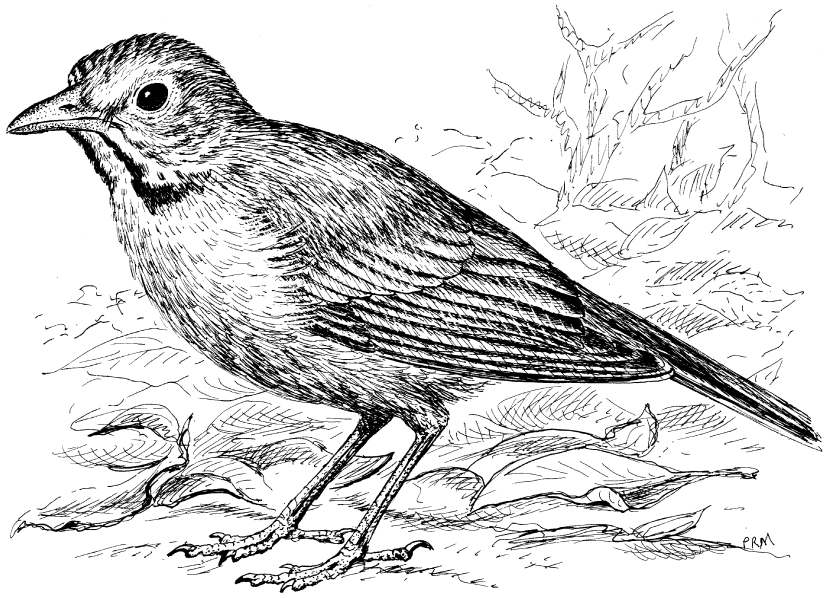


Kurrichane Thrush

Rooibeklyster

Turdus libonyana

The Kurrichane Thrush is found throughout Zimbabwe, most of the Transvaal, Swaziland and KwaZulu-Natal and extends into the hardveld region of eastern Botswana, the Okavango and Caprivi Strip and marginally further west into northeastern Namibia. The four subspecies accepted for the region (Clancey 1980b) have continuous ranges. Its distribution extends northwards to Tanzania, Zaire and Angola.

The highest reporting rates were in Swaziland and the Mashonaland Plateau where it is common to abundant. Despite being rather tame and confiding, it is sometimes confused with the Olive Thrush *T. olivaceus* (e.g. Cowgill & Davis 1994).

Habitat: It prefers woodland and thickets but avoids forest, grassland and savanna. It has readily adapted to plantations and human habitation (Fry *et al.* 1988).

The vegetation analysis clearly shows the preference for moist, broadleaved and mixed woodland habitat. In three preferred biomes, Miombo, Moist Woodland and Eastern Zimbabwe Highlands, the reporting rates were above 45%, while in other tropical woodlands, viz. Arid Woodland, Okavango and Mopane, it exceeded 20%. It avoids *Acacia* woodlands on Kalahari sands.

Movements: It is a resident (Fry *et al.* 1988), and this is confirmed by the atlas data. The small seasonal variation in the reporting rate had a similar pattern in all Zones in which it occurred, reaching a peak in spring and a trough in late-summer. This was probably a consequence of seasonal variation in vocalization which is greatest in spring near the commencement of the breeding season, and least in late-summer during the post-breeding moult.

Breeding: Breeding activity is mainly September–January, but there are some records from almost every month of the year. The models indicate that the peak becomes later southwards. This accords with published egglaying data; there is a September–November peak in Zimbabwe, but October–November in the Transvaal and KwaZulu-Natal (Dean 1971; Irwin 1981; Tarboton *et al.* 1987b). The models indicate somewhat later peaks in breeding activity, but this results from inclusion of all evidence of nesting, including recently fledged chicks.

