



## Pririt Batis

### Priritbosbontrokkie

#### *Batis pririt*

The Pririt Batis is essentially endemic to southern Africa, extending only marginally into southern Angola (Harris & Arnott 1988). It is confined to semi-arid regions. It is common in the Cape Province (except in fynbos and the eastern grasslands), western Free State, most of Namibia (except the southern Namib, northern succulent Karoo and the taller woodlands in the northeast), the Kalahari in Botswana, and marginally into the southwestern Transvaal. There is a marked break in distribution in the Karoo, corresponding to high-lying and virtually treeless regions on the escarpment and central plateau, and the Bushmanland plains. This gap does not coincide with the ranges of the two currently recognized subspecies (Clancey 1980b), which have continuous ranges in the northern Cape Province. The isolated southern population calls for closer taxonomic evaluation.

It occurs in pairs or small family groups (Harris & Arnott 1988; Maclean 1993b) and associates with mixed bird parties. It is quite tame and inquisitive, and the atlas data are comprehensive and reliable for most of the range. The males of the Pririt and Chinspot *B. molitor* Batises closely resemble one another and, where they overlap, males imitate the song of the other species to establish interspecific territories (Herremans 1992c). They overlap only marginally, but can easily be confused in these areas unless the dissimilar females are seen.

**Habitat:** It inhabits dry woodland, particularly along watercourses (Tarboton *et al.* 1987b; Hockey *et al.* 1989; Maclean 1993b), where it forages in the middle and lower strata of small trees and dense bushes. It prefers *Acacia* bushveld, but also occurs in riverine *Tamarix usneoides* (Harris & Arnott 1988; but see Brooke (1992) who implied that it is uncommon in *Tamarix*), *Grewia*, *Ziziphus*, *Boscia* and *Terminalia* bushveld. It also inhabits and benefits from the ubiquitous alien Mesquite *Prosopis* spp. thickets in the Karoo (D.G. Allan pers. comm.). From the distribution map and vegeta-

tion analysis, obvious strongholds occur along the Namibian Escarpment, in the Central and Southern Kalahari, and in the Nama Karoo. It occurs more sparsely in the Grassy and Succulent Karoo, Namib, Sweet Grassland and in the biomes where it comes into contact with the Chinspot Batis (Northern Kalahari, Arid Woodland and Mopane).

**Movements:** There are no widespread regular movements documented and the models seem to confirm this. There may be some movement into the southwestern Cape Province during winter (Hockey *et al.* 1989); also it is occasionally found to the east of its breeding range during winter and drought periods (Tarboton *et al.* 1987b; pers. obs).

**Breeding:** Atlas breeding records show an extended summer breeding period (September–May). Breeding has also been recorded in July (Maclean 1993b) and August (Skinner 1995a), and may be opportunistic at any time of the year (Maclean 1993b). A pattern of late-summer breeding in the northwest, early to midsummer breeding in the northeast, and spring breeding in the southwest, would be the expectation based on typical rainfall patterns. This pattern is vaguely discernible but the data are few for most Zones.

**Interspecific relationships:** Over most of its range it is the only batis present, but along an extensive common boundary in the north and east it comes into contact with the Chinspot Batis (Harris & Arnott 1988). This occurs in northern Namibia (Komen 1987a), Botswana (Anon. 1988; Brewster 1991), the southwestern Transvaal, and eastern Cape Province, and there seems to be regular interaction between these two species in those regions (Herremans 1992c). In view of the preference of Pririt Batis for low, mixed thornveld habitat, the virtual absence from arid woodland on the hardveld of eastern Botswana is remarkable, particularly since it occupies similar habitat in northcentral Namibia. The situation reflects competitive exclusion by the Chinspot Batis, which has a stronghold in central Botswana, right at the edge of its distribution. In the southern Cape Province, the Pririt Batis marginally overlaps the Cape Batis *B. capensis*, but is generally separated by habitat (though see Pocock 1963).

