

Shorttoed Rock Thrush Korttoonkliplyster

Monticola brevipes

The Shorttoed Rock Thrush is endemic to southern Africa, extending only marginally into southwestern Angola. Its range is largely confined to the arid western and central parts of the subcontinent but is unusual in its lack of conformity to major biomes. Foci of distribution lie along the Namibian escarpment, northeastern parts of the Cape Province and in the western Free State. It also extends into western and central Transvaal, and southeastern Botswana. The atlas has produced no evidence of an isolated population in the Lebombo Range of Swaziland (cf. Parker 1994; *contra* Clancey 1980b and Maclean 1993b).

The two races appear to have distinct ranges with *M. b. brevipes* in Namibia and Angola, and *pretoriae* in South Africa and Botswana. Clancey (1980b) spoke of an intergradation of the two in Griqualand West, but the distribution map suggests a clear break further to the west; this requires confirmation.

It is usually solitary or in pairs. It can be confused with other members of the genus but the atlas data are believed to be reliable.

Habitat: Its preferred habitat is broken ground with trees or tall scrub in areas of relatively low rainfall. Such areas include koppies, escarpments, ridges, valleys, and sometimes level rocky terrain. Particularly in winter it may be

found in flat country and around human habitation. The vegetation analysis demonstrates the importance of the Namibian Escarpment to the western race.

Movements: It has definite seasonal movements and is clearly not resident (Earlé & Grobler 1987; Penry 1994; *contra* Tarboton *et al.* 1987b and Maclean 1993b). Both the models and seasonal maps show dramatic variations in reporting rates accompanied by large expansions and contractions of the range, the winter months having higher reporting rates and larger areas of occurrence. A parsimonious interpretation of these results is that it migrates altitudinally and disperses widely when at lower altitudes in winter. This would account for the higher reporting rates in winter and would conform to a pattern observed in its congeners, the Cape *M. rupestris* and Sentinel *M. explorator* Rock Thrushes. Of the three endemic rock thrushes, the Shorttoed Rock Thrush appears to have the most extensive winter dispersal away from its breeding grounds, perhaps necessitated by scarce food resources in arid country.

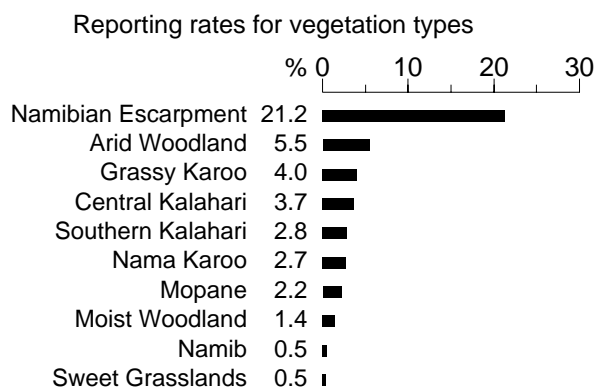
Breeding: Few published records are available. It breeds in spring to late summer when it is presumably at relatively high altitudes. Egg-laying has been recorded October–March in Namibia, August–December in Botswana, and in October in the Transvaal (Tarboton *et al.* 1987b; Skinner 1995a; Brown & Clinning *in press*). The season is probably later in Namibia than further to the south and east, corresponding to a later rainy season in the northwest.

