

African Sedge Warbler

Kaapse Vleisanger

Bradypterus baboecala

The African Sedge Warbler is a common Afrotropical resident, widely distributed throughout sub-Saharan Africa (Ginn *et al.* 1989). In southern Africa, the species occurs throughout Zimbabwe, where it is most common in the wetland areas of the Mashonaland plateau. It is also common in the Okavango region of northern Botswana and in the adjacent Caprivi strip. It is mostly absent from the drier Kalahari and Karoo regions. In South Africa its strongholds are in the wetter regions, the southwestern Cape Province and southcentral KwaZulu-Natal. It is also frequent and widespread in the south, central and eastern Transvaal, as well as in adjacent Swaziland. Because of the many scattered records it is difficult to judge whether or not the ranges of the four subspecies recognized (Clancey 1980b) are continuous.

This skulking species is shy and hard to see. It forages low down in the vegetation, mostly over water and is often overlooked unless calling. When glimpsed, it can be mistaken for other *Bradypterus* or even *Acrocephalus* warblers, but it has a loud, distinctive call on which most records are based.

Habitat: It occurs in reedbeds and swamp vegetation, especially in sedges (*Cyperus*) and bulrushes (*Typha*) around lagoons and estuaries, marshes, sewage ponds, dams and vleis and along streams and rivers (Maclean 1993b). It occurs in biomes where the appropriate wetland habitat exists.

Movements: Atlas data reveal no evidence of large-scale seasonal movement and it appears to be mainly resident throughout its range. Irwin (1981), however, indicated extensive movements, particularly during the winter months, including the use of ephemeral habitat. Reporting rates peak during the summer breeding period when it is singing and displaying.

Breeding: Atlas data indicate that the breeding season in the southwestern Cape Province is August–January, longer than previously thought (Maclean 1993b). While peak egg-laying is in September in the Cape Province, it appears to be later, during midsummer, further north (Winterbottom 1968a; Irwin 1981; Tarboton *et al.* 1987b).

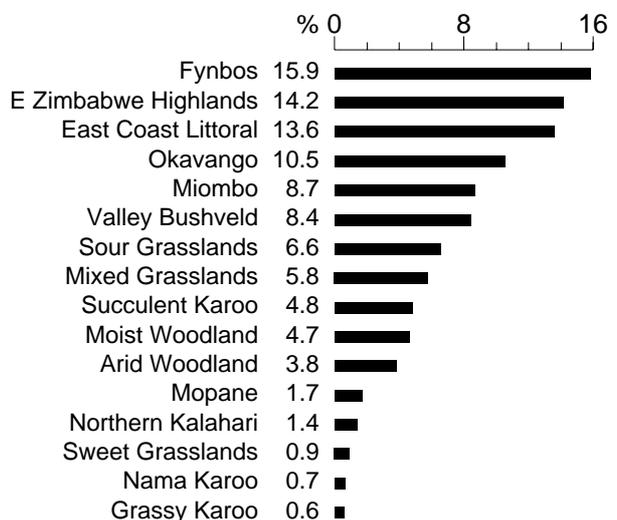
Interspecific relationships: It may compete with various *Acrocephalus* and *Bradypterus* warblers, but seems to feed the lowest down in dense aquatic vegetation. It appears to rely on permanent waterbodies and does not seem to colonize new wetlands as rapidly as the Cape Reed Warbler *A. gracilirostris*.