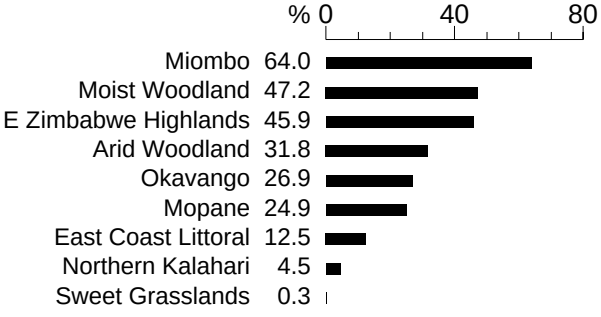
Interspecific relationships: Its distribution was formerly largely allopatric with that of the Olive Thrush. The separation was mainly geographical, but where they were sympatric, different habitats were preferred. The Kurrichane Thrush lived in woodland and the Olive Thrush in forest. Both species have adapted to newly created habitats, such as parks and gardens in suburbia. There is now greater sympatry between the two species in KwaZulu-Natal and the Transvaal, where hybridization has been claimed (Cowgill & Davis 1994). The ecological relationships between these two species are worthy of further study.

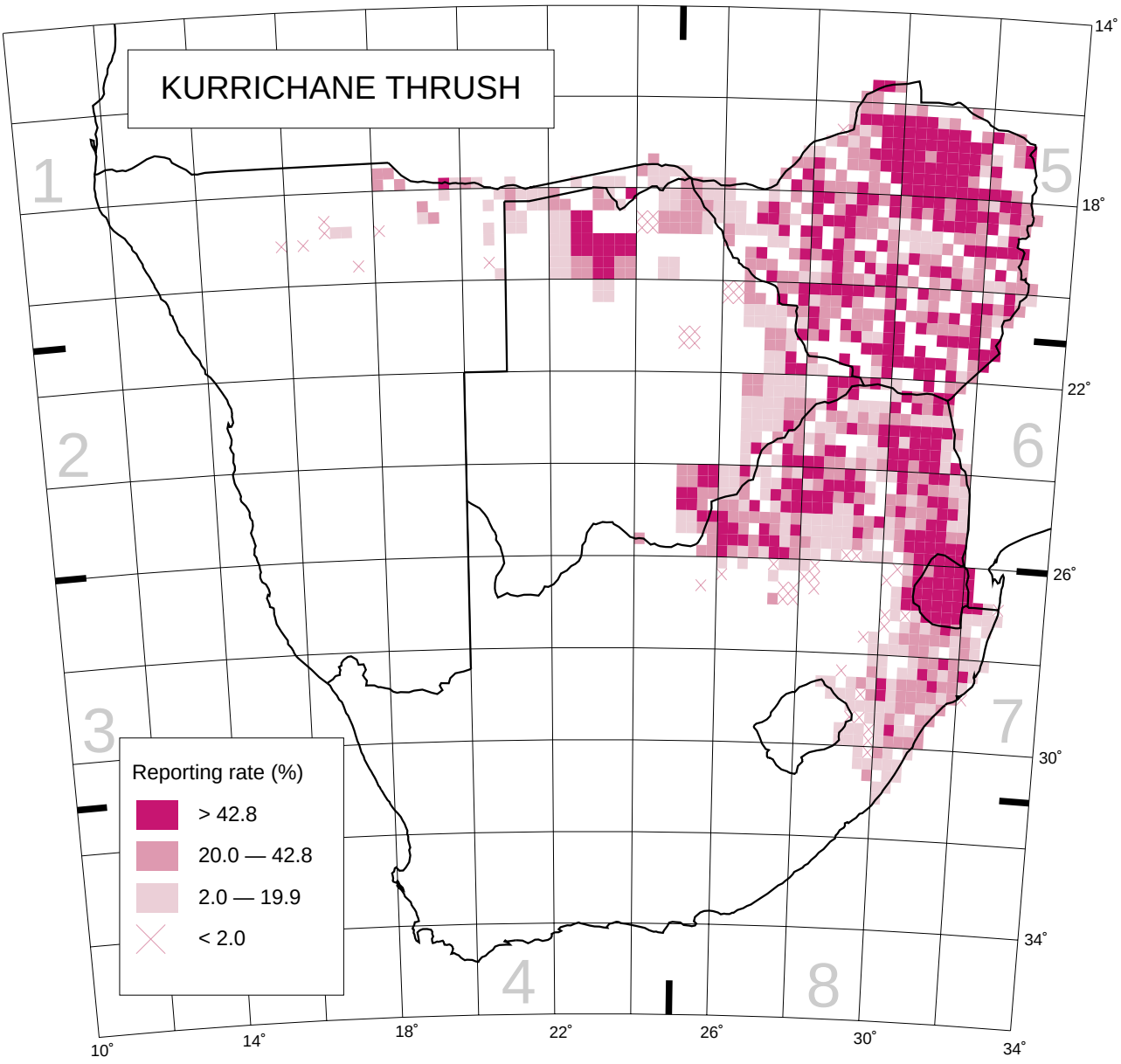
Historical distribution and conservation: The Kurrichane Thrush formerly occupied a more restricted range in South Africa (Roberts 1940; Hall & Moreau 1970). It has expanded its range southwards in KwaZulu-Natal and the Transvaal during the 20th century, and reached the Free State recently. It is not threatened.

