

## Pied Barbet

### Bonthoutkapper

*Tricholaema leucomelas*

This common near-endemic resident ranges marginally beyond southern Africa into southern Mozambique, southwestern Zambia and southern Angola (Fry *et al.* 1988). Five subspecies are recognized in the region (Clancey 1980b) and these have continuous ranges, except perhaps for *T. l. zuluensis* in the eastern lowveld, which appears to be somewhat isolated by a break along the eastern escarpment in the Transvaal and Swaziland. The range of the race *affinis* as given by Clancey (1980b) would appear to lie mainly within the region colonized during the 20th century in KwaZulu-Natal, the eastern Free State and western Lesotho (Macdonald 1986b). (It would be interesting to relate the various putative subspecies of this barbet to these range expansions.)

Highest reporting rates were recorded in parts of the Karoo, the central grassland areas, and the central arid savannas. It has distinctive vocalizations and is present in gardens, rendering it conspicuous. It is occasionally confused with the Redfronted Tinker Barbet *Pogoniulus pusillus* by novices.

**Habitat:** It is tolerant of varied ecological conditions (Macdonald 1986b). It is especially common in arid savannas where soft-wooded trees (e.g. *Acacias*) are found (Macdonald 1986b), and along wooded drainage lines in grassland and other open habitats. Its occurrence in apparently unsuitable open habitat is attributed to both alien and invasive indigenous plants providing nesting sites (Collett 1982; Macdonald 1986b). Alien trees are entirely responsible for its presence in fynbos (Macdonald 1986b). It is largely absent from mesic and higher-lying eastern areas, from broad-leaved woodland in northeastern Namibia and northeastern Botswana, and it largely avoids miombo woodland (Irwin 1981), and treeless and extremely arid areas of the western Karoo and coastal Namibia.

**Movements:** Most Zones show higher reporting rates in late summer and autumn, dropping slightly during winter and spring, while in Zimbabwe the overall low reporting rates are fairly constant. Populations may be more dispersed during summer, particularly over the more arid regions, with birds perhaps moving during winter to habitats where they are more likely to be encountered, e.g. riparian vegetation and gardens. The more arid Zones 1–3 have the highest scatter and variation in reporting rates, suggesting that birds in these regions are more apt to move, possibly in response to greater variation in veld conditions. It may be significant that four subspecies are recognized from the moister eastern regions but only one for the more arid parts of the subcontinent (Clancey 1980b).

**Breeding:** Egg-laying has been recorded in spring and summer, August–April, with a peak October–December (Dean 1971; Irwin 1981; Tarboton *et al.* 1987b; Skinner 1996a; Brown & Clinning in press). Some breeding was recorded throughout the year, possibly because birds attend and roost in nest holes when not breeding. Double peaks are shown in some western Zones (and also in the extreme southeast: Zone 8); the late-summer peak gets progressively later further south, disappearing completely in the southwestern Cape Province (Zone 4). Breeding in the northwest is mainly in late summer, while in the south and east it is concentrated earlier, possibly reflecting regional differences in rainfall



and fruiting phenology. The lack of a late-summer peak in the southwestern Cape Province possibly indicates the influence of winter rainfall on breeding, with the season beginning (August) and peaking (mid-October) earlier than elsewhere.

**Interspecific relationships:** The larger Blackcollared Barbet *Lybius torquatus* may exclude the Pied Barbet from some areas of Valley Bushveld in the eastern Cape Province and in some of the more mesic areas of the subcontinent (Macdonald 1986b) where competition for nest holes may occur. The abundance of the latter appears lower where it overlaps with the former, e.g. over most of the Transvaal. The Pied Barbet is a host of the Greater *Indicator indicator* and Lesser *I. minor* Honeyguides (Maclean 1993b). The range expansion of the Lesser Honeyguide into the southwestern Cape Province closely followed that of the Pied Barbet (Underhill *et al.* 1995).

**Historical distribution and conservation:** It has undergone a dramatic and well-documented range expansion, mainly due to the spread of alien trees in previously treeless regions (Macdonald 1986b). This expansion into fynbos, Karoo, grassland and mesic savanna has occurred during the 20th century. The availability of suitable trees for nesting apparently limited its distribution in the past; alien soft-wood trees (especially Australian *Acacia* spp.) have facilitated exploitation of previously unoccupied areas. Other possibly important factors include the abundant supply of food from fruiting alien trees, increases in the density of suitable indigenous nest trees, and the increased availability of drinking water (Macdonald 1986b).

