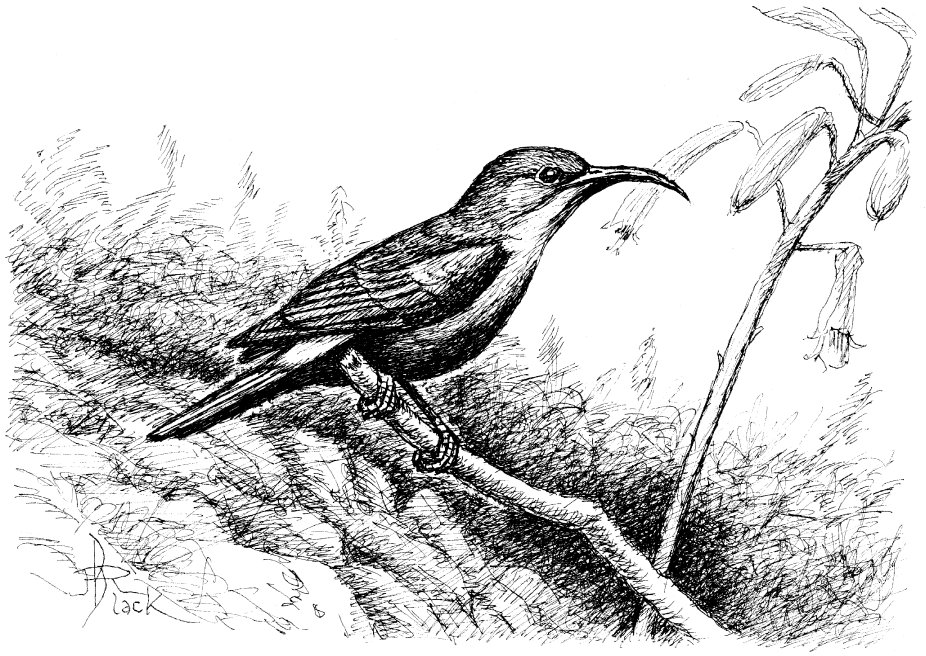


Grey Sunbird

Gryssuikerbekkie

Nectarinia veroxii

This is strictly a coastal and subcoastal species occurring southwards from Somalia to Humansdorp (3424BB) in the eastern Cape Province (Skead 1964b). The two subspecies in the region (Clancey 1980b) have continuous ranges on the present map.

The Grey Sunbird is the least colourful of southern African sunbirds and the male is easily overlooked as a female of other sunbird species if the red pectoral tufts are not seen; there is also the possibility of misidentification with immature males of the 'doublebanded' group of sunbirds which assume adult plumage with the development of the red breast band at the distal ends, hence giving the impression of red pectoral tufts (pers. obs). It also usually inhabits the interior or top of the forest canopy where it is inconspicuous except when its distinctive call-note is heard.

Habitat: Although found most frequently in the East Coast Littoral, in the eastern Cape Province it is also quite common in well-developed Valley Bushveld, extending marginally inland to suitable stands of Afromontane Forest. It may also enter adjacent, well-developed dry woodland types (Skead 1964b) and will visit suitable nearby nectar sources such as aloes, where concentrations of up to 20 birds may be found in winter in northern KwaZulu-Natal (pers. obs).

Movements: It is considered to be resident with some local movements (Maclean 1985c). A degree of seasonal movement, however, is indicated in the models. In the eastern Cape Province (Zone 8), there is a marked drop in reporting rates during the late summer and early winter. In KwaZulu-Natal (Zone 7), reporting rates also decrease in late summer but are relatively high in early winter. The lack of clear complementarity between these two Zones, which would suggest a movement northwards by the eastern Cape population during late summer–early winter is puzzling; perhaps many South African birds move into coastal Mozambique. In the very wet summer of 1987–88, there appears to have been a westward irruption, with one bird even reaching Cape Town (3318CD) (Hockey *et al.* 1989).

