



## Terrestrial Bulbul

### Boskrapper

#### *Phyllastrephus terrestris*

The distribution of the Terrestrial Bulbul, which extends as far north as southern Somalia, is centred in the southeast of the Afrotropical region. Its distribution in southern Africa is well depicted by the atlas map; in the arid areas of Botswana and the Limpopo River basin it ranges into dry country by way of dense woody vegetation lining perennial and seasonal watercourses.

Six races have been described and Clancey (1980b) recognized four for southern Africa; Keith *et al.* (1992) recognized only three for the whole Afrotropical area, two of which – *P. t. terrestris* and *intermedius* – occur within the atlas region; they have continuous ranges on the present map.

A largely brown bird with white and buff underparts and a brown to reddish eye, it is not easily seen, being a highly covert species. It spends most of its time in thick undergrowth and much of that on the ground, foraging in the leaf litter. In the nonbreeding season it normally occurs in small groups of up to six individuals. The presence of such a group can often be detected by the rustling sounds made while hopping about and whisking leaves in the dry litter carpet. Once members of the group are aware they are being observed or threatened, they break into series of harsh, scolding ratchet-like notes before slipping silently away in the undergrowth.

**Habitat:** This is typically an evergreen forest bird, occurring from sea-level up to 1500 m in southern Africa, but most commonly encountered in coastal forests. It ranges outside of closed forest into densely wooded kloofs and ravines and dense riparian growth and thickets in some bushveld areas. The vegetation analysis ranks its preferences accurately. In coastal forests and Valley Bushveld it is often found where patches of thin-stemmed *Isoglossa* spp. (Acanthaceae) form dense stands in the undergrowth. The high reporting rates in the Okavango basin refer to birds in thickets in the mixed swamp-fringing woodlands.

**Movements:** It is sedentary. There have been 56 ringed birds recaptured at 11 sites between Malawi and KwaZulu-Natal at intervals ranging from one year to over 12 years after ringing (Hanmer 1989a; pers. obs). The models show little variation between summer and winter in most Zones, and the slight increase in winter reporting rates in some Zones is probably due to less dense vegetation and easier sighting of

these birds at such times. Harwin & Manson (1989) suggested that it 'may be seasonal' in the Vumba region (1932BB) of Zimbabwe, but they also stated that no bird had ever been recaptured more than 200 m from the original ringing site.

**Breeding:** The atlas records show peaks in the summer months in keeping with the months of egg-laying (October–January in KwaZulu-Natal, September–April in Zimbabwe) given by Maclean (1993b). Although it occurs in groups in the nonbreeding season, it is monogamous and pairs off at the start of the breeding season; communal breeding has not been observed. Harwin & Manson (1989) stated that flocks of subadult birds can be found in all months in Zimbabwe.

**Interspecific relationships:** It occasionally occurs amicably alongside Yellowstreaked Bulbuls *P. flavostriatus* in the same mixed-species flocks; Terrestrial Bulbuls often form the core species of such flocks. There are no other congeneric species in the atlas region except for the marginal intrusion of the Slender Bulbul *P. debilis* and no interactions between the two have been documented.

**Historical distribution and conservation:** The range is not known to have undergone any changes in historic times. In view of its comparatively widespread Afrotropical distribution, the Terrestrial Bulbul is not considered to be under any threat.

