

Fantailed Flycatcher

Waaierstertvlieëvanger

Myioparus plumbeus

The Fantailed Flycatcher is distributed from northern KwaZulu-Natal, through Swaziland and the Transvaal to eastern Botswana. In Zimbabwe it is patchily distributed and is absent in the west from the drier woodlands on Kalahari sands, but it reappears further west in Botswana and Namibia, in the Okavango region and the Caprivi. Beyond southern Africa it occurs over most of sub-Saharan Africa as far as 10°N (Hall & Moreau 1970).

Two subspecies are recognized in the region (Clancey 1980b; Clancey *et al.* 1991): *M. p. orientalis* occurs in the tropical lowlands from northern KwaZulu-Natal to south-eastern Zimbabwe and is separated from *catoleucus* to the west. There is a wide gap between populations in the upper Limpopo catchment and miombo woodlands on the central plateau of Zimbabwe, and birds in the Caprivi and Okavango, both currently ascribed to *catoleucus*.

It is uncommon and localized. Although it occurs in dense vegetation and has dull plumage, its unique tail-fanning display is given with frequency and vigour. The atlas records are likely to be accurate.

Habitat: Most atlas records were from the Okavango, Arid Woodland and Moist Woodland. The spotty distribution and low reporting rates in Miombo on the plateau in Zimbabwe accords with an earlier observation (Irwin 1952) that the species was 'thinly distributed' there. Atlas records also appear to correlate with the Arid Woodland biome, but

experience in KwaZulu-Natal shows that it uses mainly the riverine strips in such habitat (Cyrus & Robson 1980) which is also indicated by its relative stronghold along the upper Limpopo catchment. Mopane is generally avoided, accounting for the wide gap between eastern and western populations. Throughout its range it favours dense vegetation, tending to use the upper strata; little use is made of alien plants. It is dependent on holes in trees for nest sites (Maclean 1993b).

Movements: There is no evidence of seasonal movement. A slight increase in reporting rates is seen in early summer; this can be attributed to greater conspicuousness at the onset of the breeding season.

Breeding: Atlas breeding records were few, though still many more than were available previously (Dean 1971; Irwin 1981; Tarboton *et al.* 1987b; Skinner 1995a). Breeding is in spring and early summer, spanning August–January, with a peak in October–November.

It is a host of Klaas's Cuckoo *Chrysococcyx klaas* (Tarboton *et al.* 1987b; Maclean 1993b).

Interspecific relationships: The Bluegrey Flycatcher *Muscicapa caerulescens* is nearest, both taxonomically and ecologically, to the Fantailed Flycatcher, without being particularly close (Maclean 1993b). The ranges of the two species overlap, and they can be seen alongside each other, but the Fantailed Flycatcher is rarer and there are differences in foraging technique. The Fantailed is primarily a warbler-like gleaner (Fraser 1983), while the Bluegrey Flycatcher feeds more by hawking and pouncing.

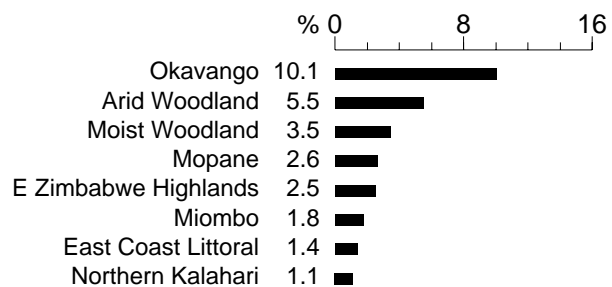
The Fantailed Flycatcher will use holes created by woodpeckers and barbets as nest sites (Maclean 1993b).