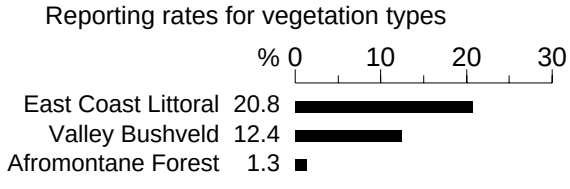
Breeding: Egglaying takes place September–January, peaking in November, in KwaZulu-Natal (Dean 1971). Atlas data largely span September–February, with a November–December peak.

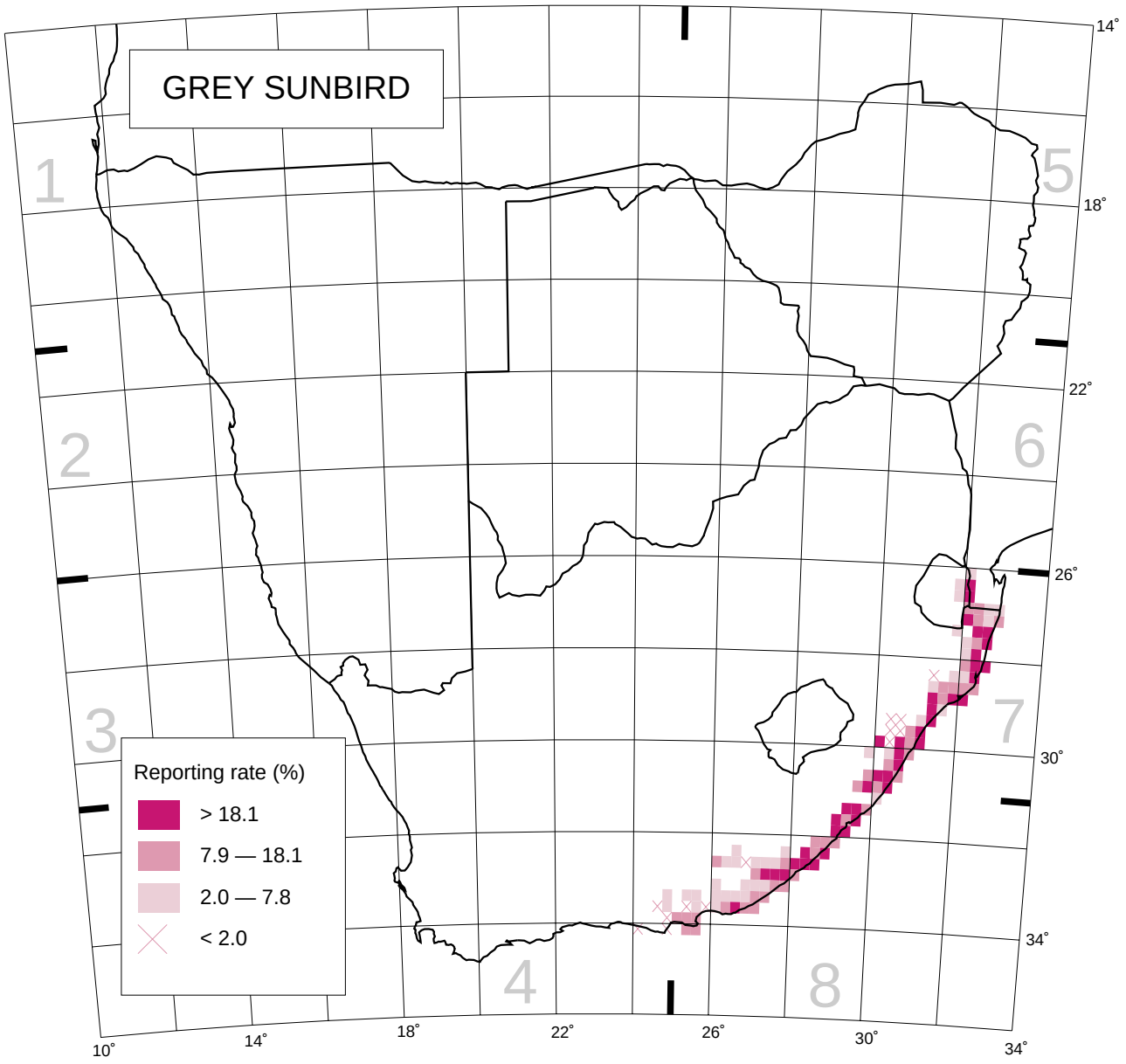
Interspecific relationships: The Grey and Olive *N. olivacea* Sunbirds occur in the same forest patches and there may be competition between the two, but the latter feeds at all forest levels, particularly near the edges, whilst the former is a canopy or sub-canopy feeder (Ginn *et al.* 1989).

