the second largest of the African kingfishers, after the Giant Kingfisher *C. maxima.* It has an extensive range, both on the continent and beyond, ranging from the Middle East eastward as far as China. In southern Africa the range is determined by the availability of permanent water. There is a centre of abundance in the Okavango Delta and it is common throughout most of the eastern subcontinent in Zimbabwe, Swaziland and South Africa. It extends along the southern coast to the southwestern Cape Province, and a feature of the range is the linear distribution into the dry west along the Orange River. All Afrotropical populations are referable to *C. r. rudis* (Clancey 1980b).

It is generally found in pairs, but can be moderately gregarious in parts of its range. It is distinctive and conspicuous.

Habitat: It is closely associated with aquatic environments and its occurrence is entirely dependent on the availability of fish. The waterbodies exploited include large rivers and perennial streams, estuaries, man-made canals, lakes and reservoirs, and the intertidal zone of the coast. It exploits ornamental ponds in parks as well as farm dams. Sewage farms are frequently resorted to if fish are present and it will visit fish-hatcheries. It hovers frequently and therefore is less reliant on wetlands with overhanging tall trees for hunting perches than are other kingfishers. For example, Irwin (1981) commented that, at Lake Kariba, it will feed out over the lake far from the shore and perching sites. For breeding it requires suitable banks for the excavation of nest tunnels.

Movements: It is generally viewed as sedentary but, like most waterbirds, it vacates waterbodies when they dry up. In Zimbabwe, Irwin (1981) considered that such movements were purely local and did not represent true migration. The models show no evidence for regular migration. When dry rivers start flowing, it can appear within a day of the water arriving, and in some regions, e.g. northern Botswana, it also readily disperses to ephemeral pans when these hold water (M. Herremans pers. comm.); this suggests exploratory nomadism.

Breeding: The atlas data mainly span spring–summer, August–April, except in Zone 1 (northern Botswana and Namibia) where they seem concentrated in winter–spring, April–October. Egglaying in Zimbabwe spans July–April, mainly August–November; in the Transvaal August–April, in KwaZulu-Natal September–November, and in the southwestern Cape Province August–September (Winterbottom 1968a; Dean 1971; Irwin 1981; Tarboton *et al.* 1987b). In Botswana egglaying occurs primarily May–October (Skinner 1996a). This agrees with the atlas data, and the Okavango population appears to breed out of synchrony with the rest of the region. In the east (Zones 5–8) there is a tendency for breeding to be initiated earlier in the north of the range compared with the south. The long 'tails' to the models probably result from observations of immature birds which are fed by the parents for 1–2 months (Fry *et al.* 1988). Generally a solitary breeder in the south of the continent, it is locally colonial in more tropical areas (Fry *et al.* 1992). Small colonies occur along the Chobe River in the Caprivi, at Kosi Bay (2632DD) and at Lake Chivero (1730DD) (C.J. Brown, M. Herremans, A.J. Tree pers. comms).

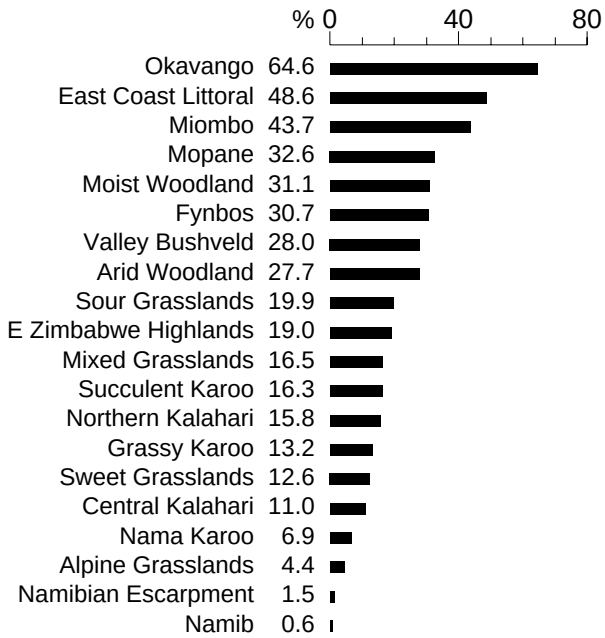
Interspecific relationships: The distribution is similar to that of the sympatric Giant Kingfisher. Pied and Giant Kingfishers frequently coexist without obvious interaction, though competition for suitable fishing perches may occur and the species do usually use separate perches (Monadjem *et al.* 1994a). Boshoff (1978) reported on possible commensalism with the Cape Clawless Otter *Aonyx capensis.* It uses communal roosts with herons, glossy starlings and other piscivorous birds (Utschick & Brandl 1986; Randall 1988b).