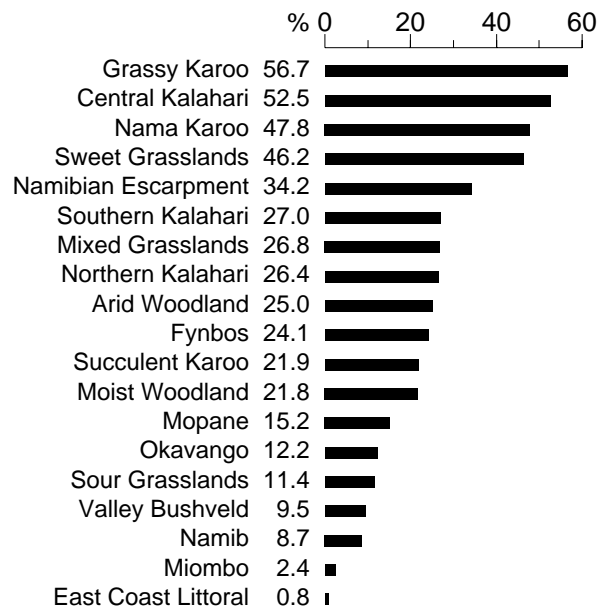
R.J. Nuttall

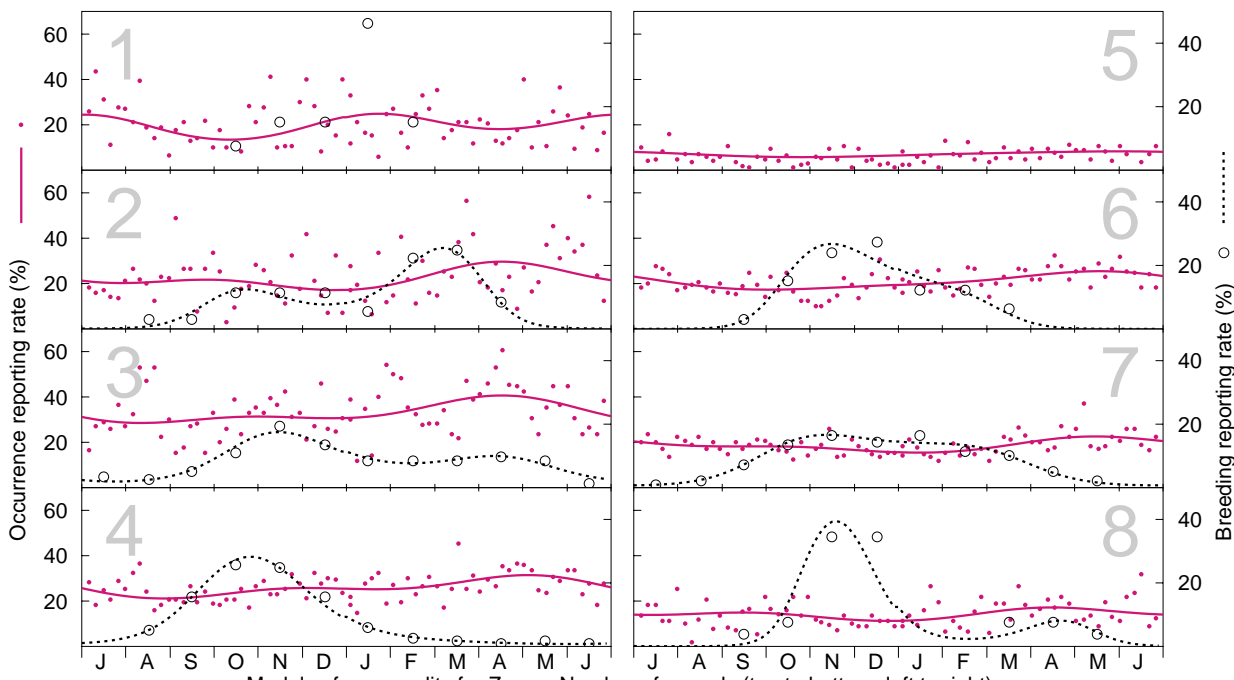
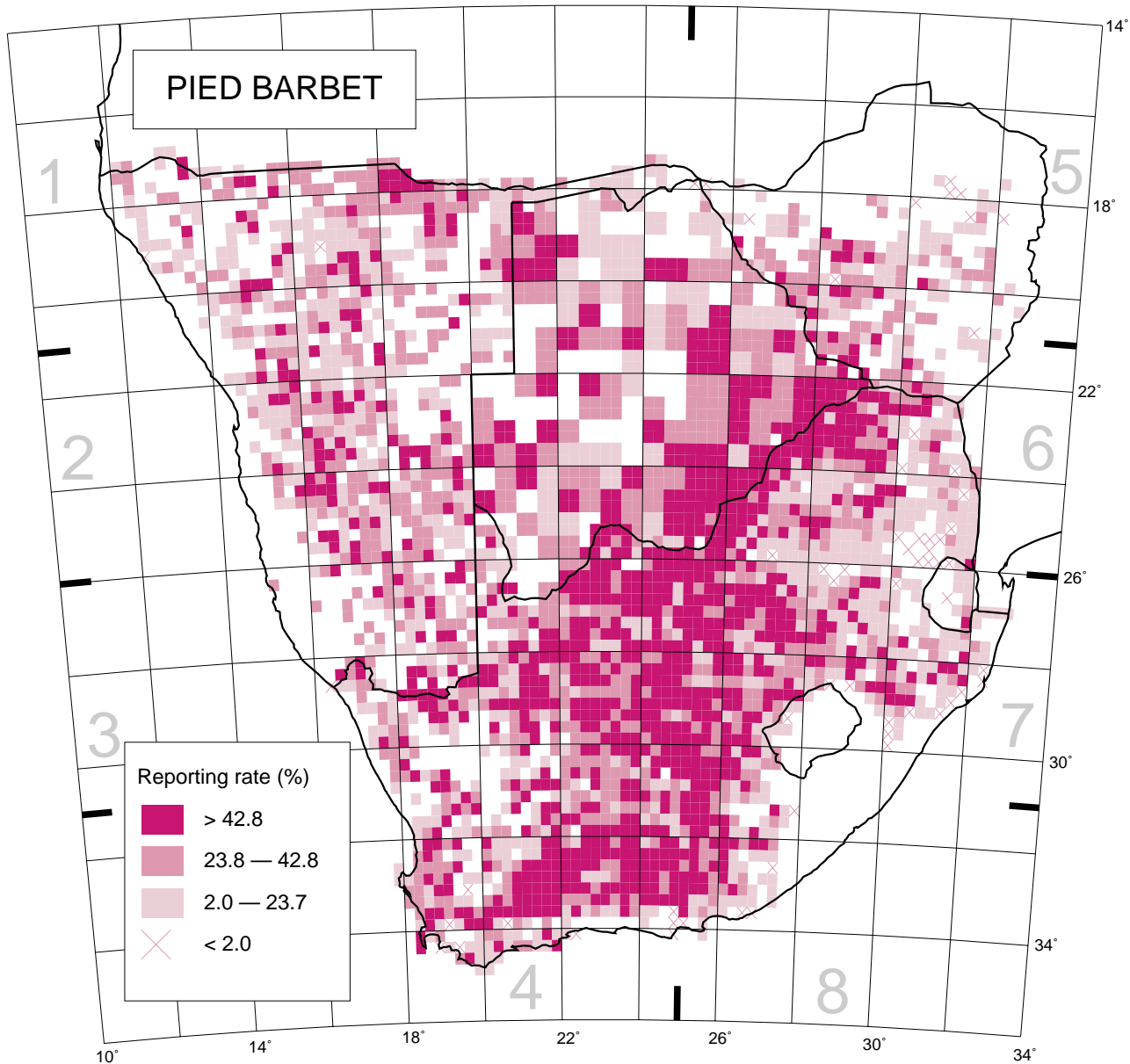
Recorded in 3013 grid cells, 66.4%

Total number of records: 32 401

Mean reporting rate for range: 28.7%

#### Reporting rates for vegetation types





Models of seasonality for Zones. Number of records (top to bottom, left to right):  
 Occurrence: 654, 831, 1853, 2268, 616, 2385, 3640, 783; Breeding: 13, 36, 82, 117, 0, 33, 97, 26.