

Bushveld Pipit

Bosveldkoester

Anthus caffer

The Bushveld Pipit is confined to eastern and southern Africa. In the latter region it occurs in three distinct areas: eastern Botswana and central Zimbabwe; the central Transvaal and extreme southeastern Botswana; and the eastern Transvaal, eastern Swaziland and northern KwaZulu-Natal; each of these populations represents a separate subspecies (Clancey 1990b). In Mozambique the species is found south of the Save River.

It is one of a triad of small Afrotropical pipits along with the Shorttailed *A. brachyurus* and Sokoke *A. sokokensis* Pipits. Its dimensions suggest a phylogenetic relationship with the latter endemic of the East African coast. It is moderately polytypic with a highly fragmented range. Some five or six races are admissible, three in southern Africa. *A. c. mzimbaensis* occurs to the north and west of the Limpopo catchment, while there is also a break between *caffer* to the west and *traylori* to the east of the Transvaal escarpment. The geographical variation of the species is still poorly understood.

It is generally sparse and often highly localized. It is unobtrusive, but its characteristic call sometimes reveals its presence. It is mostly encountered singly but becomes moderately gregarious during the nonbreeding season. It has few salient features but is larger and has a longer tail than the almost equally small Shorttailed Pipit. It was probably commonly overlooked and under-recorded during the atlas period.

Habitat: It occurs in the south of its range from near sea-level to c. 2000 m on the eastern plateau where it occurs in various types of bushveld savanna. Highest reporting rates were in Moist and Arid Woodlands. It is found on the ground, often in bare or overgrazed places liberally sprinkled with dry animal droppings, but it flits into tree cover when flushed. In some parts of the range it occurs in *Acacia* woodlands, and in Zambia is recorded from drainage lines in *Brachystegia* woodland where it is very sparse (Clancey 1990b).

Movements: Its movements are not well understood but examples of the nominate race of the Transvaal plateau have been recorded from northeastern Zimbabwe. The race *mzimbaensis*, which breeds in dry country from northeastern Botswana east to Zimbabwe, undertakes a post-breeding movement to northern Zambia, adjacent Zaire and Malawi. The southeastern lowland race *traylori* seems to be essentially sedentary (Clancey 1990b). Birds were present throughout the year in all parts of the range and the atlas reporting rates do not support the notion of comprehensive migrations.

Breeding: Egg-laying has been recorded in summer, October–March (Dean 1971; Irwin 1981; Tarboton *et al.* 1987b; Maclean 1993b), and the few atlas records agree with this.

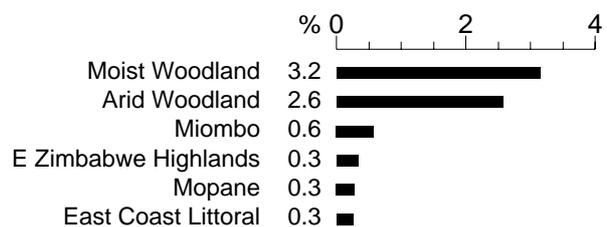
Interspecific relationships: In the nonbreeding season it often consorts with mixed bird parties of actively foraging bushveld passerines.

