



Brownhooded Kingfisher

Bruinkopvisvanger

Halcyon albiventris

This is a medium-sized kingfisher which is largely restricted to the more mesic eastern parts of southern Africa, ranging northward to Somalia in the east and south of the equatorial rainforest to Gabon, Congo and northern Angola in the west. In the arid interior of southern Africa, the Brownhooded Kingfisher is restricted to the northern districts of Namibia, mostly along the course of the Okavango River. The pattern of its distribution closely matches the occurrence of woodland habitat, with the exception of dry Kalahari types. Its rarity in the woodlands of Namibia and its absence from the banks of the Orange River are interesting features, particularly as it extends south of the woodland boundary (c. 26°S) along the Vaal River drainage.

In terms of contemporary *Halcyon* species, it is probably without close allies. Biogeographically it appears to interrelate with the comparably sized but wholly forest-bound Chocolatebacked Kingfisher *H. badia* (Clancey 1992b). Six subspecies are recognizable, three of which occur in southern Africa.

In suitable country it is generally the commonest of the halcyons, usually to be found alone or in pairs. It has a distinctive and loud call and is relatively conspicuous and well known to birders.

Habitat: It inhabits the edges of evergreen forest and plantations, degraded areas with some trees left standing, woodland and riverine woodland. It is relatively scarce in the well-developed Okavango fringing woodlands. It is often to be found in large gardens and parks in built-up areas and occurs also on the edges of subsistence cultivation. It normally feeds on dry land, but is occasionally seen diving into shallow water in order to fish, with limited

success. Atlas data suggest high relative abundance in association with suburban development in what was previously treeless grassland; it is clearly an adaptable species. It generally occurs below 1500 m. It nests in a burrow in a sand or clay bank or, nowadays, often in drainage ducts in retaining walls (Clancey 1992b).

Movements: It has been suggested that the southernmost race *H. a. albiventris* moves northwards after breeding, having been recorded in winter in southern Zimbabwe and southeastern Botswana (within the breeding range of the race *vociferans*) (Irwin 1981; Clancey 1992b). Clancey (1992b) also suggested that the race *vociferans* is migratory but the source for this statement was not given. The models reveal only small seasonal changes in reporting rates in the southern Zones 4, 7 and 8 (encompassing the breeding range of *albiventris*), but in Zone 6, which includes southern Zimbabwe, and possibly in Zones 1 and 5, fairly substantial seasonality in reporting rates is apparent, providing some evidence of a partial migration with a winter influx in Zone 6.

Breeding: Atlas data indicate a spring–autumn breeding season with an October–January peak. Breeding tends to peak progressively later with increasing latitudes. For the Transvaal, Tarboton *et al.* (1987b) showed a narrower egg-laying period of September–December with an October–November peak.

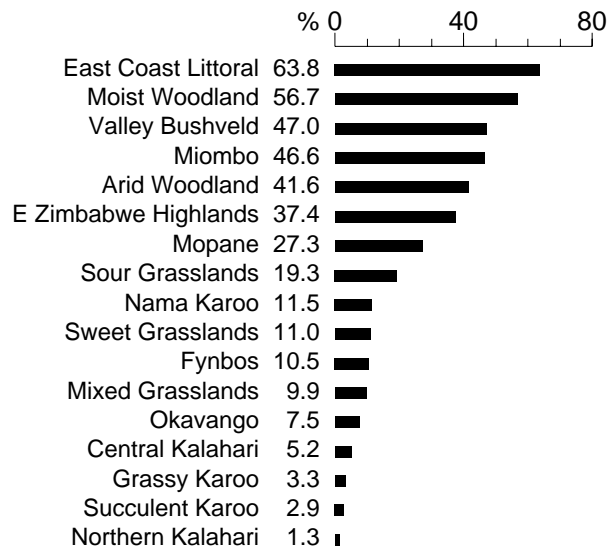
Interspecific relationships: It is the only one of the four *Halcyon* kingfishers which extends its distribution south of 29°S. It is otherwise widely sympatric with its congeners and occurs regularly alongside all of them.

