

## Goldenbreasted Bunting

### Rooirugstreepkoppie

*Emberiza flaviventris*

The Goldenbreasted Bunting is widespread in sub-Saharan Africa (Maclean 1993b). It is common in southern Africa where it occurs widely in a broad variety of woodlands and savannas. Indeed, it is perhaps the most widely distributed woodland bird in the region. It is distributed along the east coast, from the eastern Cape Province northwards, through KwaZulu-Natal, Swaziland, most of the Transvaal, Zimbabwe and eastern and northern Botswana. The distribution is more scattered in the northern Cape Province, Free State, Kalahari sandveld and northern Namibia (excluding the coastal desert). Although common in a variety of woodlands, it seems to be less abundant in the Limpopo and Zambezi Valleys.

Goldenbreasted Buntings occur solitarily, in pairs or in small flocks when not breeding (Maclean 1993b), but occasionally gather in flocks of many hundreds near waterholes in the dry season. In 16 transect-counts in northern and eastern Botswana (M.H. pers. obs), an average density of 1 bird/2 ha was found in eight broadleaved and mixed open woodlands, with a peak density of 1 bird/0.8 ha in miombo-like woodland (2026C). Much lower numbers were present in nine counts in *Acacia*-dominated habitat (1 bird/20 ha), and the species was totally absent from six counts in three tall riverine galleries (cf. low reporting rates in the Limpopo Valley). It was present at moderate densities in tall Mopane (1 bird/9 ha), but common (1 bird/2 ha) in open Mopane scrub.

It is conspicuous and easily identified and the atlas data are comprehensive and reliable. Cabanis's Bunting *E. cabanisi* is the only species with which misidentifications are possible.

**Habitat:** It prefers open broadleaved and mixed woodlands and savanna, including gardens, farmyards and exotic plantations. It is less common in pure *Acacia*. It avoids tall, dense riverine woodland, such as the floodplain-fringing forest in the Okavango. There are strongholds in all broadleaved and mixed woodlands and savannas. Although Mopane is shown as an important woodland type in the vegetation analysis, it is sparse in tall stands. Similarly, it is scant in well-developed miombo and absent from the moister east-facing slopes of the eastern highlands of Zimbabwe (Irwin 1981), where its place is taken by Cabanis's Bunting. The fairly high reporting rates from biomes at higher altitudes is at least partly due to colonization of alien tree plantations. It otherwise extends only marginally into the more open and arid biomes.

Goldenbreasted Buntings drink regularly and this behaviour may be obligatory in the dry season (Skead 1975a). This may account for the localized and scattered distribution in the more arid areas, while higher-rainfall areas or soils with enhanced water retention show less broken patterns of distribution. It can, however, sometimes be found away from water in arid woodlands during dry conditions.

**Movements:** No regular migratory movements have been reported, but the models show that in northern Namibia and Botswana (Zone 1) there is a decrease in reporting rates in the dry season, while in Zones 6 and 7 to the southeast there is an increase in reporting rates in the late dry and early wet season. It is probable that there is regular movement, birds from the more arid northwest moving out of the region and birds from the drier Kalahari sandveld moving into the upper-middle Limpopo drainage. At one site in Mashonaland, following

seasons of normal rainfall, birds arrived about August and departed in December–January, but were found throughout the year in drought years (Tree 1994c).

**Breeding:** Atlas data were all from October–May, with a November–December peak over most of the range. These data mainly confirm earlier breeding data (Irwin 1981; Tarboton *et al.* 1987b; Ginn *et al.* 1989; Maclean 1993b; Skinner 1995a).

