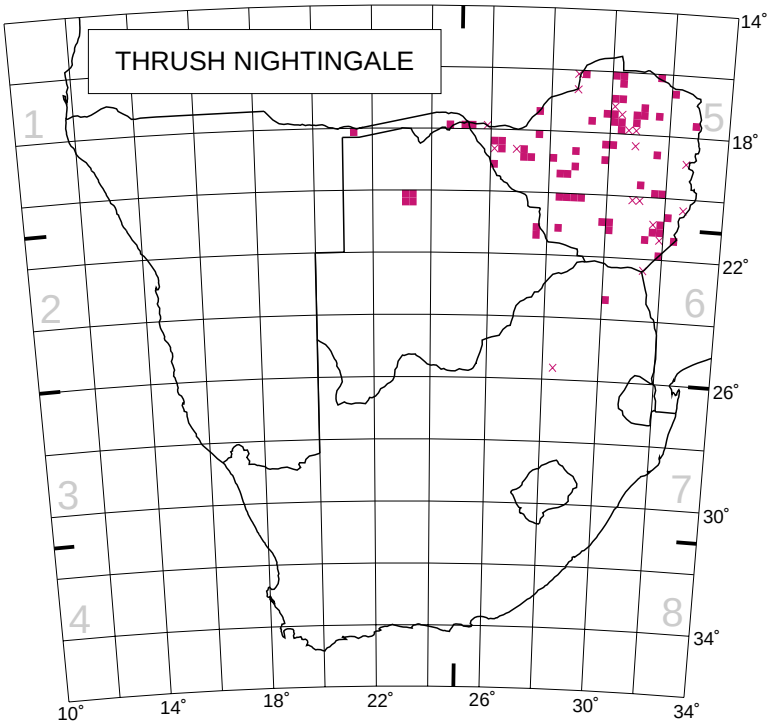
Thrush Nightingale

Lysternagtegaal

Luscinia luscinia



Recorded in 85 grid cells, 1.9%
Total number of records: 195
Mean reporting rate for range: 4.1%

The Thrush Nightingale is a Palearctic migrant breeding in a mid-latitude zone from Denmark to nearly 100°E and spending the nonbreeding season in eastern Africa from Ethiopia to South Africa (Cramp *et al.* 1988). In the atlas region it is found mainly in Zimbabwe with peripheral records from the Caprivi Strip, Botswana and the Transvaal. Subsequent to the atlas period, it was found to be more widespread in northern and eastern Botswana (Hunter 1992; Abernethy & Herremans 1994; Herremans 1994d; Brewster 1995).

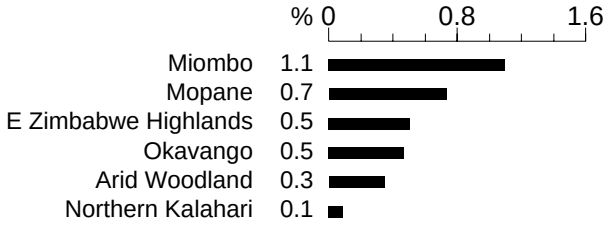
This generally uncommon, skulking and inconspicuous bird is almost totally overlooked unless mist-netted or its remarkably rich, striking subsong is heard. The fleeting glimpses that one normally obtains may lead to misidentification with some robins.

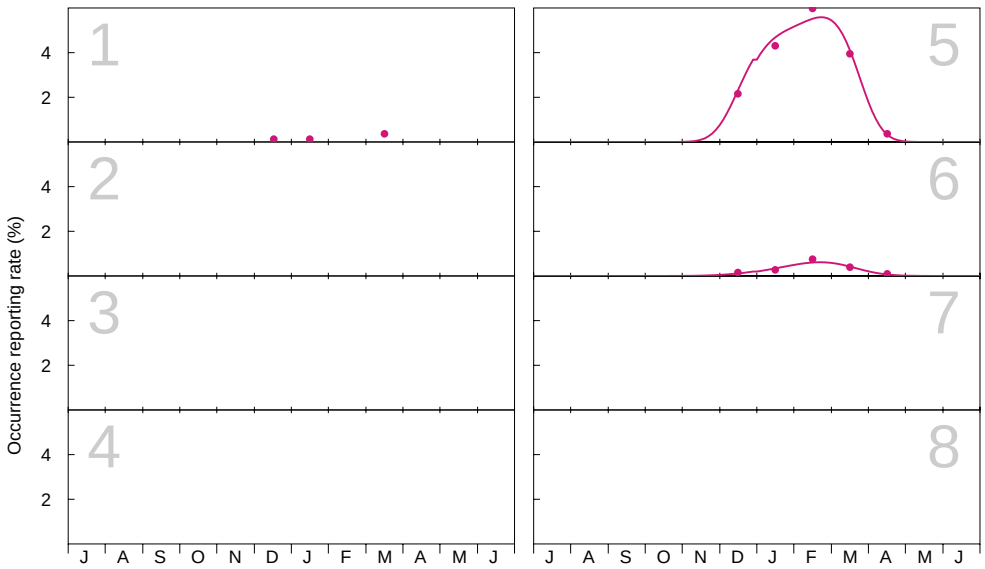
In areas of suitable thicket, quite a few birds may be found in a small area, but a considerable distance may have to be travelled before finding a similar occurrence (pers. obs). Densities of 12 birds/2 ha have been recorded in the Zambezi Valley in Zimbabwe (pers. obs) and of 20 birds/35 ha in *Capparis* thickets along the Chobe River in northern Botswana (Herremans 1993c). It utilizes any type of thicket whether it be in natural wilderness areas or a back garden. Thickets, especially those bearing soft-berried fruits, are particularly favoured and the rapid spread of the alien *Lantana camara* has also created suitable habitat.

It is one of the last migrants to reach southern Africa. Few birds arrive before mid-December; most arrive in January because they move into the region after the southward course of the Inter-tropical Convergence Zone has improved the habitat (Pearson & Lack 1992). Most leave in March but a few remain until early April. Its occurrence in any given locality is unpredictable and it seems to move into areas that have received good early rainfall with lush vegetation conditions prevailing, while other areas that have not received good early rains may not be visited for an entire season, with a possible reversal in a subsequent year (pers. obs).

A.J. Tree

Reporting rates for vegetation types





Models of seasonality for Zones. Number of records (top to bottom, left to right):
Occurrence: 5, 0, 0, 0, 155, 31, 0, 0.