

## Whitebrowed Robin

### Gestreepte Wipstert

#### *Erythropygia leucophrys*

This most widespread member of its genus occupies savanna woodlands across most of central and southeastern Africa. To the north, the Whitebrowed Robin ranges as far as Somalia and the southern Sudan; in the west it is found from Gabon southwards through Angola to northern Namibia (Keith *et al.* 1992). It exhibits well-marked geographic variation in plumage (Clancey 1964b, 1975b) and some of the designated subspecies were originally described as full species. Birds in the Okavango basin, *E. l. ovamboensis* (Clancey 1975b), are distinctive in that adult males in particular have virtually unstreaked undersides with a pronounced orange wash (e.g. Randall 1987a). These birds resemble the Miombo Bearded Robin *E. barbata* and the Bearded Robin *E. quadrivirgata*, and are frequently mistaken for the latter which also occurs in southern Africa.

The Afrikaans name is much more appropriate than the English one, describing as it does two of the species' main characteristics, the streaking on the tail and the exaggerated raising and lowering of the tail. It also has two white bars on the wing coverts which distinguish it from all similar-sized birds in its habitat. It is a fairly vociferous species with harsh alarm rattles and a far-carrying, simple whistled song (more varied in the wet season). These calls make it easy to locate. The atlas data are accurate and comprehensive.

**Habitat:** The vegetation analysis provides a clear indication of preference for woodland and bushveld habitats. This scrubrobin is commonest in patches of dense undergrowth in thornveld and broadleaved woodland, but is generally rather sparse in miombo woodland. It does not venture far into closed forest, though it occurs in dune scrub on the fringes of coastal forest. It is not especially characteristic of disturbed habitats but may linger on in fragments of woodland isolated in the course of agricultural or urban development. It generally avoids arid Kalahari thornveld.

**Movements:** It is resident virtually throughout its range. T.E. Hobson (pers. comm.) of Jansenville (3224DC) in the eastern Cape Province reported that it disappeared from his area in the winter months. This is at the southern extremity of the range where some local movements may occur in

response to seasonal climatic extremes. The models show little variation in reporting rates but show a slight decrease in January–February, the time when most adults are moulting and consequently silent.

**Breeding:** Atlas data indicate that breeding activity extends September–March; 69% of clutches are laid October–November (Keith *et al.* 1992). Clutches are normally of 2–3 eggs, the smaller number predominating in northeastern KwaZulu-Natal. Losses of nest contents to predators are high and replacement broods are common (pers. obs).

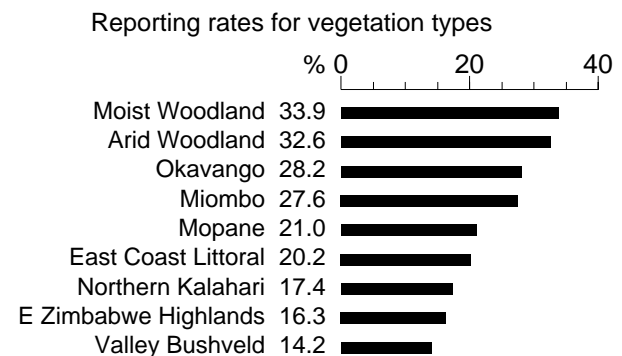
**Interspecific relationships:** It overlaps widely with the Kalahari Robin *E. paena* and, in the east, with the less closely related Bearded Robin. Where such overlap occurs, each species tends to occupy its preferred habitat, the Kalahari Robin frequenting more open habitat than the Whitebrowed Robin which in turn occupies more open habitat than the Bearded Robin.