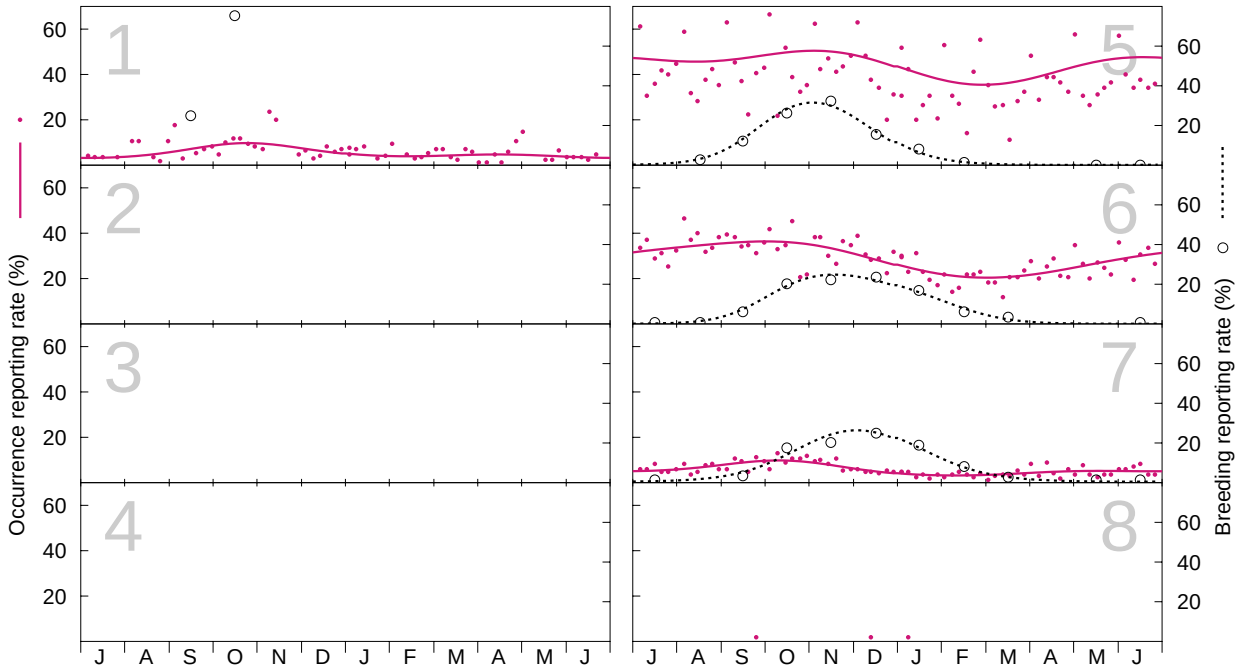
C.J. Vernon

Recorded in 1129 grid cells, 24.9%
Total number of records: 21 206
Mean reporting rate for range: 31.5%

Reporting rates for vegetation types







Models of seasonality for Zones. Number of records (top to bottom, left to right):
Occurrence: 173, 0, 0, 0, 3884, 3281, 1121, 3; Breeding: 4, 0, 0, 0, 236, 312, 84, 0.