Mozambique Nightjar

Laeveldnaguil

Caprimulgus fossii

This tropical and subtropical nightjar occurs from Gabon, Congo, Zaire and Kenya south to KwaZulu-Natal, with single records from Glen Grey (3127CA) in the eastern Cape Province (Skead 1967b) and Lesotho (Bonde 1993). The Mozambique Nightjar's usual southernmost locality is Durban (2931CC) (Cyrus & Robson 1980). It is locally common only from northern KwaZulu-Natal northward into the lowveld of Swaziland and the eastern Transvaal, where it is resident. It occurs occasionally in the central Transvaal, probably only in years of good rainfall (Tarboton *et al.* 1987b), and there are several records from the upper Limpopo catchment in southeastern Botswana, as far south as Pelotshetla (2525A) (Smithers 1964; Bushell 1983; Barnes & Bushell 1989; Penry 1994). It is widespread in Zimbabwe (Jackson 1975) and is quite common in northern Botswana. It is confined to the northern third of Namibia where it is scarce, except in the mesic northeast.

Clancey (1980b) recognized three races from southern Africa, which may differ in their degrees of movement. *C. f. mossambicus* is the common resident nightjar in woodlands of southern Mozambique, whereas *welwitschii* is said to be a nonbreeding, largely dry-season, migrant to the drier parts of southern Africa (Clancey 1971c). The atlas did not provide evidence for the existence of a population of *griseoplurus* in the Kalahari, from the Molopo River in the northern Cape Province north through Botswana (*contra* Clancey 1980b).

It is difficult to identify by sight alone, but its choice of open sandy ground and its froglike churring call, varying characteristically in pitch, are good identification features. The trilled call of the Rufouscheeked Nightjar *C. rufigena* does not vary in pitch.

Habitat: It occurs in riverine woodland, coastal forest and dune scrub in KwaZulu-Natal, woodland and savanna in the Transvaal, *Acacia* and Mopane scrub on sandy ground, and along the edges of pans and rivers and associated floodplains in Zimbabwe and Botswana. It also frequents open sandy ground, not necessarily in woodland, throughout Zimbabwe, especially at elevations below 1700 m (Jackson 1975, 1978). At night it often occurs on roads, where it is frequently killed by traffic.

Movements: Populations in the lowveld appear to be resident, while the species may be migratory at higher altitudes and in drier areas. Seasonal fluctuations in reporting rates may also reflect variation in song frequency. However, many birds from Zimbabwe, especially from the central plateau, move away during the dry season May–November (Irwin 1981), possibly to the lowlands of Mozambique (Clancey 1971c). Birds are scarce above 1200 m May–November and below 1200 m June–September, suggesting winter movement to the lowveld beyond the borders of Zimbabwe, almost certainly to Mozambique (Jackson 1978). Local movements occur in Botswana, apparently governed by rainfall (Penry 1994). Concentrations occur in the Zambezi Valley April–May and August, while few overwinter (A.J. Tree *in litt.*). Birds attributed to the race *griseoplurus*, which allegedly breeds in the Kalahari, were found northwards to about 14°S in Angola and Zambia (Clancey 1980b), and in Zimbabwe (Irwin 1981; Tree 1992g).

Breeding: Atlas records were in spring and early summer. Egglaying records in the region span August–December, mainly October–November (Dean 1971; Irwin 1981; Jackson 1983; Tarboton *et al.* 1987b; Skinner 1996a; Brown & Clinning in press). Egglaying usually coincides with the period between full moon and last quarter (Jackson 1983).

