

Rufousbellied Tit

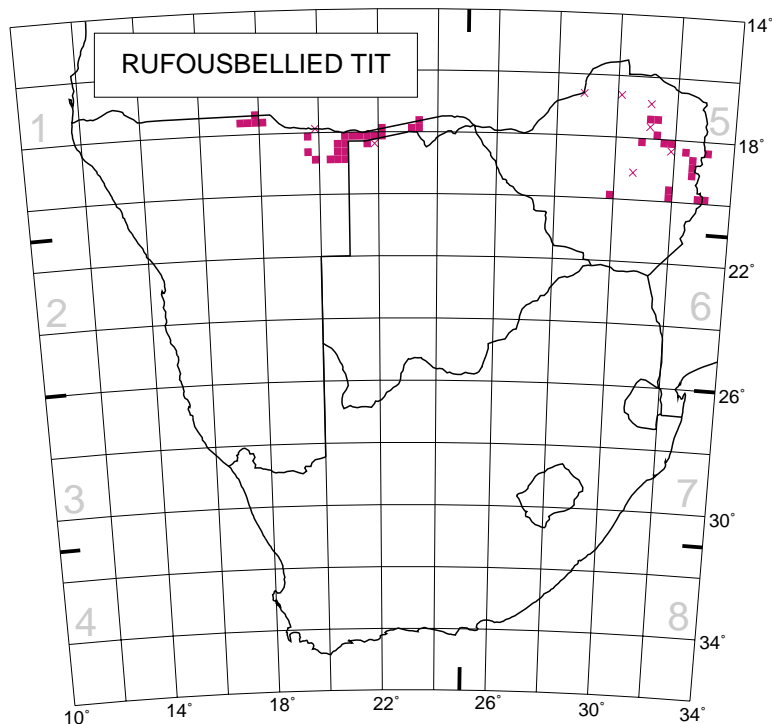
Swartkopmees

Parus rufiventris

The Rufousbellied Tit is found in well-developed broadleaved woodland in southcentral Africa. In Zimbabwe the subspecies *P. r. pallidiventris* is found only in *Brachystegia* woodlands with large trees which give cover and have plenty of lichen and *Usnea* growing on their bark. It is most common in some small patches of undisturbed woodland in eastern Zimbabwe; it occurs in limited areas which are often widely separated by areas of cultivation. In Namibia, the subspecies *diligens* occurs in the northeast in broadleaved woodland (e.g. *Baikiaea*, *Pterocarpus*, *Burkea*) on deep Kalahari sand in Kavango, parts of Owambo and the western Caprivi (Hines 1985–87; Brown 1990a, 1993), and it has been recorded in far northwestern Botswana (Herremans *et al.* 1993a).

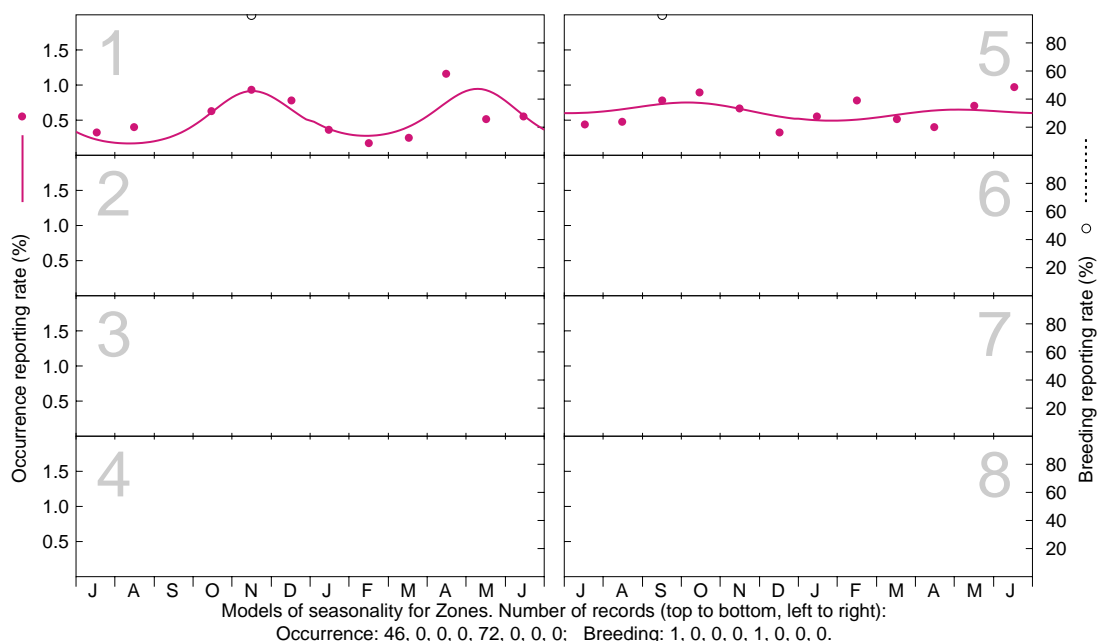
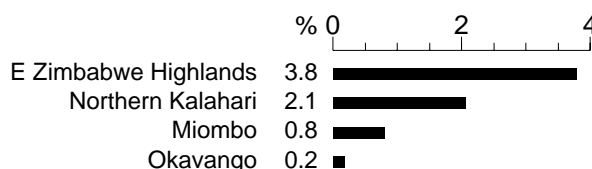
It is resident and most often seen when in bird parties. It occurs alongside both Southern Black *P. niger* and Northern Grey *P. griseiventris* Tits in these parties, but is not as vocal. The female could perhaps be confused with the Northern Grey Tit, but the lack of white on the cheek is conspicuous. The males have an obvious rufous belly in the breeding season, but are paler during the rest of the year, as is the female. Despite its distinctiveness it may have been overlooked or under-reported.

During the breeding season (September–November) it becomes secretive and is easily overlooked. It appears that the young accompany the adults until the following breeding season, as groups of 2–5 birds are usual in bird parties. It is noticeable that they forage close together and that not all bird parties contain this species – perhaps evidence of the low population density. It is one of the first species to disappear if woodlands become degraded and it is in danger of disappearing in many areas owing to destruction of miombo and other well-developed woodlands. The population in north-eastern Namibia is probably less threatened.



Recorded in 50 grid cells, 1.1%
Total number of records: 120
Mean reporting rate for range: 6.1%

Reporting rates for vegetation types



P.J. Ginn