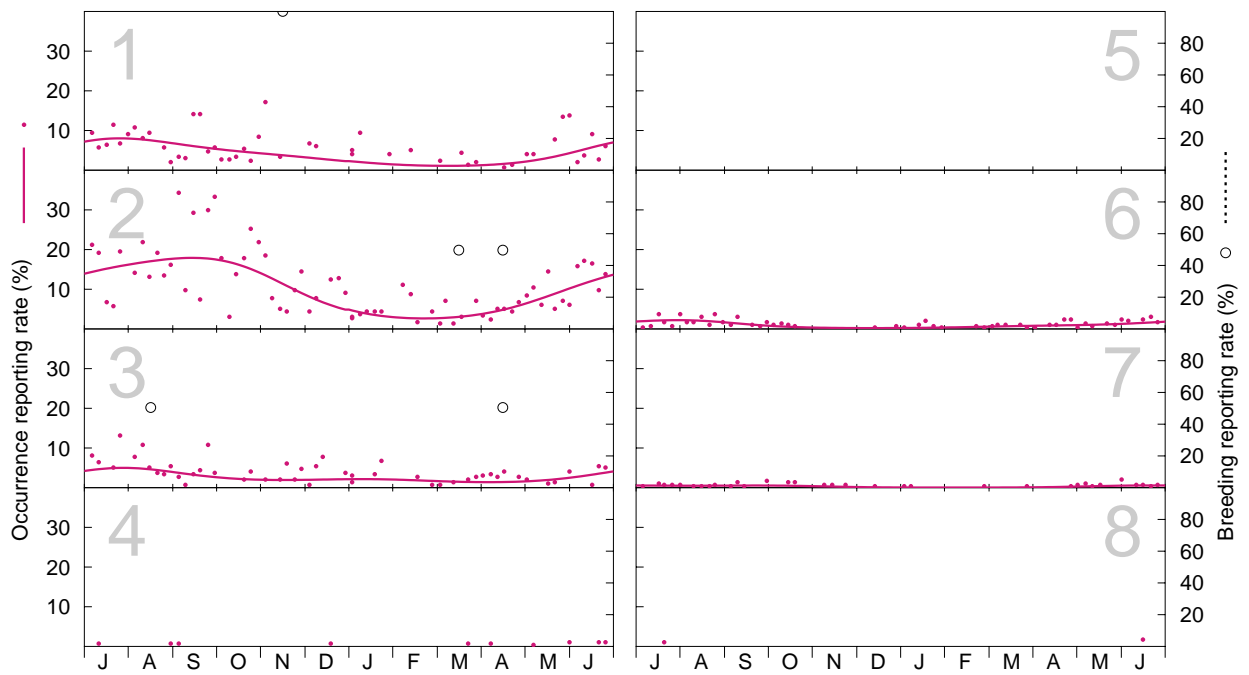
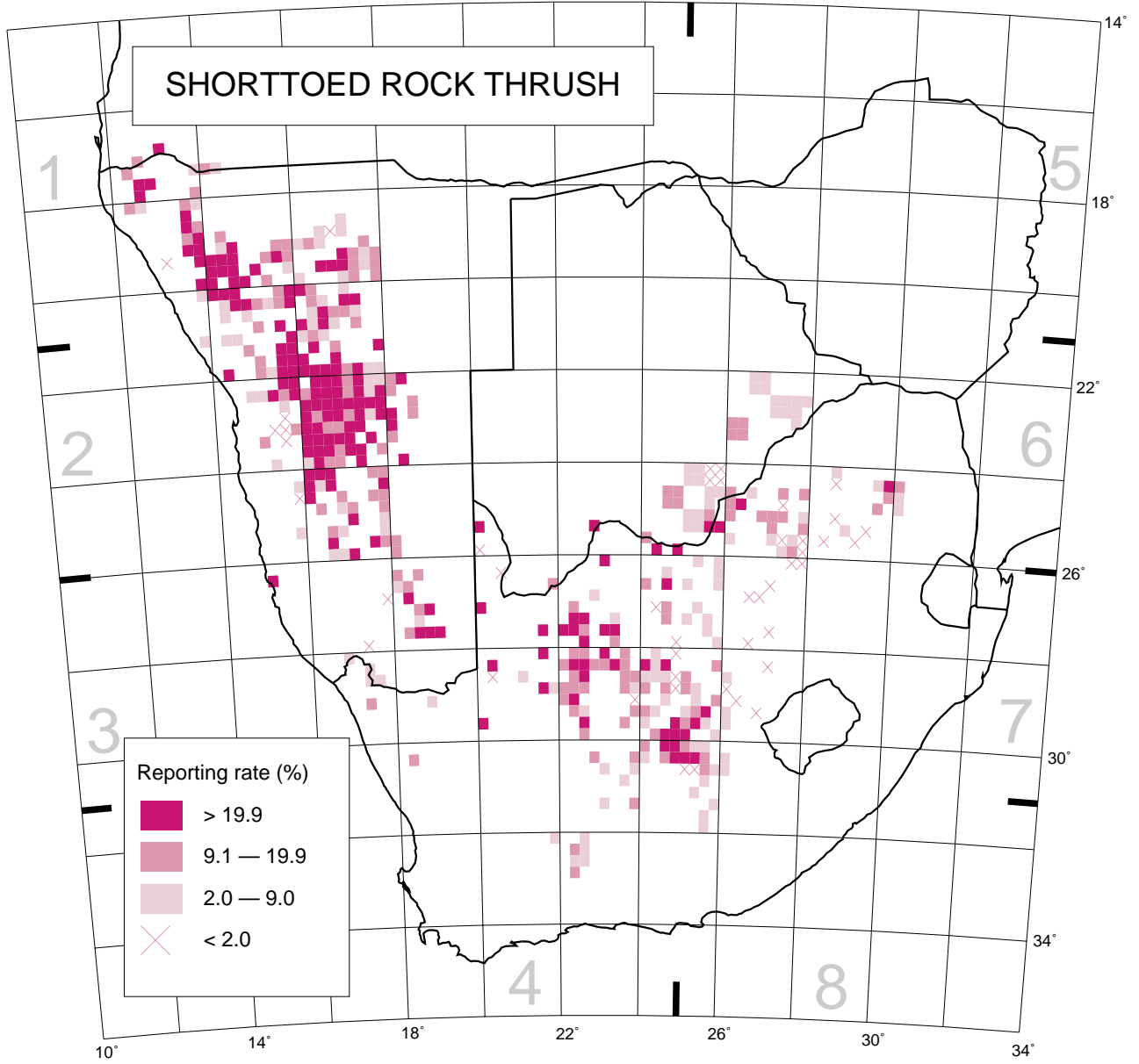
Interspecific relationships: Its range and habitat requirements overlap only slightly with that of the Cape and Sentinel Rock Thrushes, and not at all with the Miombo Rock Thrush *M. angolensis*. It is worth noting that, of the three species of rock thrush endemic to southern Africa, all are dependent on montane habitats and have altitudinal movements but appear to have evolved into separate ecological niches.