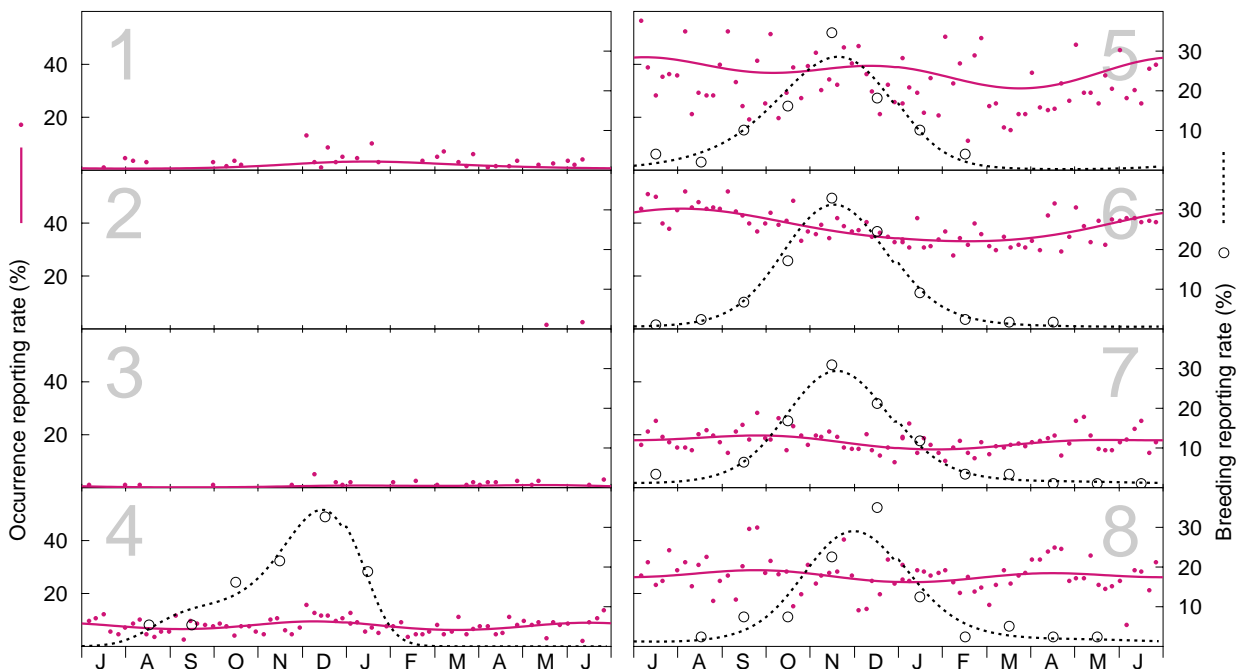
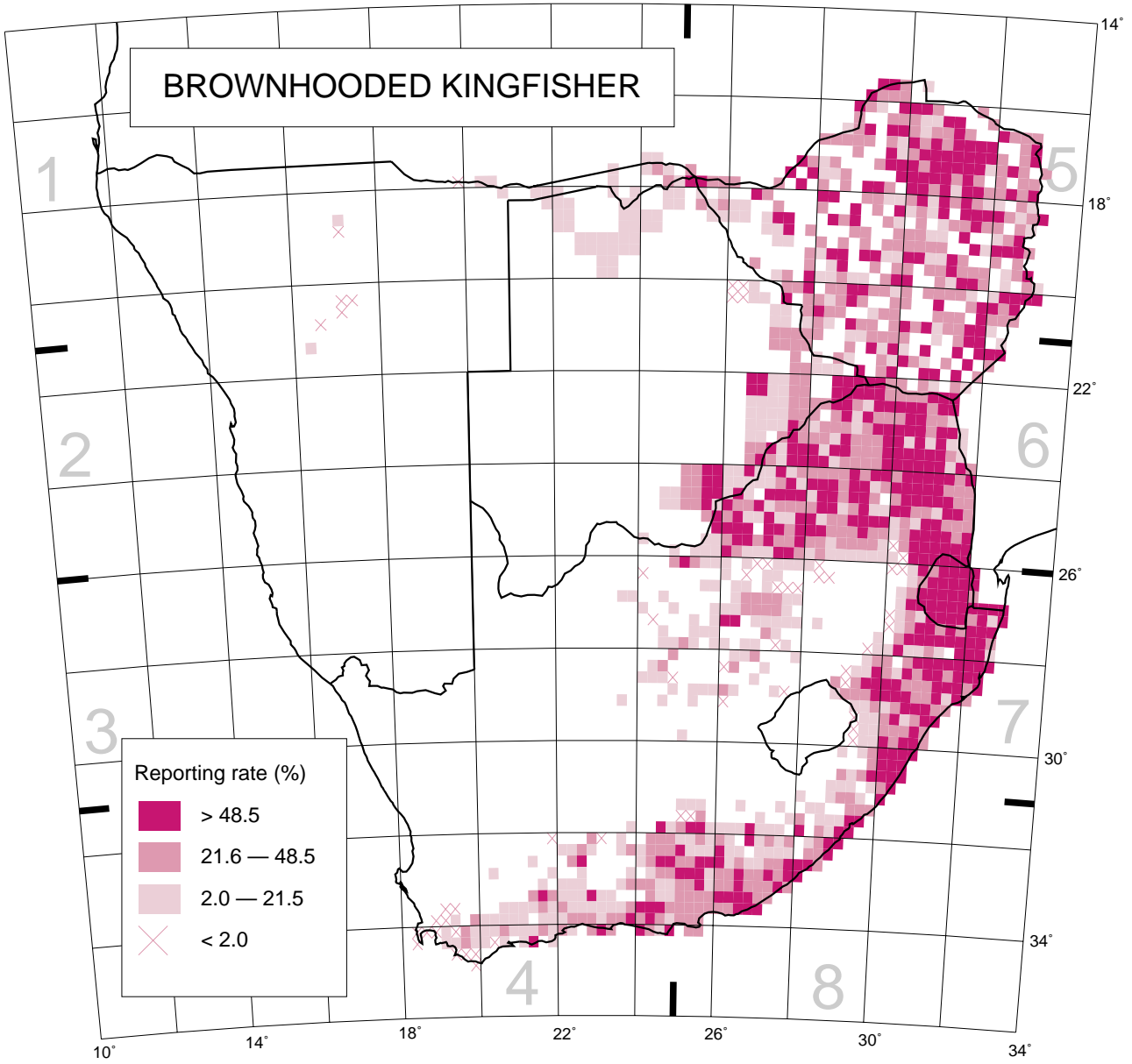
Historical distribution and conservation: The Brownhooded Kingfisher is a widespread, relatively numerous and adaptable species and is not under threat at present. It has apparently expanded its range in recent times in the southwestern Cape Province and into the southern Karoo, possibly owing to the spread of alien trees, including those in parks and gardens (Hockey *et al.* 1989).

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Recorded in 1418 grid cells, 31.3%
Total number of records: 36 393
Mean reporting rate for range: 37.4%

Reporting rates for vegetation types





Models of seasonality for Zones. Number of records (top to bottom, left to right):
 Occurrence: 49, 2, 31, 671, 3255, 4391, 3386, 1469; Breeding: 0, 0, 0, 37, 49, 118, 94, 40.