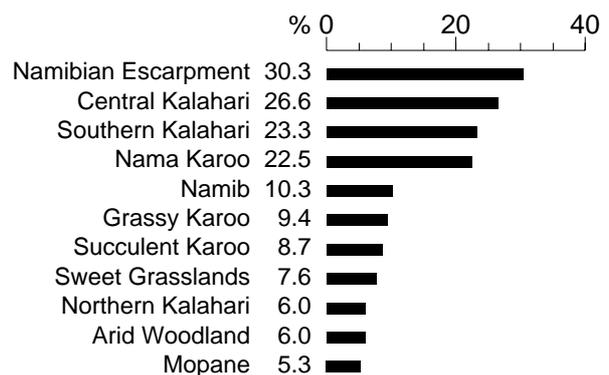
It is a host of Klaas's Cuckoo *Chrysococcyx klaas* (Harris & Arnott 1988).

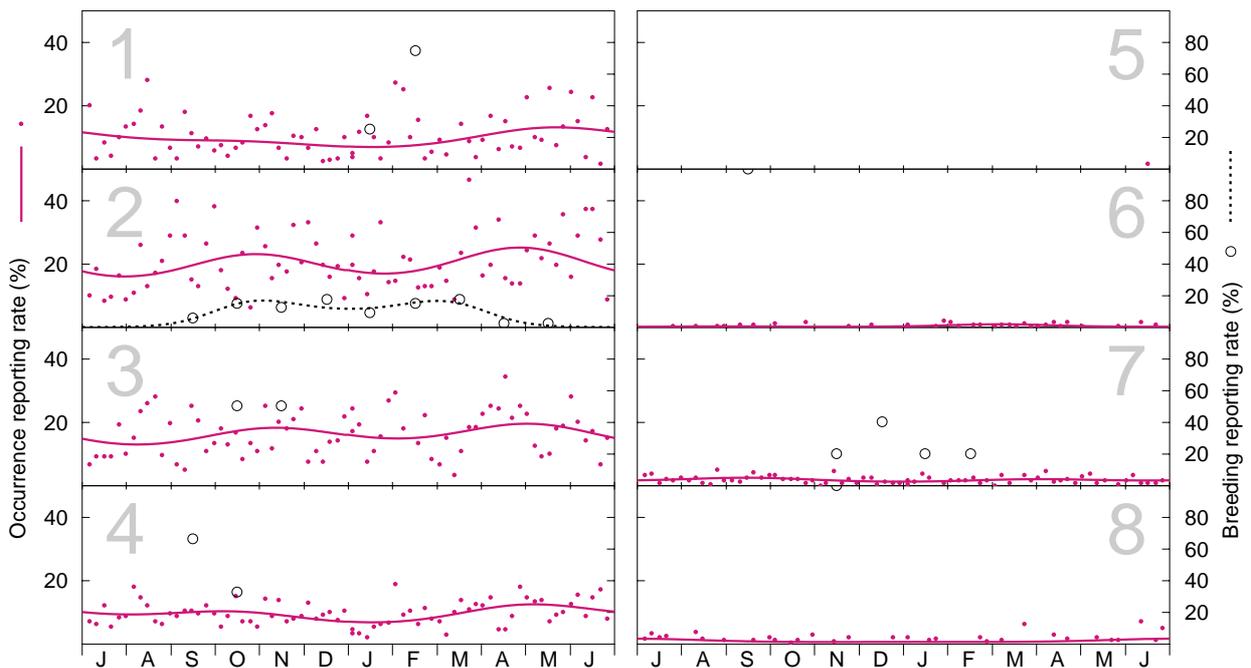
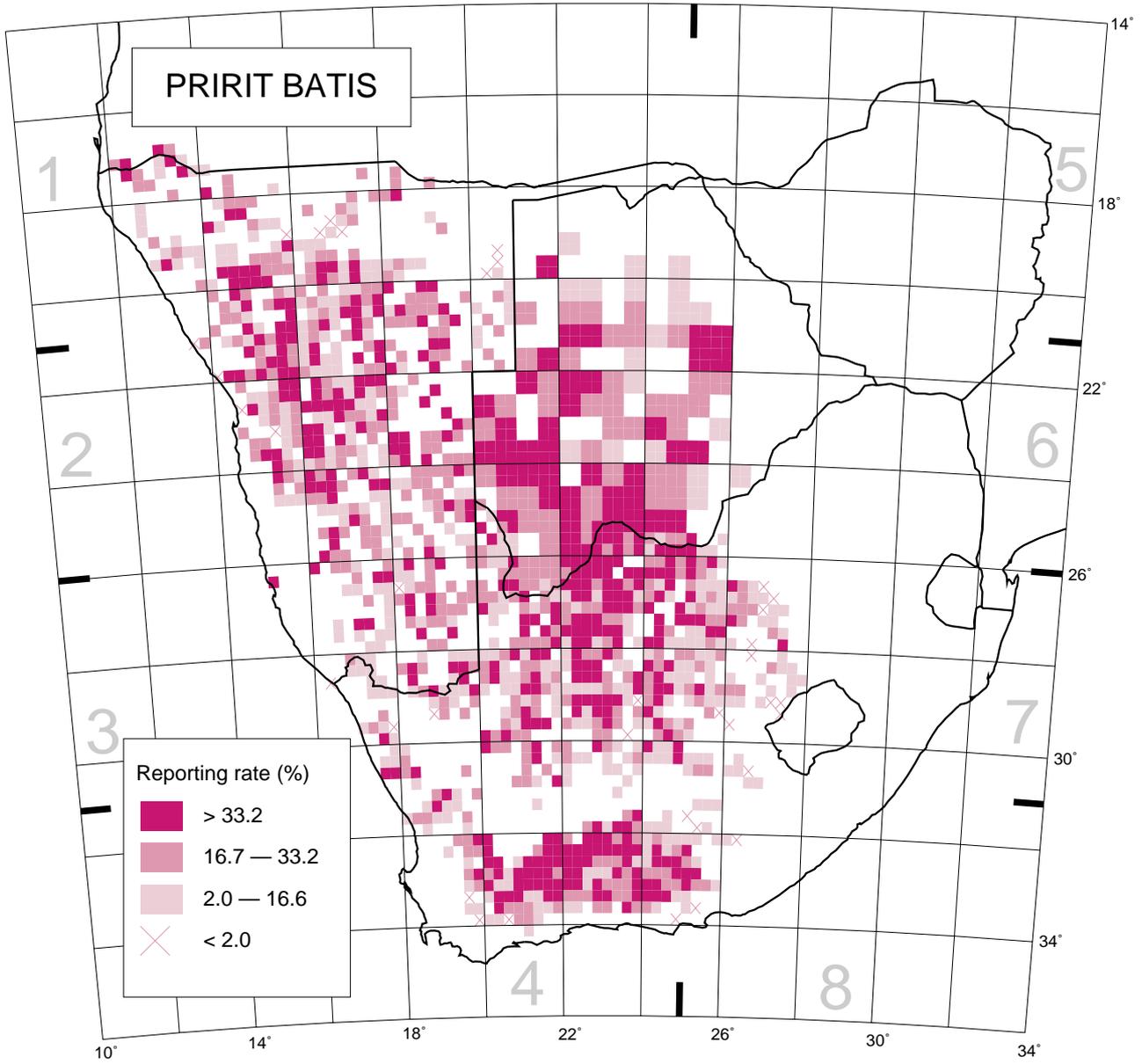
**Historical distribution and conservation:** It is common in many parts of its large range and does not seem to be under any threat. It probably benefits from bush encroachment in response to overgrazing, the most extensive habitat modification in the Kalahari basin.

*M. Herremans*

Recorded in 1594 grid cells, 35.1%  
Total number of records: 7734  
Mean reporting rate for range: 23.2%

#### Reporting rates for vegetation types





Models of seasonality for Zones. Number of records (top to bottom, left to right):  
 Occurrence: 334, 734, 906, 855, 1, 48, 365, 52; Breeding: 4, 33, 4, 6, 0, 1, 5, 1.