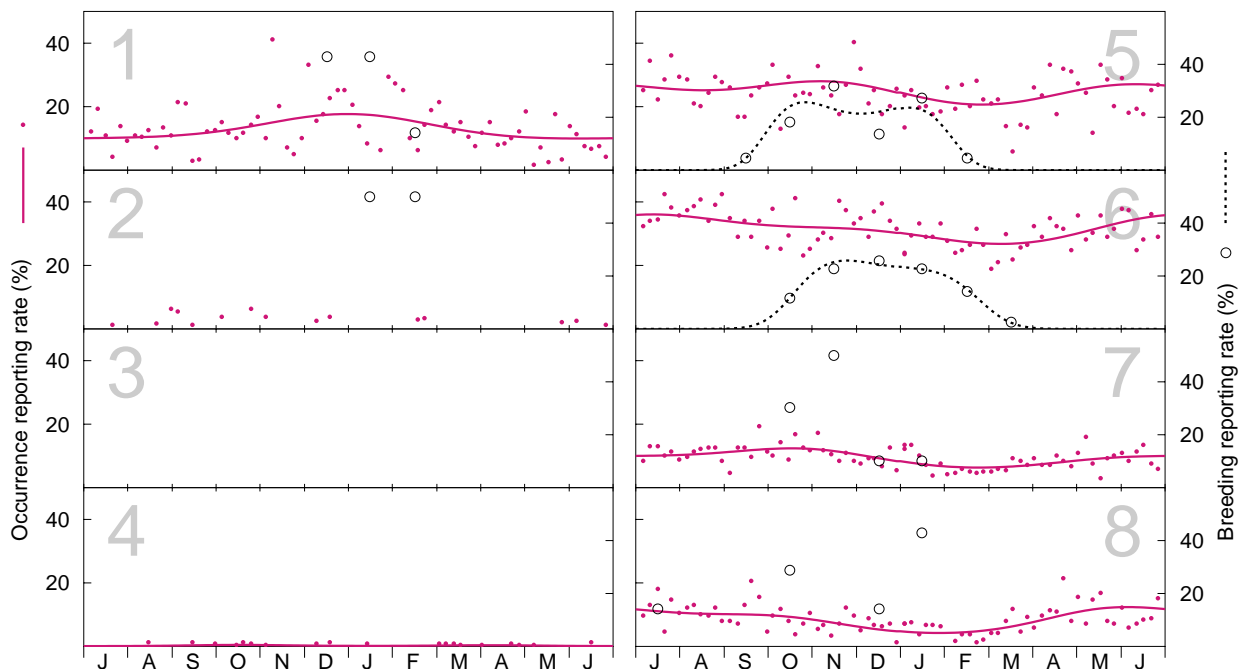
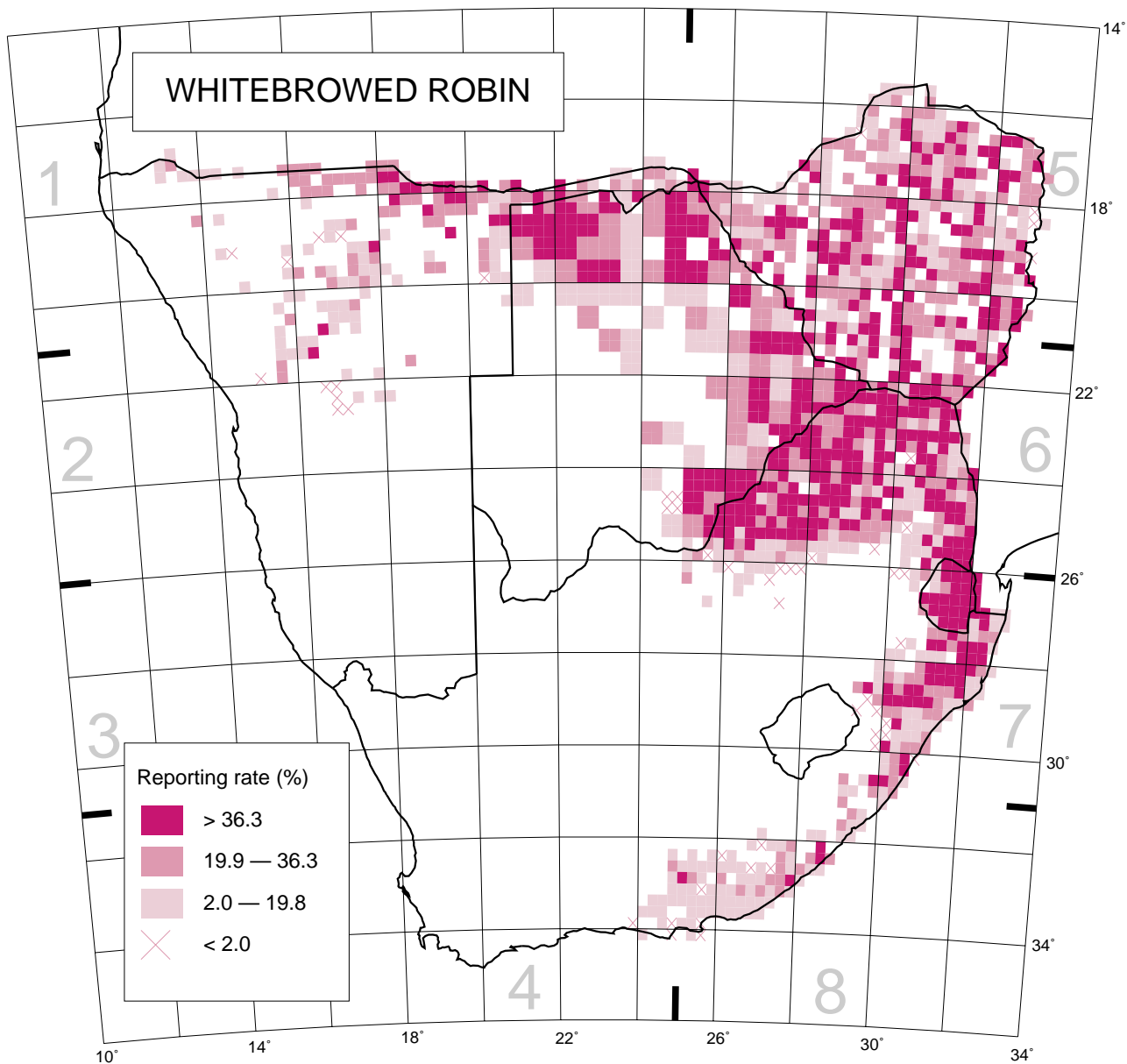
It is an occasional host of Klaas's Cuckoo *Chrysococcyx klaas* (Skinner 1993).

**Historical distribution and conservation:** No evidence exists to suggest that the distribution has changed in historic times. Because of its wide distribution and choice of habitat, the Whitebrowed Robin is not considered to be threatened in any part of its range.

T.B. Oatley

Recorded in 1531 grid cells, 33.7%  
Total number of records: 17 528  
Mean reporting rate for range: 24.4%





Models of seasonality for Zones. Number of records (top to bottom, left to right):  
 Occurrence: 406, 19, 0, 23, 2190, 3588, 1839, 470; Breeding: 7, 2, 0, 0, 22, 35, 10, 7.