

Grey-rumped Swallow

Gryskruisswael

Pseudhirundo griseopyga

This small swallow is distributed in northern Natal and the Transvaal lowveld, and is present in northern and eastern Swaziland. It occurs throughout Zimbabwe, except for parts of the southeast and is reported to be the commonest breeding swallow on the Mashonaland Plateau (Irwin 1981). In Botswana it occurs in the Okavango region, with scattered records in the east. It occurs in the Caprivi Strip and along the Kunene River in Namibia. In the rest of Africa this swallow is widespread but rather local in its distribution south of the Sahara (Keith *et al.* 1992). Large flocks of Grey-rumped Swallows are regularly recorded (e.g. Irwin 1981; Tarboton *et al.* 1987b) and nonbreeding birds often roost gregariously in reedbeds (R.K. Brooke *in litt.*). This species is easily confused with the House Martin *Delichon urbica*.

Habitat: It is typically a species of open areas in otherwise rather tall, dense woodland. It often frequents burnt and cleared areas, ploughed fields and especially floodplains. The vegetation analysis shows relatively high reporting rates for Miombo, Eastern Zimbabwe Highlands and the Okavango.

Movements: This species has been described as both resident and showing local movements (e.g. Maclean 1993b). In the Transvaal it has been recorded in all months, but most commonly March–September (Tarboton *et al.* 1987b). In Zimbabwe it is claimed to show clear seasonality, arriving in April and departing September–October, fluctuating in numbers between years, and present throughout dry years (Irwin 1981). The models show higher reporting rates during the winter months, but the species is present throughout its range in all months.

Breeding: The atlas breeding data are few and the apparent later breeding in Zimbabwe (Zone 5), compared with the Transvaal (Zone 6), may not be reliable. Irwin (1981) recorded a breeding peak July–August in Zimbabwe based

on a much larger sample, similar to the June–August peak found in the atlas data for the Transvaal.

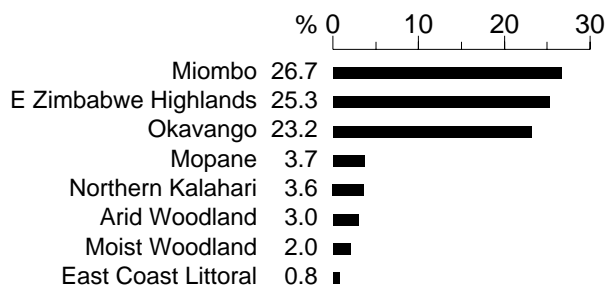
Interspecific relationships: It breeds in holes in level or slightly sloping ground and not in sandbanks, and so it does not compete for suitable nesting sites with most other species which breed in burrows.