Historical distribution and conservation: There is no evidence for changes in distribution, apart from the somewhat uncertain status of a putative isolated population in the Lebombo Mountains (Clancey 1980b). The Shorttoed Rock Thrush is not threatened.

J.A. Harrison

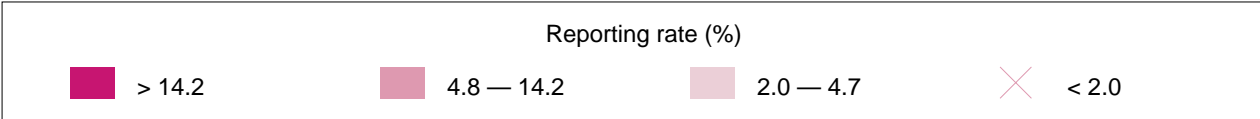
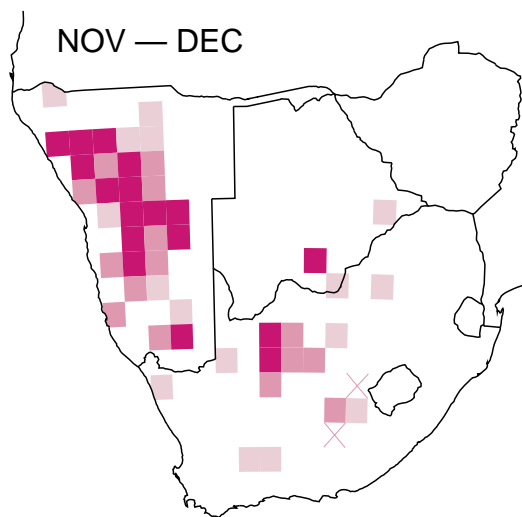
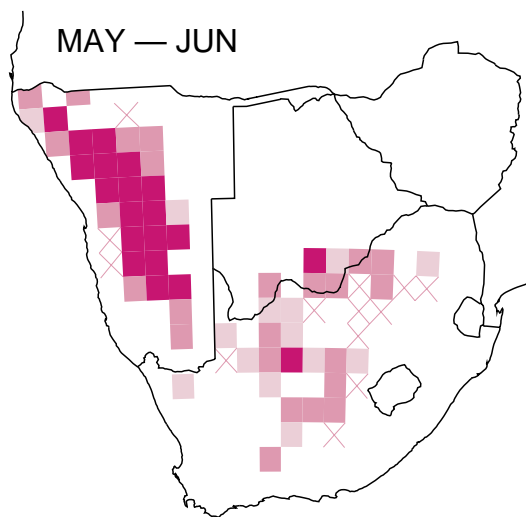
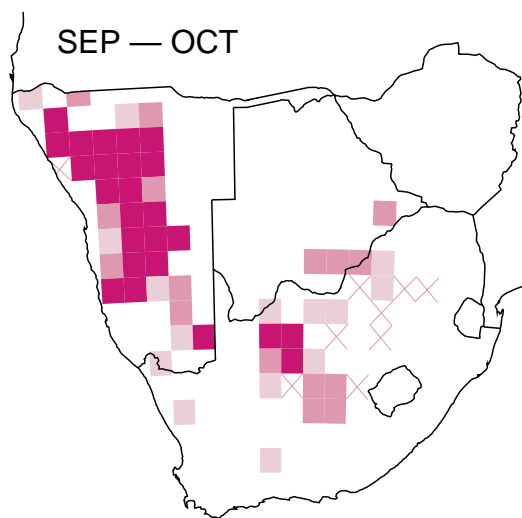
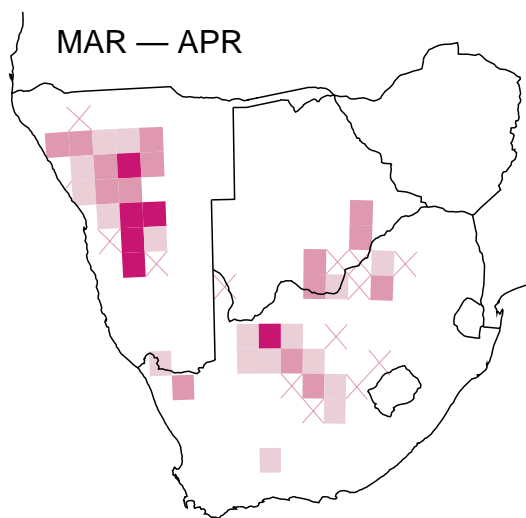
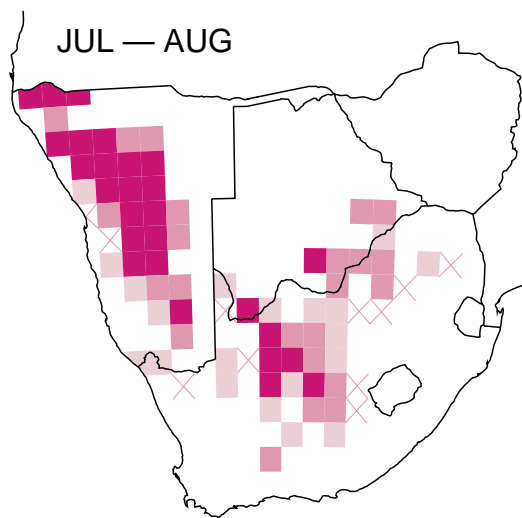
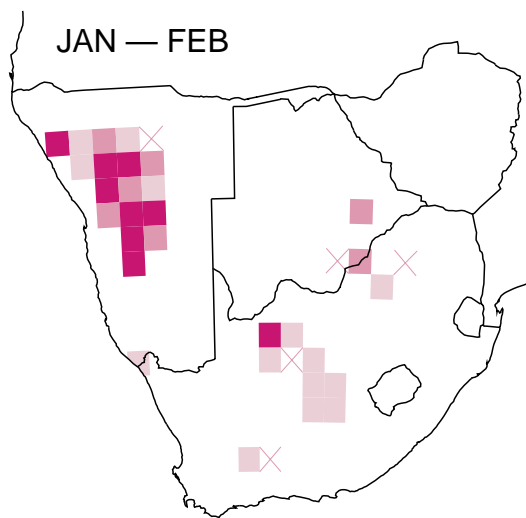
Recorded in 500 grid cells, 11.0%
Total number of records: 2588
Mean reporting rate for range: 12.2%





Models of seasonality for Zones. Number of records (top to bottom, left to right):
 Occurrence: 134, 345, 148, 11, 0, 107, 59, 2; Breeding: 1, 2, 2, 0, 0, 0, 0, 0.

SHORTTOED ROCK THRUSH



Seasonal distribution maps; one-degree grid.