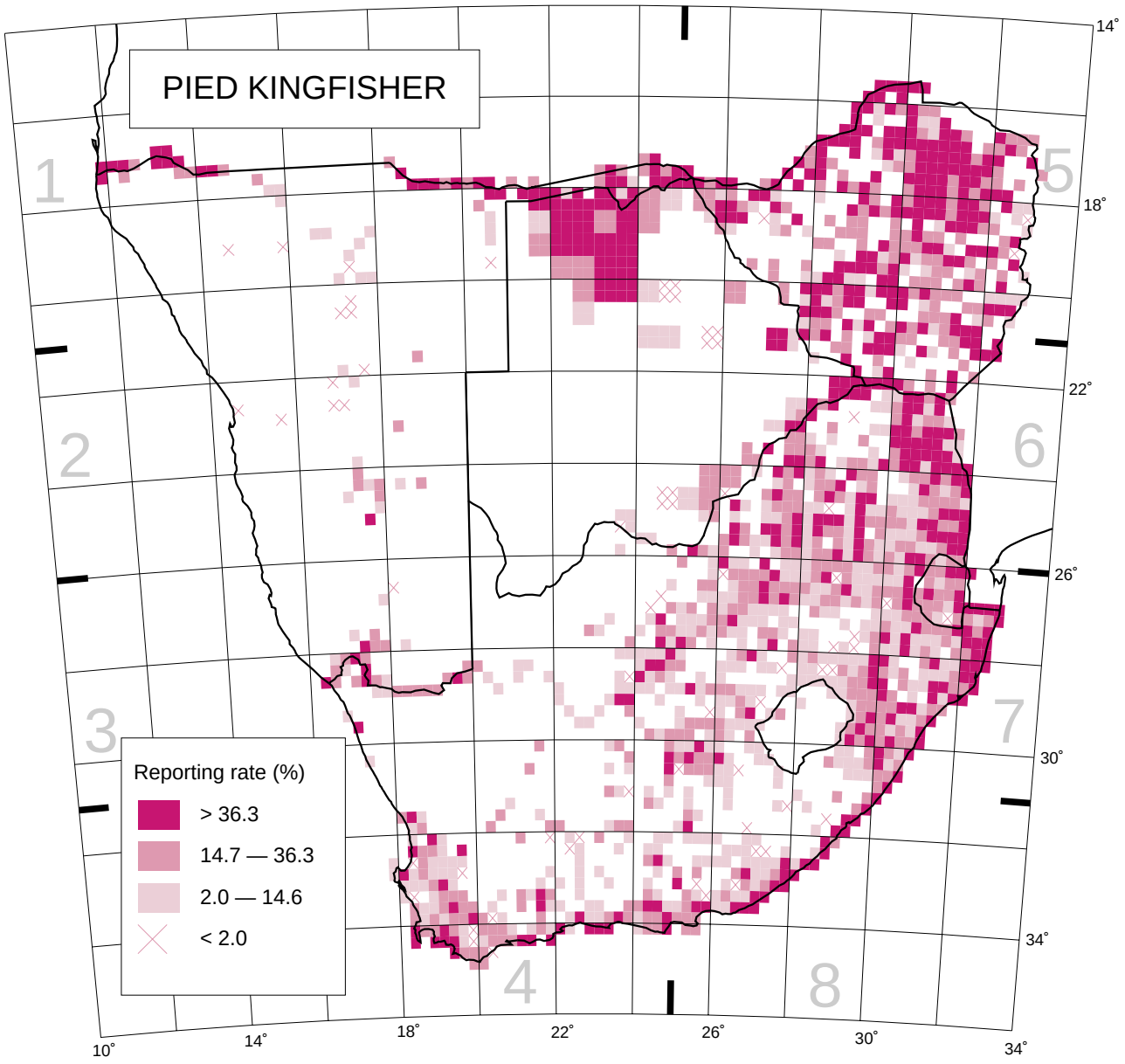
Historical distribution and conservation: The use of pesticides in sugar-growing areas in the Save River sector of Zimbabwe has resulted in a widespread decline in kingfisher populations (Irwin 1981). Extensive aerial spraying of insecticides in the Okavango against the Tsetse Fly *Glossina morsitans* was considered to have no effect (accidental misuse of chemicals not withstanding) on Pied Kingfishers (Douthwaite *et al.* 1981; Douthwaite 1982). Populations on the Pongola floodplain in northern KwaZulu-Natal may be negatively affected by DDT contamination (Evans & Bouwman 1993). It has probably benefited from the construction of dams in many regions. In eastern Swaziland it has increased locally as a result of habitat modification caused by flooding in the wake of Cyclone Demoina in February 1984 (Parker 1994).