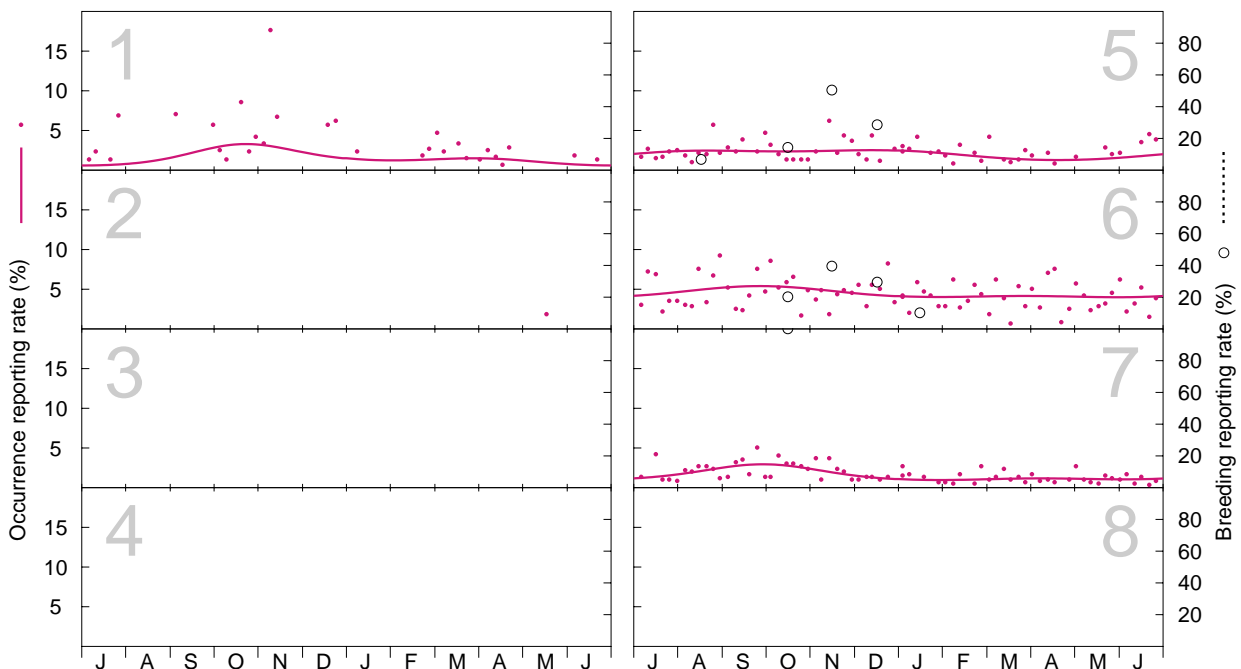
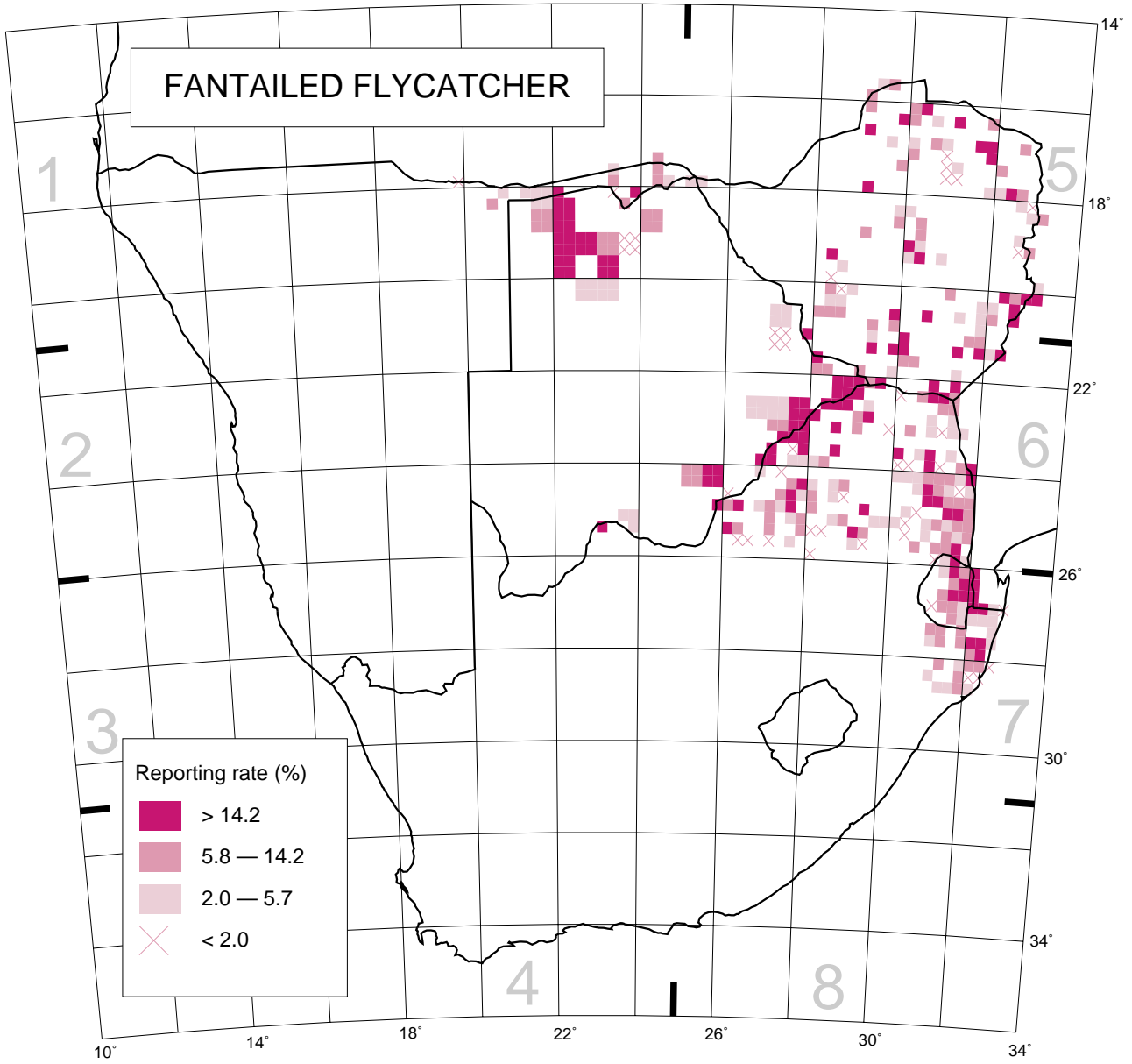
Historical distribution and conservation: Known past distribution and abundance differ little from the present. For example Tarboton *et al.* (1987b) described it as sparse in the Transvaal. Fieldguides generally show it to occur in what is a wide gap between populations on the present map. Its dependence on holes in trees for nest sites, makes it, along with other hole-nesting species, vulnerable to the removal of dead wood for fuel. The atlas data do not give cause for complacency; the status of the Fantailed Flycatcher should be monitored.

D.N. Johnson

Recorded in 397 grid cells, 8.8%
Total number of records: 1961
Mean reporting rate for range: 8.6%

Reporting rates for vegetation types





Models of seasonality for Zones. Number of records (top to bottom, left to right):
 Occurrence: 50, 1, 0, 0, 180, 507, 303, 0; Breeding: 0, 0, 0, 0, 14, 10, 1, 0.