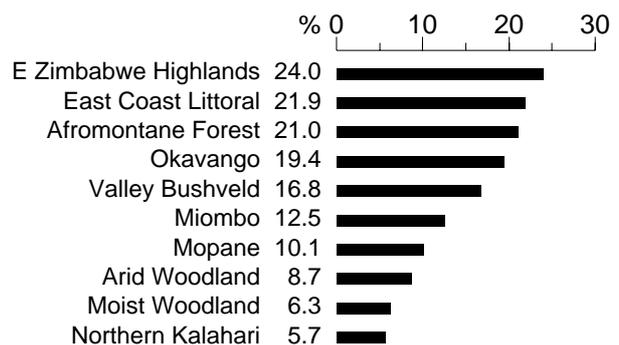
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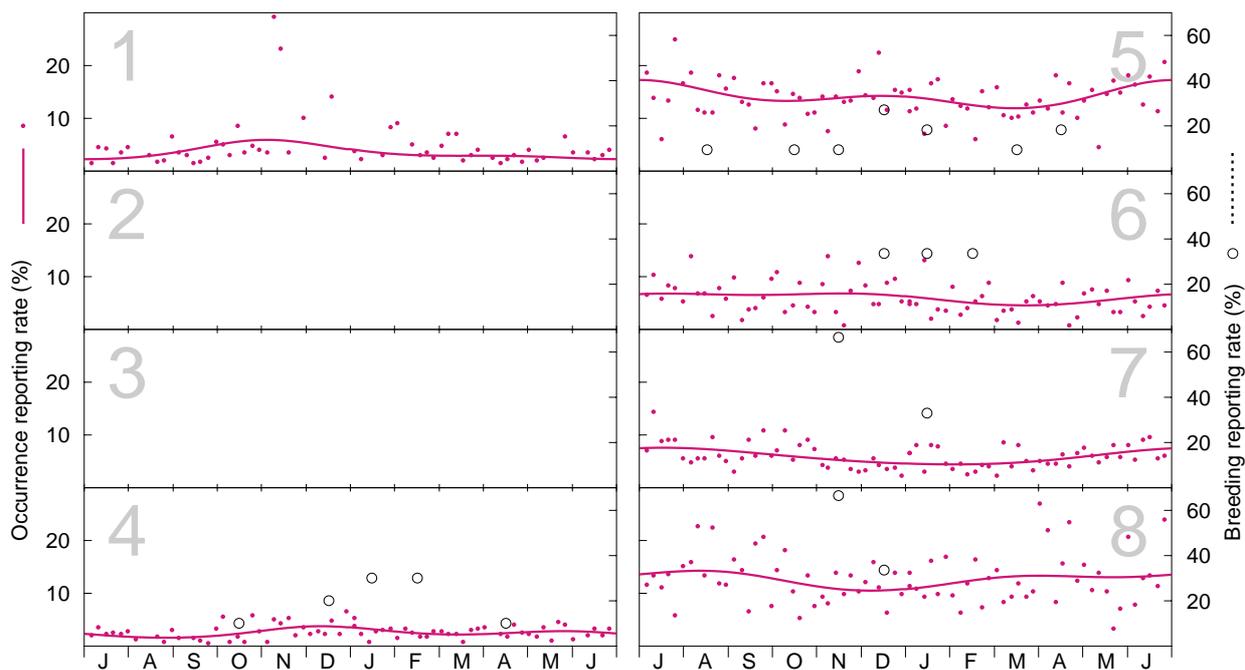
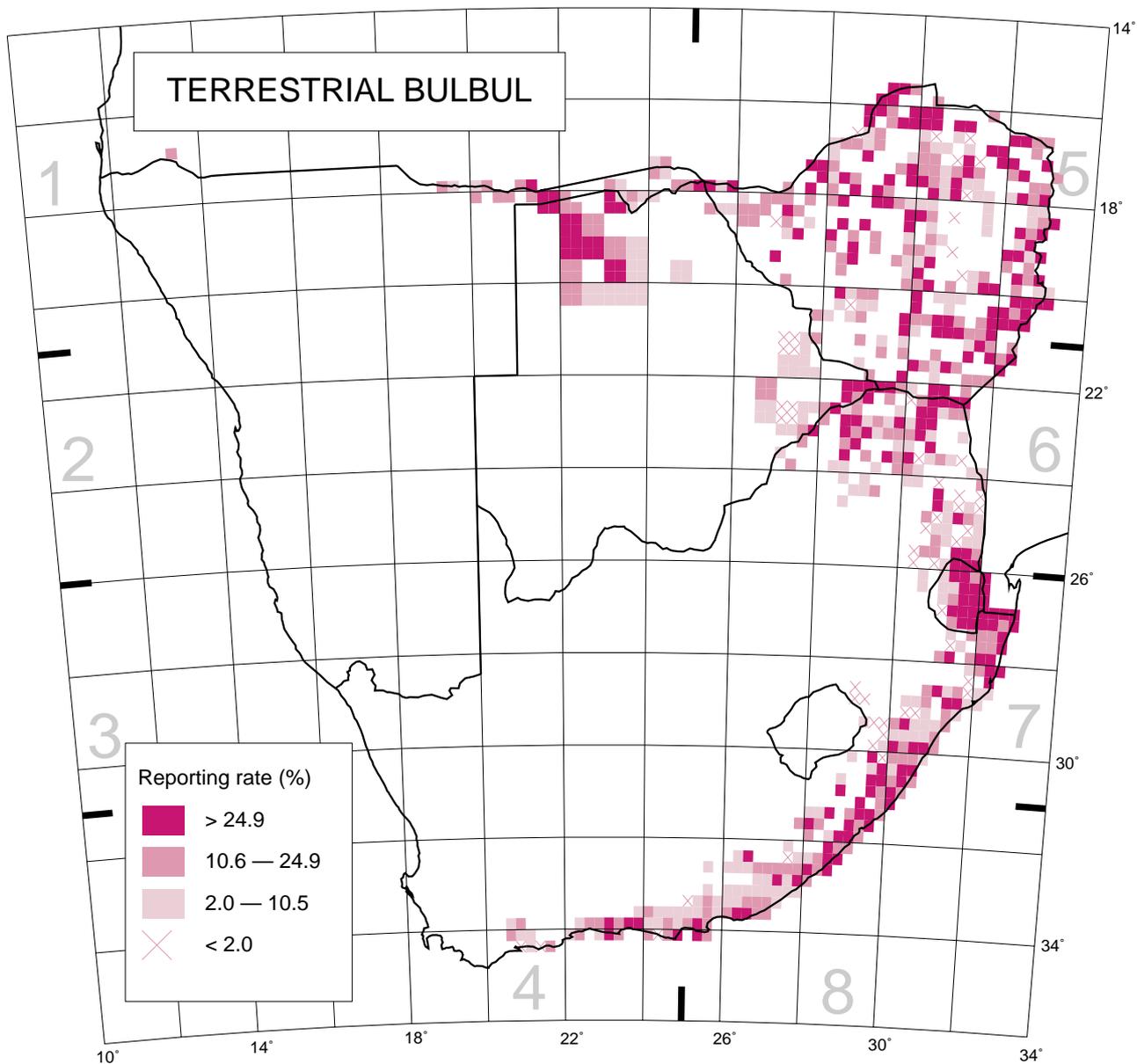
Recorded in 752 grid cells, 16.6%

Total number of records: 8676

Mean reporting rate for range: 17.6%

#### Reporting rates for vegetation types





Models of seasonality for Zones. Number of records (top to bottom, left to right):  
 Occurrence: 113, 0, 0, 219, 1238, 684, 1141, 693; Breeding: 0, 0, 0, 10, 11, 3, 3, 3.