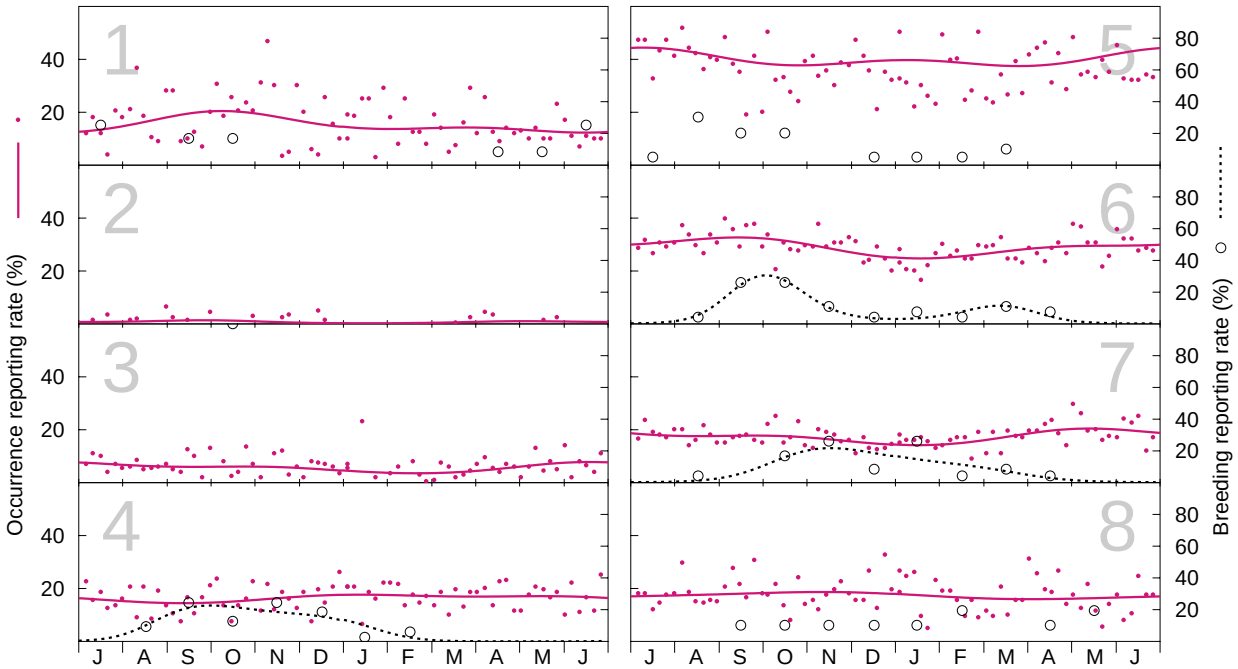
P.A. Clancey

Recorded in 1661 grid cells, 36.6%
Total number of records: 35 832
Mean reporting rate for range: 30.5%

Reporting rates for vegetation types







Models of seasonality for Zones. Number of records (top to bottom, left to right):
Occurrence: 505, 28, 320, 1426, 3493, 3297, 3391, 951; Breeding: 12, 0, 2, 32, 20, 27, 23, 10.