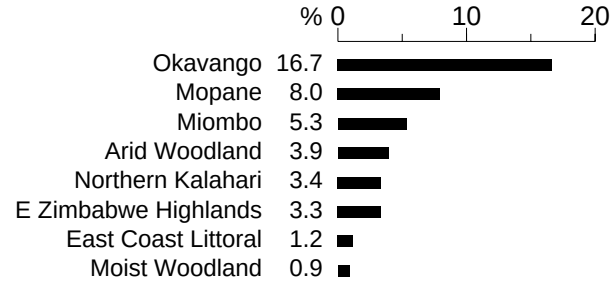
Interspecific relationships: It comes into some contact with the Fierynecked Nightjar *C. pectoralis* and other nightjars when foraging at night, but its preference for open sandy areas in woodland probably isolates it to a great extent.

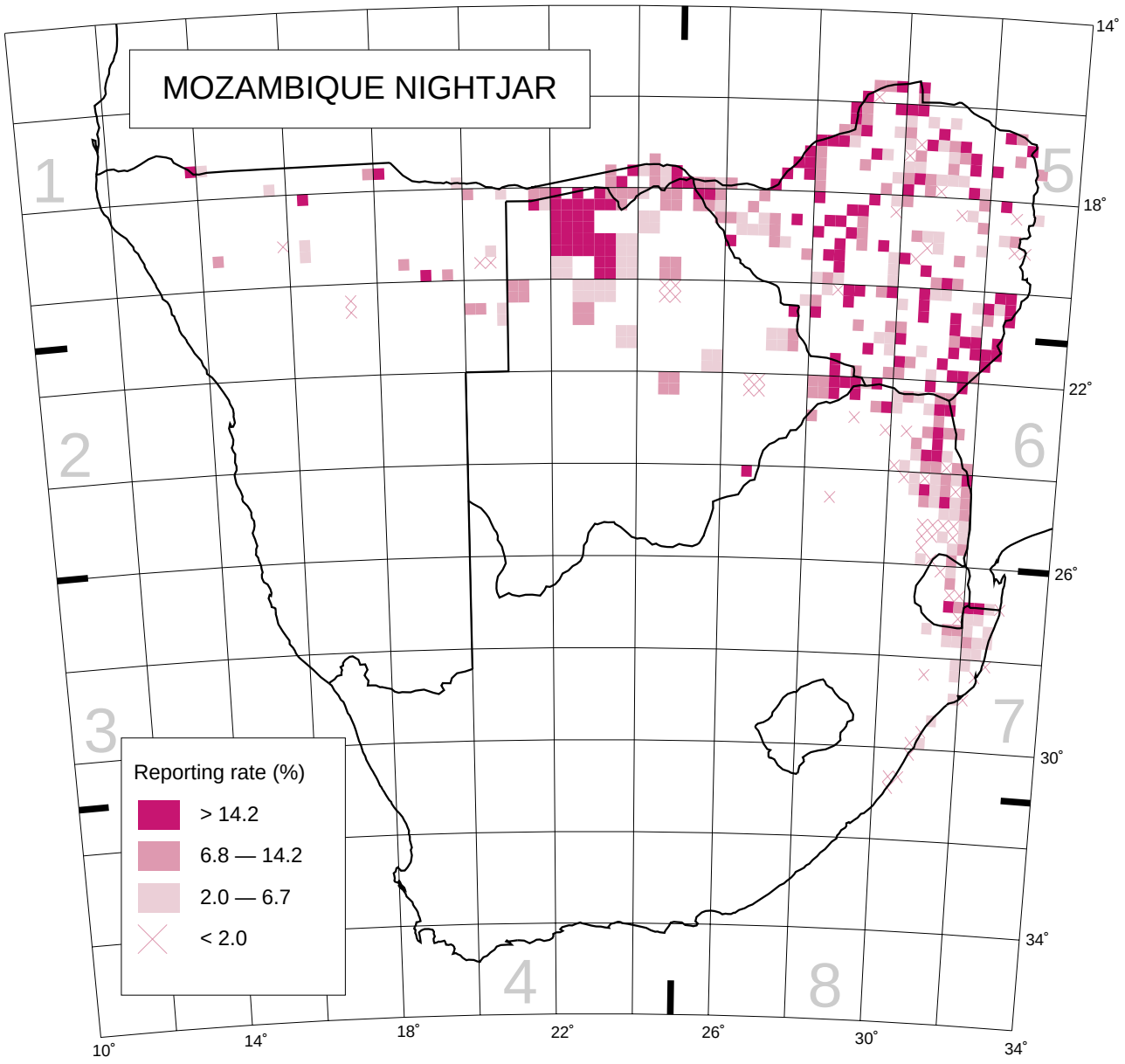
Historical distribution and conservation: The distribution has probably changed little. It suffers considerable mortality at night on roads. The wide distribution of the Mozambique Nightjar and its preference for open and possibly somewhat degraded, sandy habitats, allows it to persist in extensive rangelands. There is no need for special conservation measures.