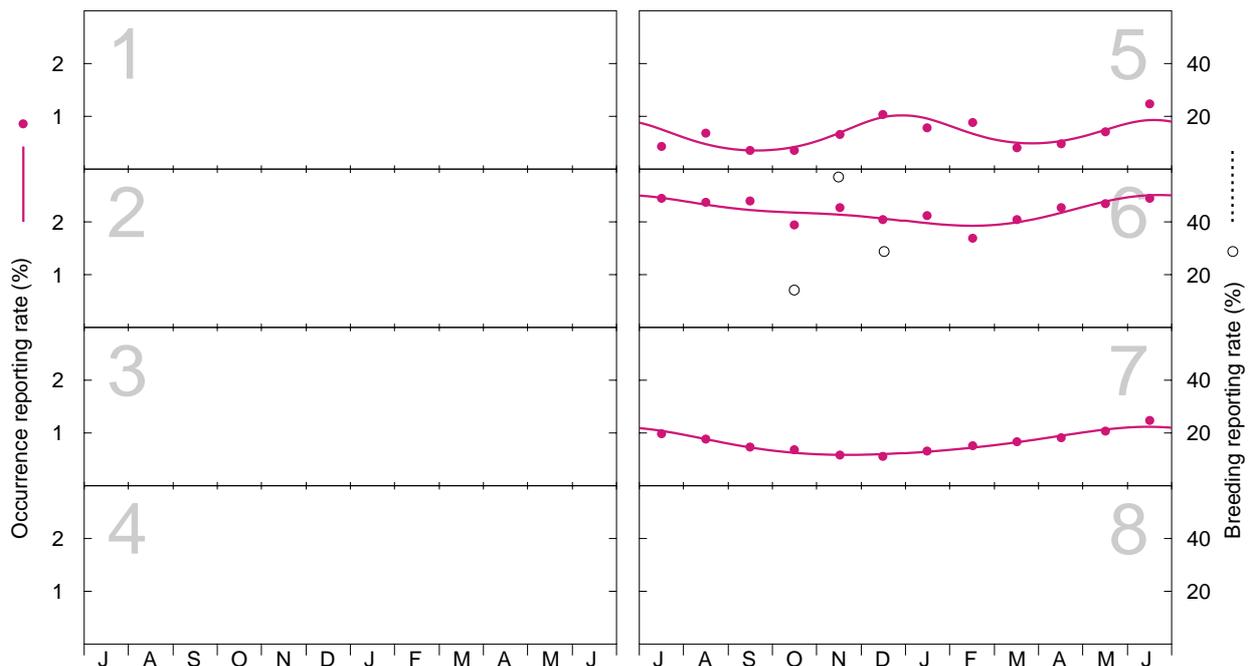
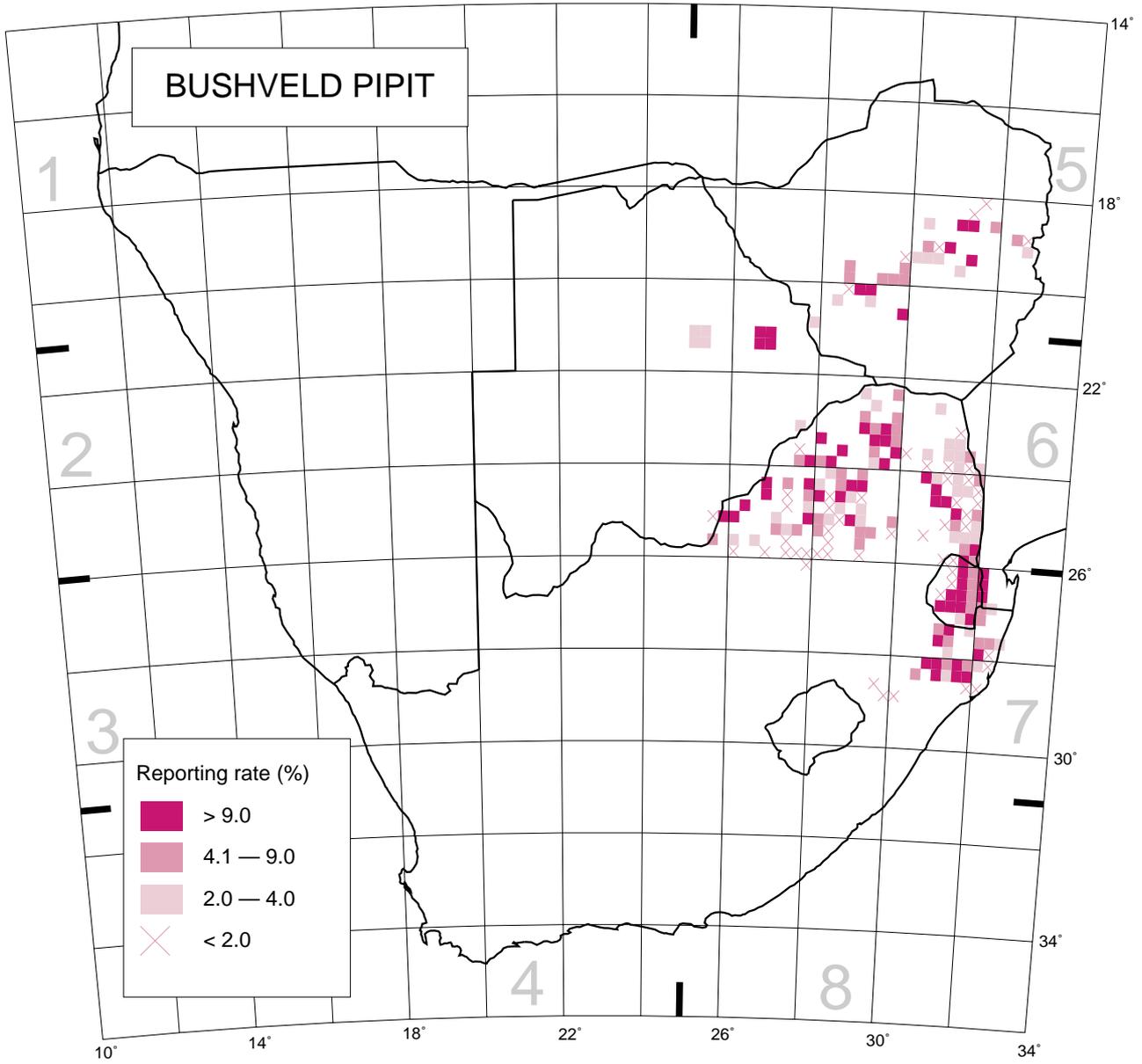
Historical distribution and conservation: The historical range is not known to have differed from the present; the southern African population is not known to have been affected by anthropogenic development and at present the Bushveld Pipit is not noticeably threatened.

P.A. Clancey

Recorded in 216 grid cells, 4.8%
Total number of records: 996
Mean reporting rate for range: 4.7%

Reporting rates for vegetation types





Models of seasonality for Zones. Number of records (top to bottom, left to right):
 Occurrence: 0, 0, 0, 0, 75, 537, 366, 0; Breeding: 0, 0, 0, 0, 0, 7, 0, 0.