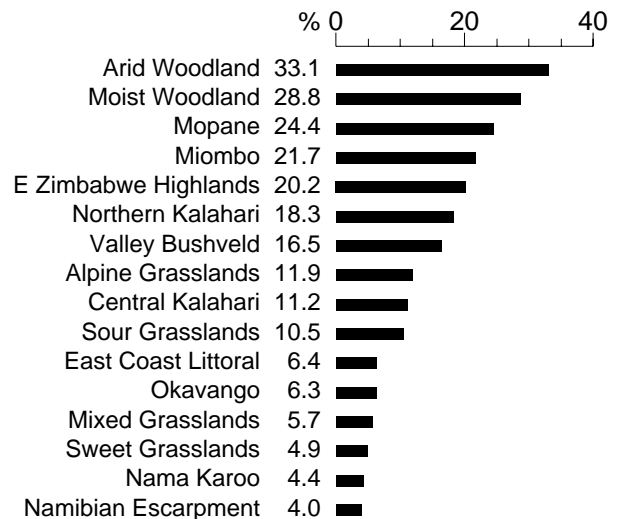
**Interspecific relationships:** It overlaps widely with the larger but similar Cabanis's Bunting in Zimbabwe. It is a host of the Diederik Cuckoo *Chrysococcyx caprius* (Maclean 1993b).

**Historical distribution and conservation:** There is no evidence that the overall distribution of the Goldenbreasted Bunting has changed in the recent past. It has been able, however, to colonize alien plantations in previously treeless grassland in parts of the eastern Transvaal highveld and perhaps elsewhere (D.G. Allan pers. comm.). This common and widespread species is not considered to be threatened.