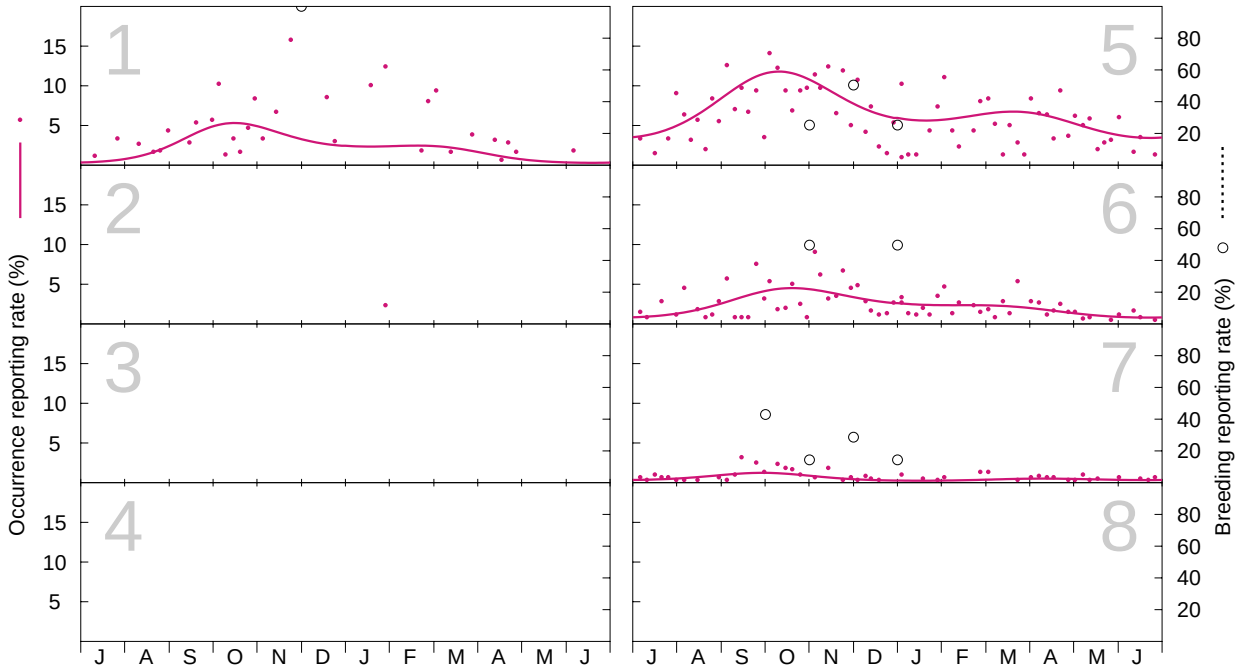
G.L. Maclean

Recorded in 481 grid cells, 10.6%
Total number of records: 2073
Mean reporting rate for range: 7.5%

Reporting rates for vegetation types







Models of seasonality for Zones. Number of records (top to bottom, left to right):
Occurrence: 67, 1, 0, 0, 602, 267, 107, 0; Breeding: 2, 0, 0, 0, 4, 2, 7, 0.