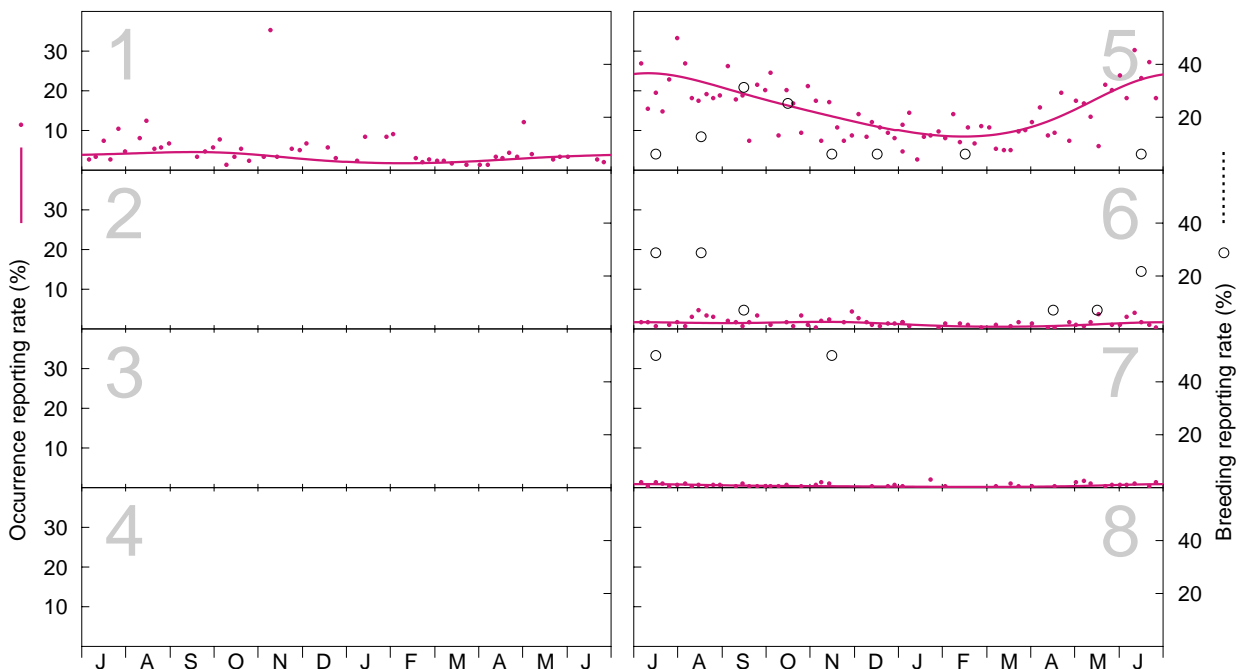
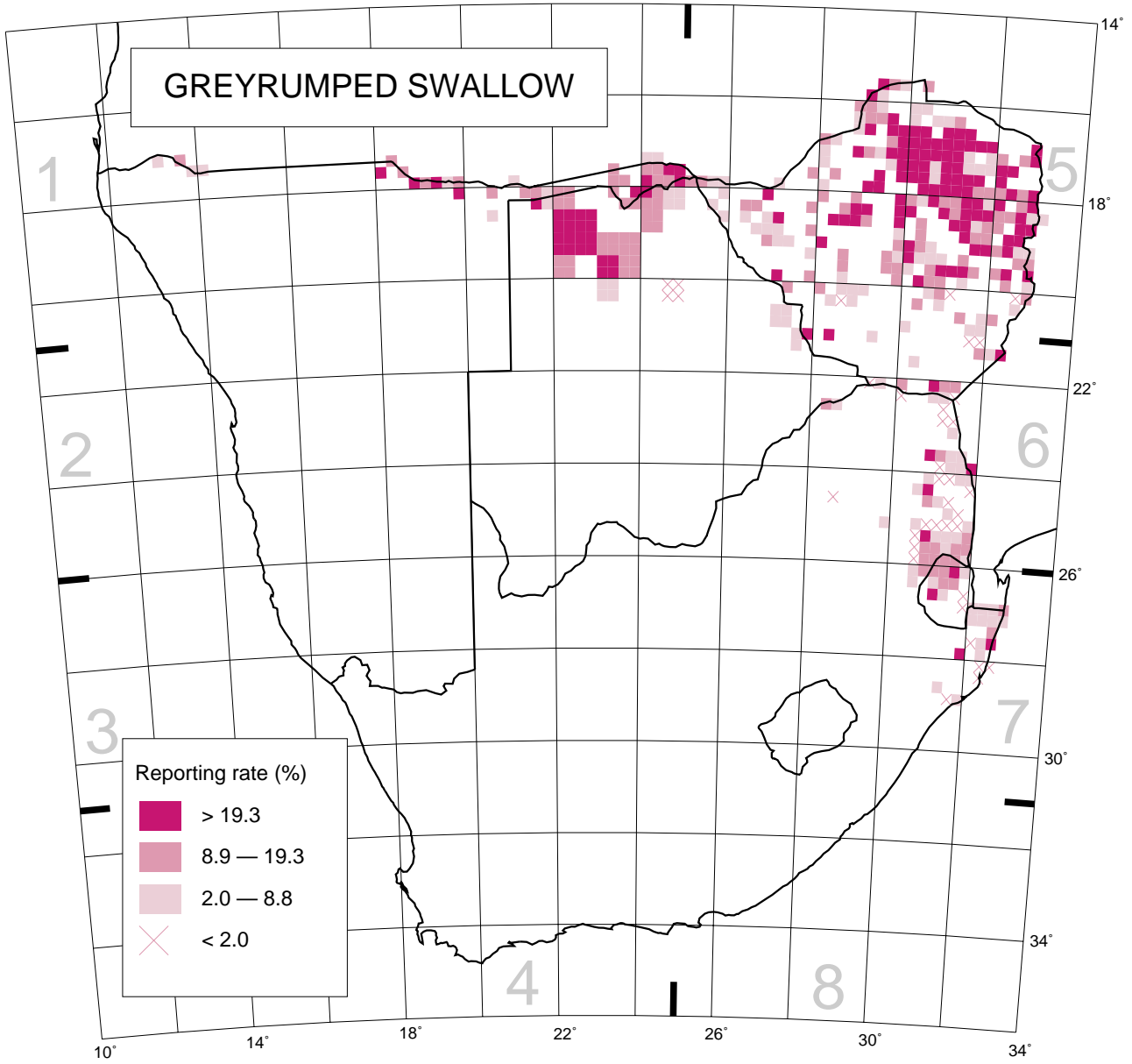
Historical distribution and conservation: The Grey-rumped Swallow has probably benefited from man-made clearings in woodland, anthropogenic burning and intensive stock grazing in some areas. Its conservation status is poorly known, however, and its habit of roosting communally in reedbeds may render it vulnerable if these sites are sprayed with avicides to control problem seedeaters, especially the Redbilled Quelea *Quelea quelea*. Fortunately, like most swallows, it avoids roosting in reedbeds with large numbers of quelea.

R.A. Earlé

Recorded in 444 grid cells, 9.8%
Total number of records: 3110
Mean reporting rate for range: 13.7%

Reporting rates for vegetation types





Models of seasonality for Zones. Number of records (top to bottom, left to right):
 Occurrence: 108, 0, 0, 0, 1388, 144, 88, 0; Breeding: 0, 0, 0, 0, 16, 14, 2, 0.