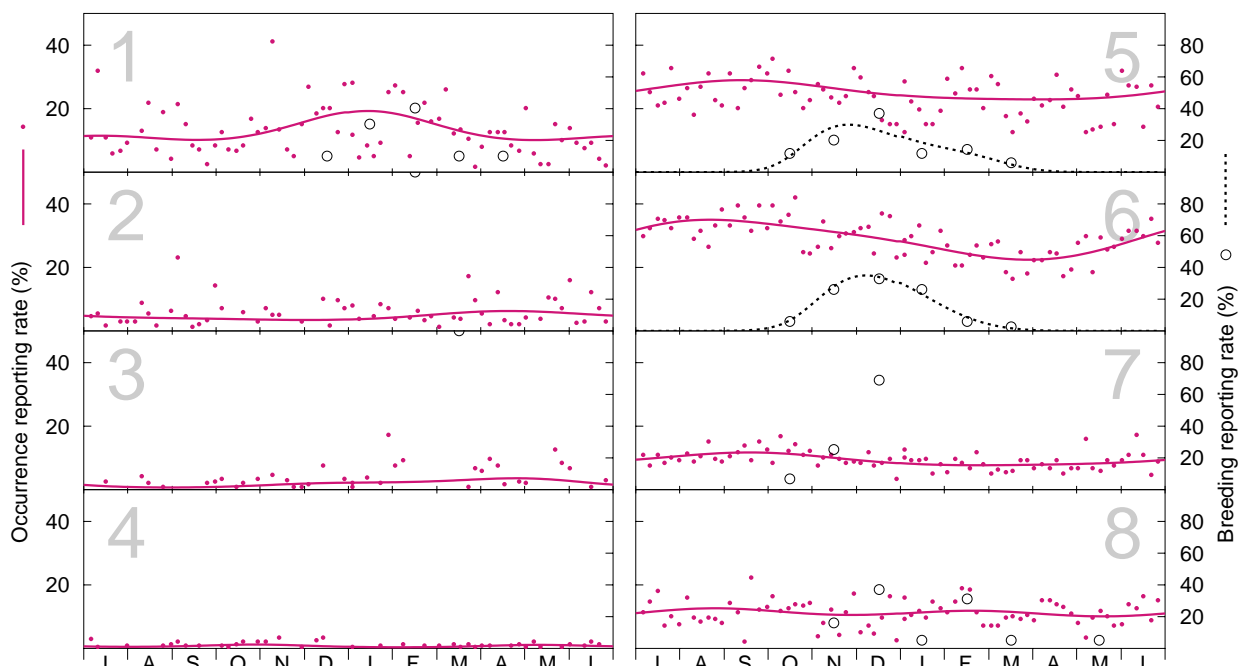
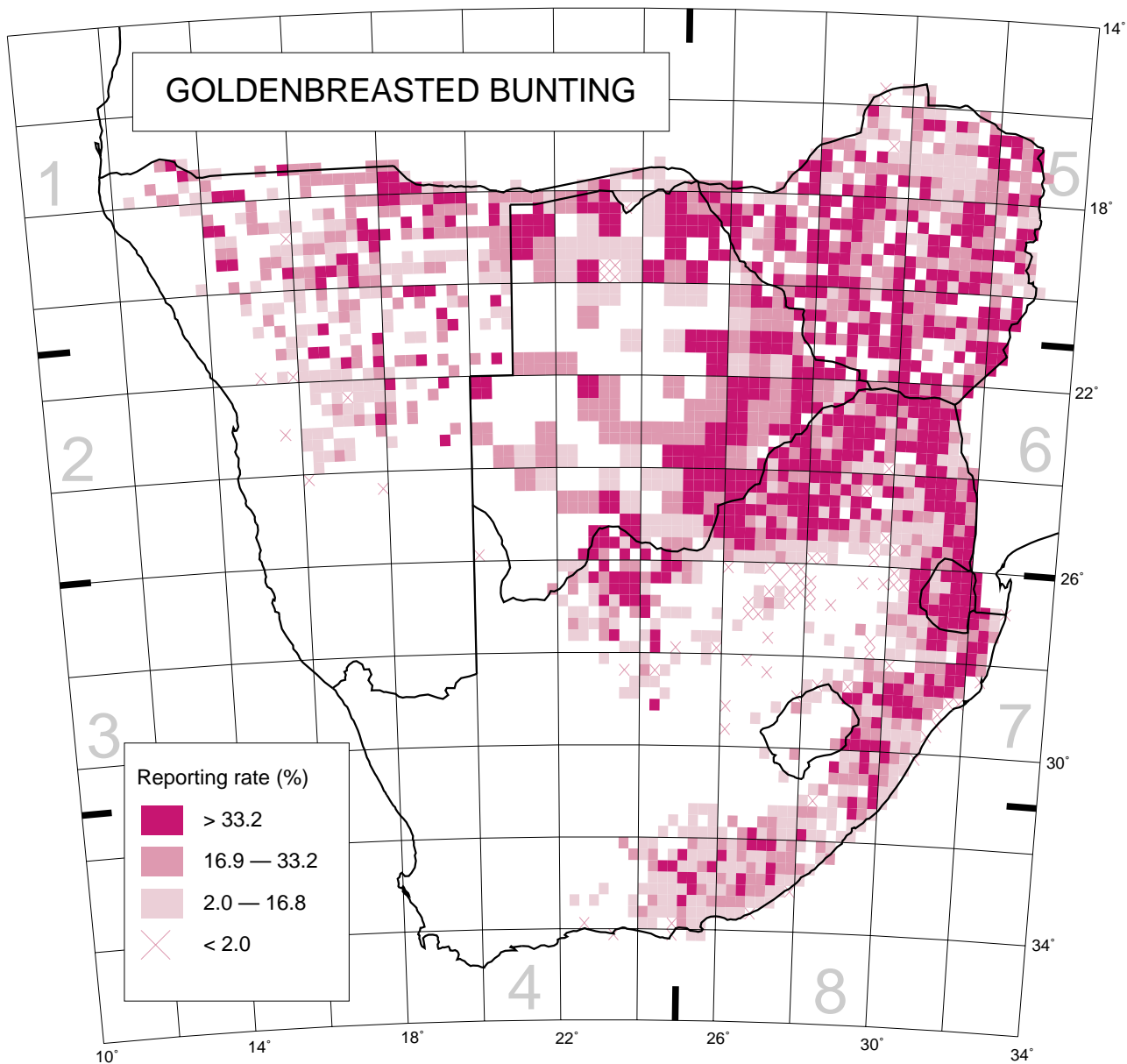
*M. Herremans and A.J. Tree*

Recorded in 2066 grid cells, 45.5%  
Total number of records: 18 668  
Mean reporting rate for range: 20.4%

#### Reporting rates for vegetation types



Also marginally in Grassy Karoo and Southern Kalahari.



Models of seasonality for Zones. Number of records (top to bottom, left to right):  
 Occurrence: 408, 173, 112, 67, 2230, 3294, 1815, 618; Breeding: 10, 1, 1, 0, 35, 34, 16, 19.