



Chinspot Batis

Witliesbosbontrokkie

Batis molitor

The Chinspot Batis is common over most of the eastern and northeastern parts of southern Africa. It ranges from the eastern Cape Province in the vicinity of Port Elizabeth (3325DC), eastwards through KwaZulu-Natal and eastern Swaziland, over most of the Transvaal and Zimbabwe, and through eastern and northern Botswana to the Caprivi Strip in Namibia. Further west, in the northern half of Namibia, it becomes rarer and localized. It avoids the higher parts of the Drakensberg escarpment. Further north it is widespread to 3°N, although absent from the rain forests of the Zaire Basin (Hall & Moreau 1970). The two subspecies in the atlas region have continuous ranges (Clancey 1980b).

The male is difficult to distinguish from the males of the Pririt *B. pririt* and Mozambique *B. soror* Batises, but the species overlaps only marginally with those species; the females are distinctive. The species' presence is often revealed by its diagnostic three-note call. The atlas records can be considered accurate.

Habitat: The range corresponds almost exactly with a combination of all the major woodland types, except most of the Kalahari where it is replaced by the Pririt Batis. In the eastern Cape Province and KwaZulu-Natal, it is especially associated with *Acacia* spp., and Skead (1967b) considered it typical of valley bushveld, thornveld and karroid brokenveld. Further north it is equally at home in miombo and broadleaved woodlands. It is frequently found in thickets. Winterbottom (1971c) described it as 'not uncommon'

in Mopane. Evergreen forest and alien vegetation are rarely used.

Movements: It is generally considered to be sedentary. The models show a post-breeding decrease in reporting rates during summer in the east (Zones 5–8), which is probably associated with seasonal variations in calling frequency, especially as the decreases in the east correspond with the post-breeding period of moult, and show the same staggered pattern from north to south as do the breeding data.

Breeding: The season is clearly defined; it has a summer peak and the onset is not synchronous throughout the range: it begins earliest in the north (August in Zone 5), becoming progressively later to the south (November in Zone 8). This pattern could be a function of temperature and is confirmed by egg-laying data from KwaZulu-Natal (Dean 1971), the Transvaal (Tarboton *et al.* 1987b) and Zimbabwe (Irwin 1981).

Interspecific relationships: It is a member of a superspecies (Hall & Moreau 1970) with the other *Batis* flycatchers. In southern Africa these are the Cape *B. capensis*, Woodward's *B. fratrum*, Pririt and Mozambique Batises. They are all ecologically separated from the Chinspot Batis in the style of a classic superspecies; two of them are forest species, so scarcely interact with the others, and the Pririt and Mozambique Batises, woodland species, geographically replace the Chinspot Batis to the drier west and moister east respectively.

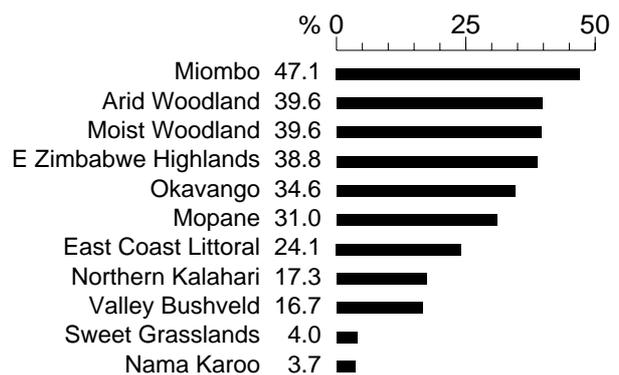
Historical distribution and conservation:

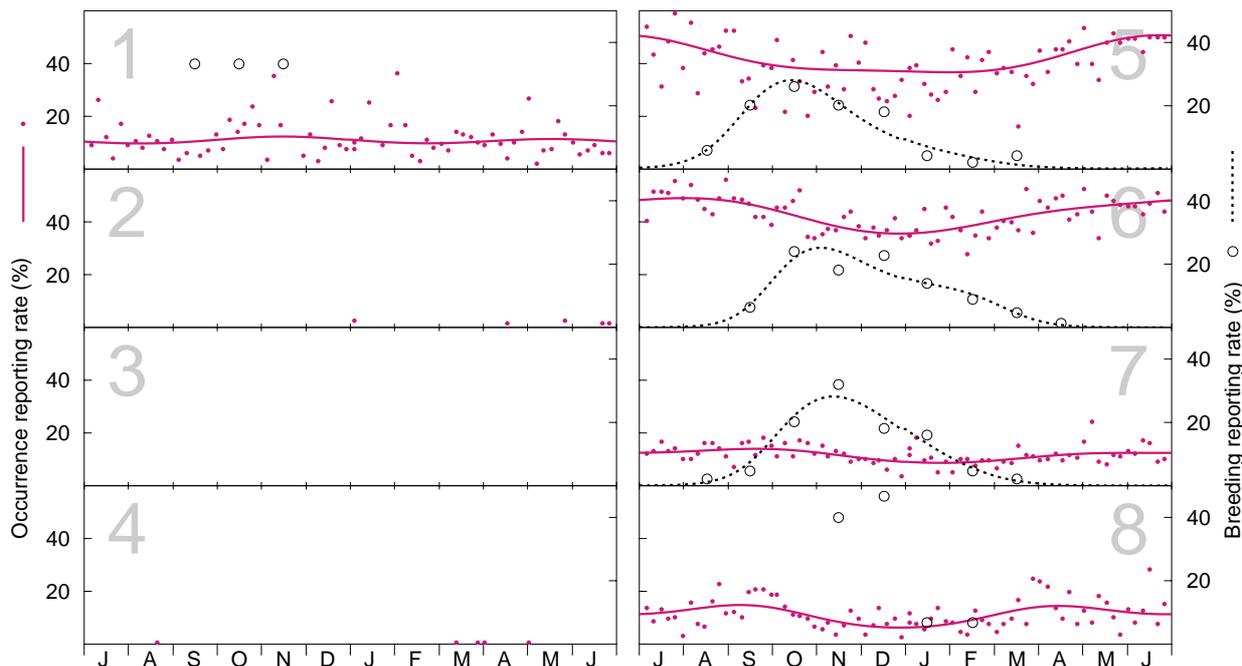
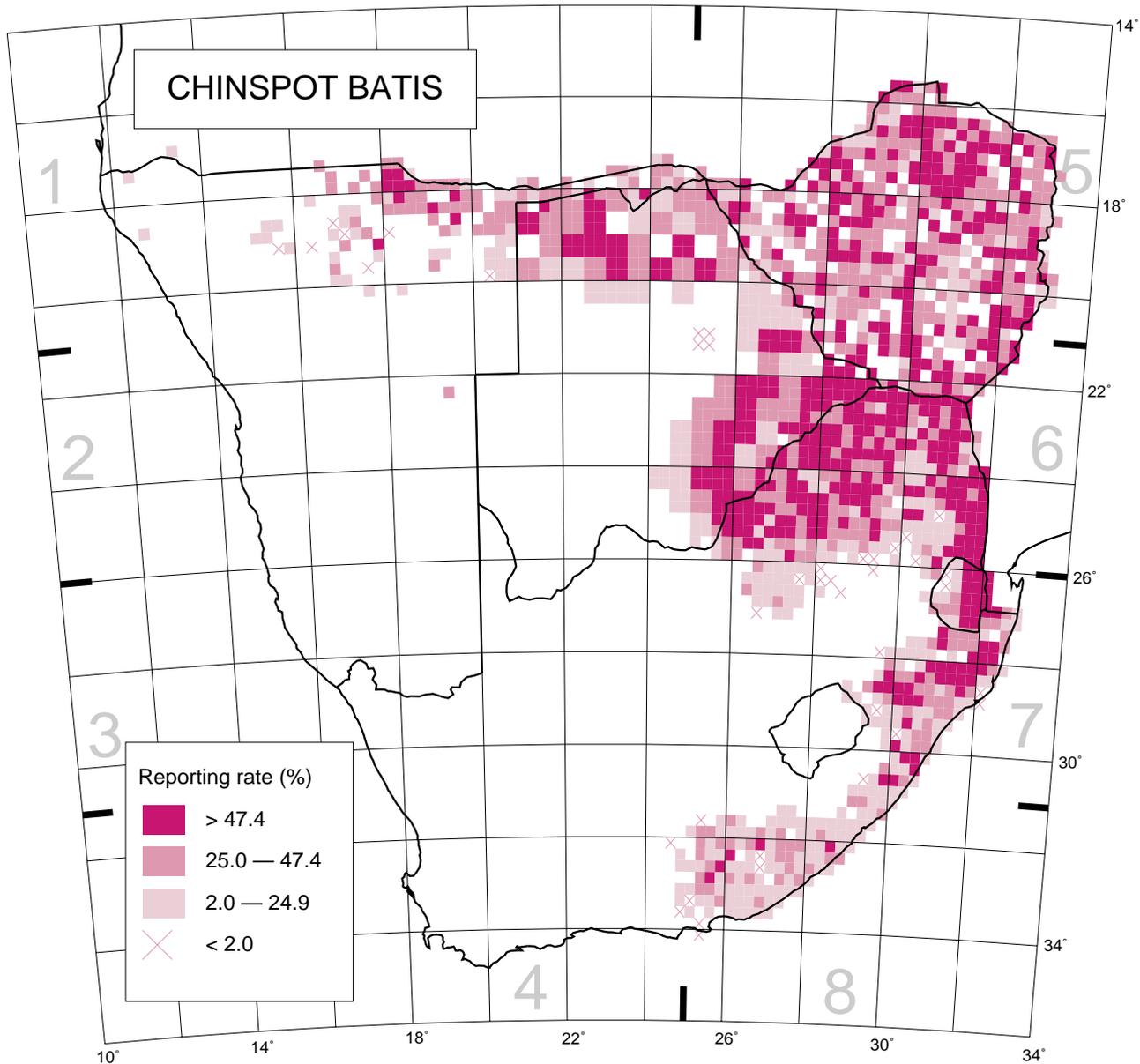
The Transvaal (Tarboton *et al.* 1987b) and Natal (Cyrus & Robson 1980) atlases show patterns very similar to the current data. In the eastern Cape Province, the range boundary has not moved from the vicinity of Somerset East (3225DA; Skead 1967b) in 30 years. The Chinspot Batis is not threatened.

D.N. Johnson

Recorded in 1556 grid cells, 34.3%
Total number of records: 23 611
Mean reporting rate for range: 30.7%

Reporting rates for vegetation types





Models of seasonality for Zones. Number of records (top to bottom, left to right):
 Occurrence: 357, 6, 0, 5, 3669, 4897, 2265, 620; Breeding: 3, 0, 0, 0, 50, 66, 44, 15.