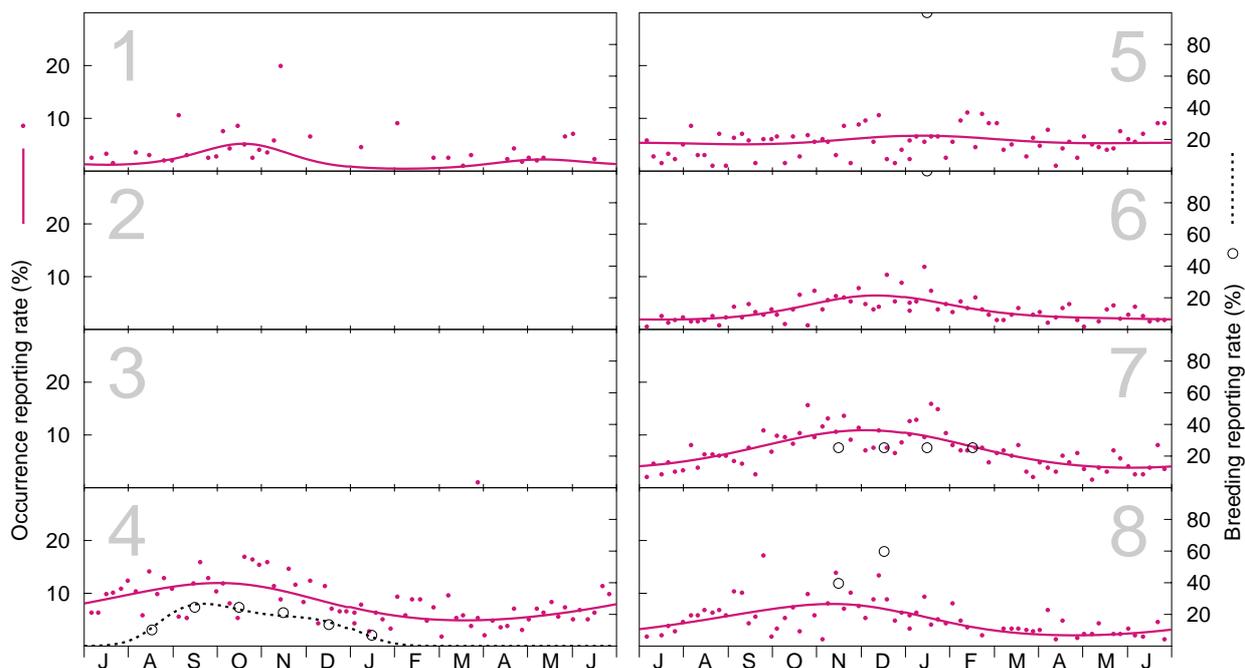
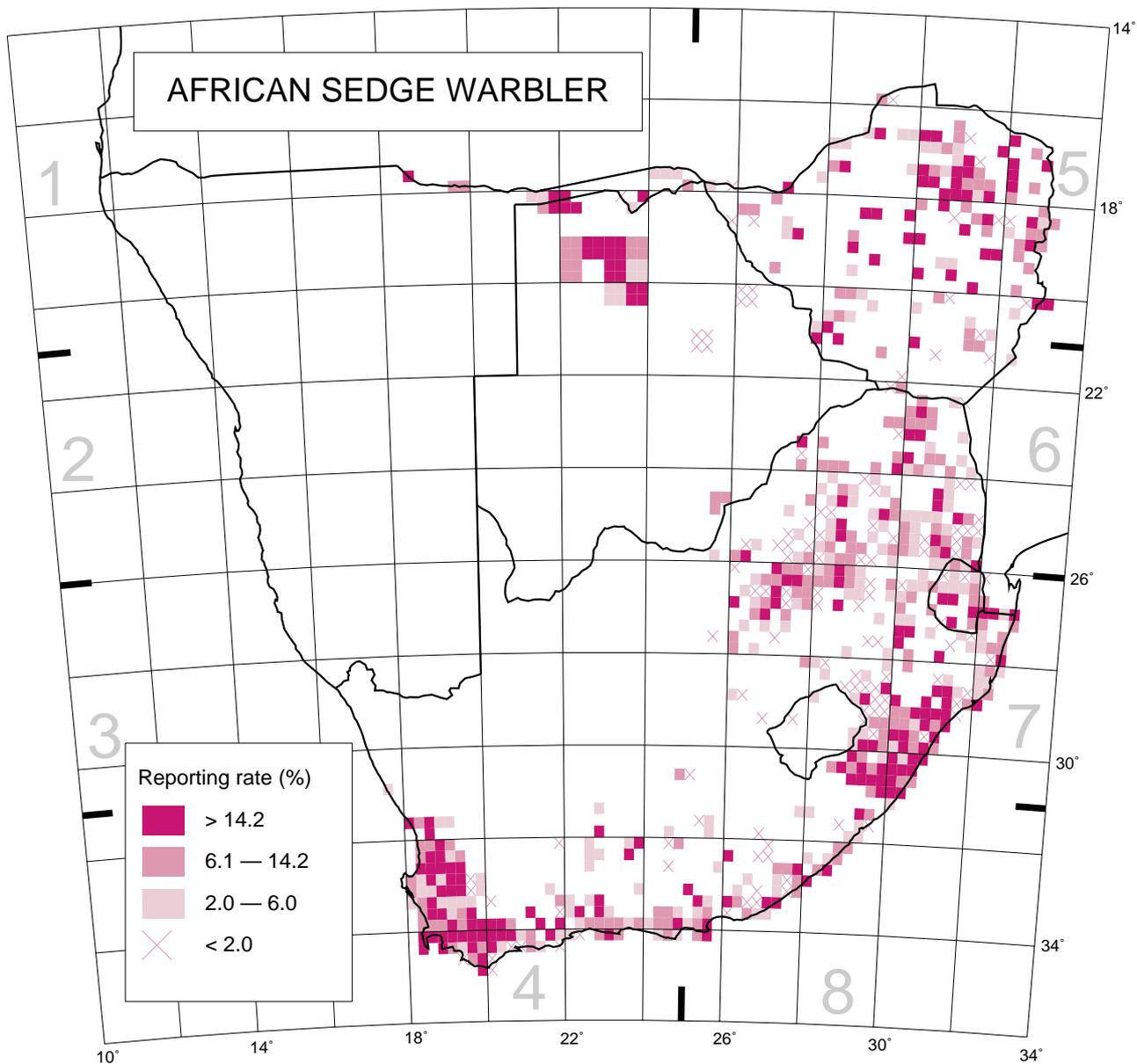
Historical distribution and conservation: There is no evidence to suggest that the current distribution is any different from the historical distribution. It has probably become more common in the southwestern Cape Province owing to impoundments which have created additional habitat. The African Sedge Warbler is widespread in Africa and is not included in lists of threatened species (Brooke 1984b; Collar *et al.* 1994).

K.N. Barnes

Recorded in 749 grid cells, 16.5%
Total number of records: 9565
Mean reporting rate for range: 11.0%

Reporting rates for vegetation types





Models of seasonality for Zones. Number of records (top to bottom, left to right):
 Occurrence: 66, 0, 1, 704, 493, 395, 1376, 258; Breeding: 0, 0, 0, 29, 1, 1, 8, 5.