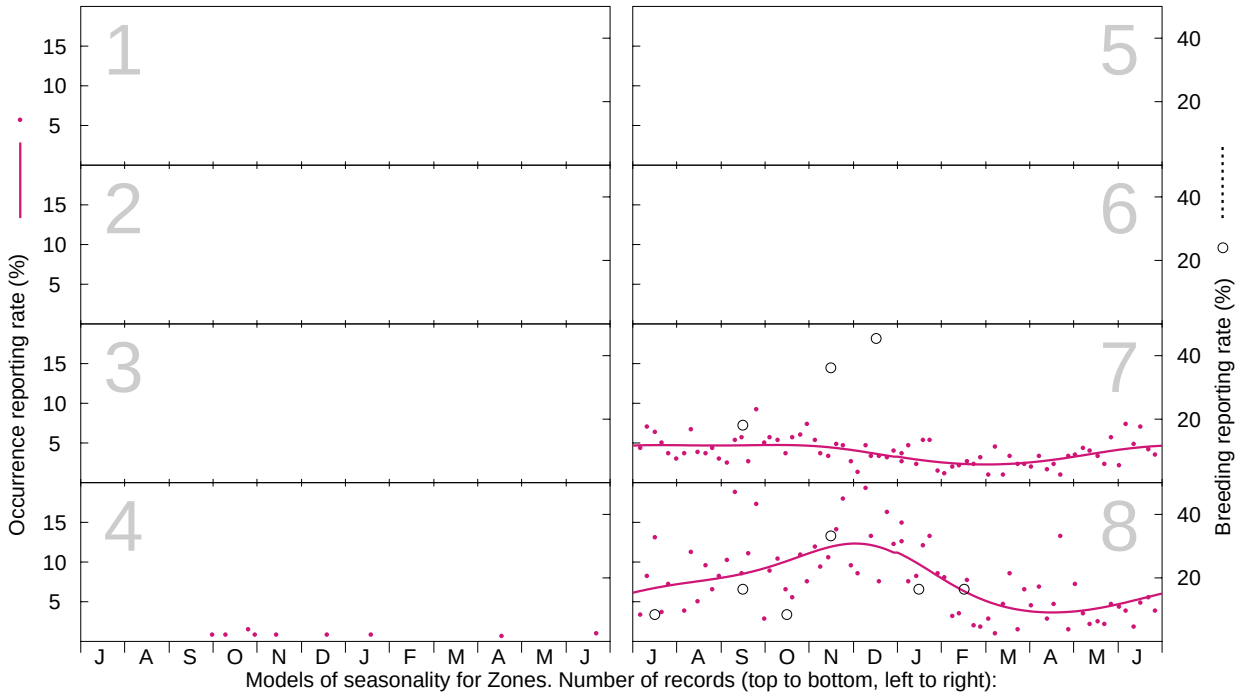
Historical distribution and conservation: Although there does not appear to be any historical change in the distribution (see Skead 1967c), a decline in numbers of the Grey Sunbird is bound to have resulted from the extensive clearing of the littoral forests of KwaZulu-Natal for sugarcane plantations.

A.J. Tree

Recorded in 130 grid cells, 2.9%
Total number of records: 3001
Mean reporting rate for range: 15.5%







Models of seasonality for Zones. Number of records (top to bottom, left to right):
Occurrence: 0, 0, 0, 10, 0, 0, 742, 413; Breeding: 0, 0, 0, 0, 0, 0, 11, 12.