

Lesser Honeyguide

Kleinheuningwyser

Indicator minor

The overall distribution of the Lesser Honeyguide in Africa is similar to that of the Greater Honeyguide *I. indicator*: sub-Saharan Africa from Senegal to Ethiopia, and southwards to the Cape, but absent from tropical forest and arid areas (Fry *et al.* 1988). In southern Africa, the detailed distribution patterns for the two species are also similar; the striking difference is the Lesser Honeyguide's scattered occurrence in Namibia. It also occurs along the Vaal and Orange rivers and their major tributaries, as far west as the Augrabies Falls (2820CB) where it was first recorded in 1968 (Winterbottom 1969a.)

In contrast to the monotypic Greater Honeyguide, five weakly differentiated subspecies are recognized for the Lesser Honeyguide, of which two occur in southern Africa: *I. m. damarensis* in Namibia, and nominate *minor* elsewhere (Fry *et al.* 1988).

It is a brood parasite and a relatively inconspicuous species which is readily overlooked unless calling.

Habitat: The vegetation analysis reflects the wide range of wooded habitats used, from savannas with scattered trees to forest fringes, riverine woodland, and artificial 'woodlands' such as exotic plantations, suburban gardens, and thickets of alien *Acacias* in the southwestern Cape Province (Fry *et al.* 1988; Underhill *et al.* 1995). It uses brood hosts nesting in tree holes.

Movements: The seasonal variability in reporting rates is attributable to changes in conspicuousness during breeding when males are calling and females are searching for nests of their hosts. During a ringing study in the southwestern Cape Province, three-quarters of Lesser Honeyguides mist-netted were females, suggesting greater mobility of females (tracking the movements of their hosts) than

of males (stationary at call posts) (Underhill *et al.* 1995). Retrap rates at ringing stations are low, suggesting that individuals range over large areas (Underhill & Underhill 1992).

Breeding: The few atlas records conform to the known breeding season September–February, with a peak October–November (Dean 1971; Irwin 1981; Tarboton *et al.* 1987b). Limited data suggest a later peak, January–February, in Namibia (Brown & Clinning in press).

Interspecific relationships: The most frequent hosts in southern Africa are the Blackcollared Barbet *Lybius torquatus* and the Pied Barbet *Tricholaema leucomelas* (Friedmann 1955), but a wide range of other hosts have been recorded, including other barbet species, kingfishers, bee-eaters and starlings. There are frequent skirmishes with these hosts. The Lesser Honeyguide colonized the southwestern Cape Province, closely following the expansion of the Pied Barbet (Macdonald 1986b; Hockey *et al.* 1989; Underhill & Underhill 1992; Underhill *et al.* 1995). On the other hand, it is strikingly absent from the stronghold of the Pied Barbet in the Kalahari.

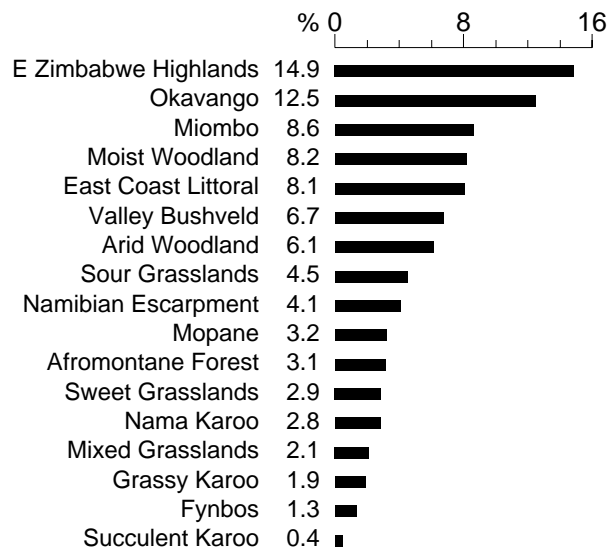
In contrast to the Greater Honeyguide which parasitizes mainly species nesting in banks, the hosts of the Lesser Honeyguide nest mostly in tree holes. The atlas data show remarkable similarities in distribution, reporting rate and habitat preferences of these two species. It would be instructive to compare their ecological relationships in more detail.

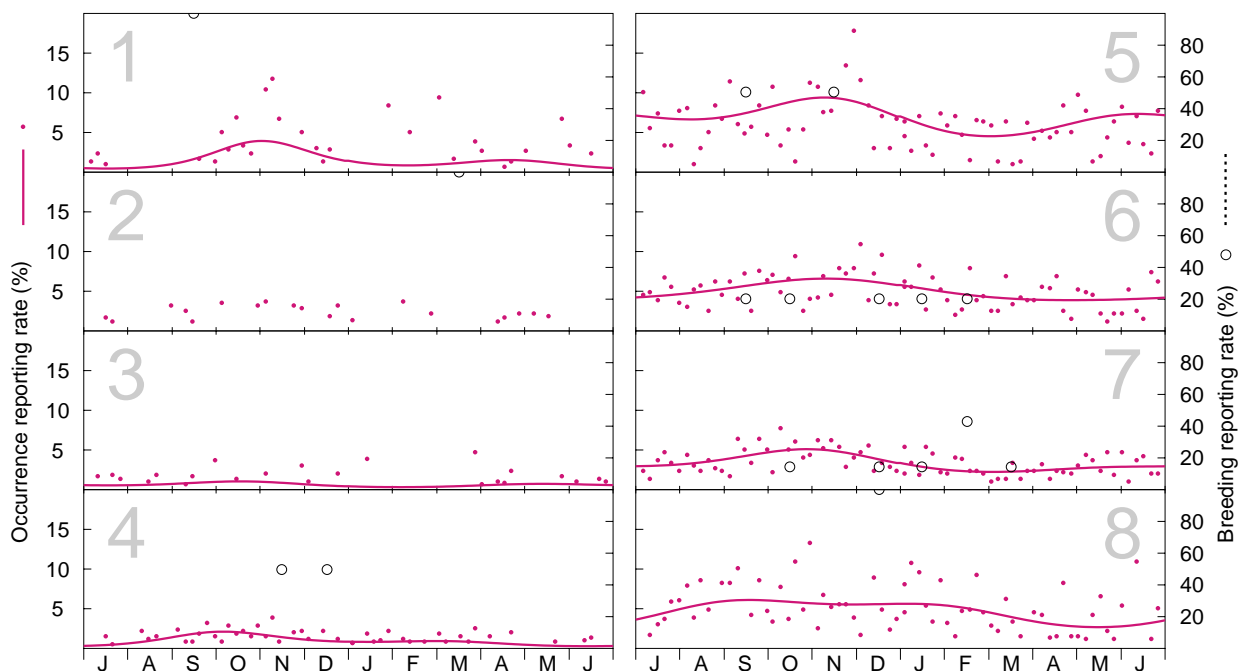
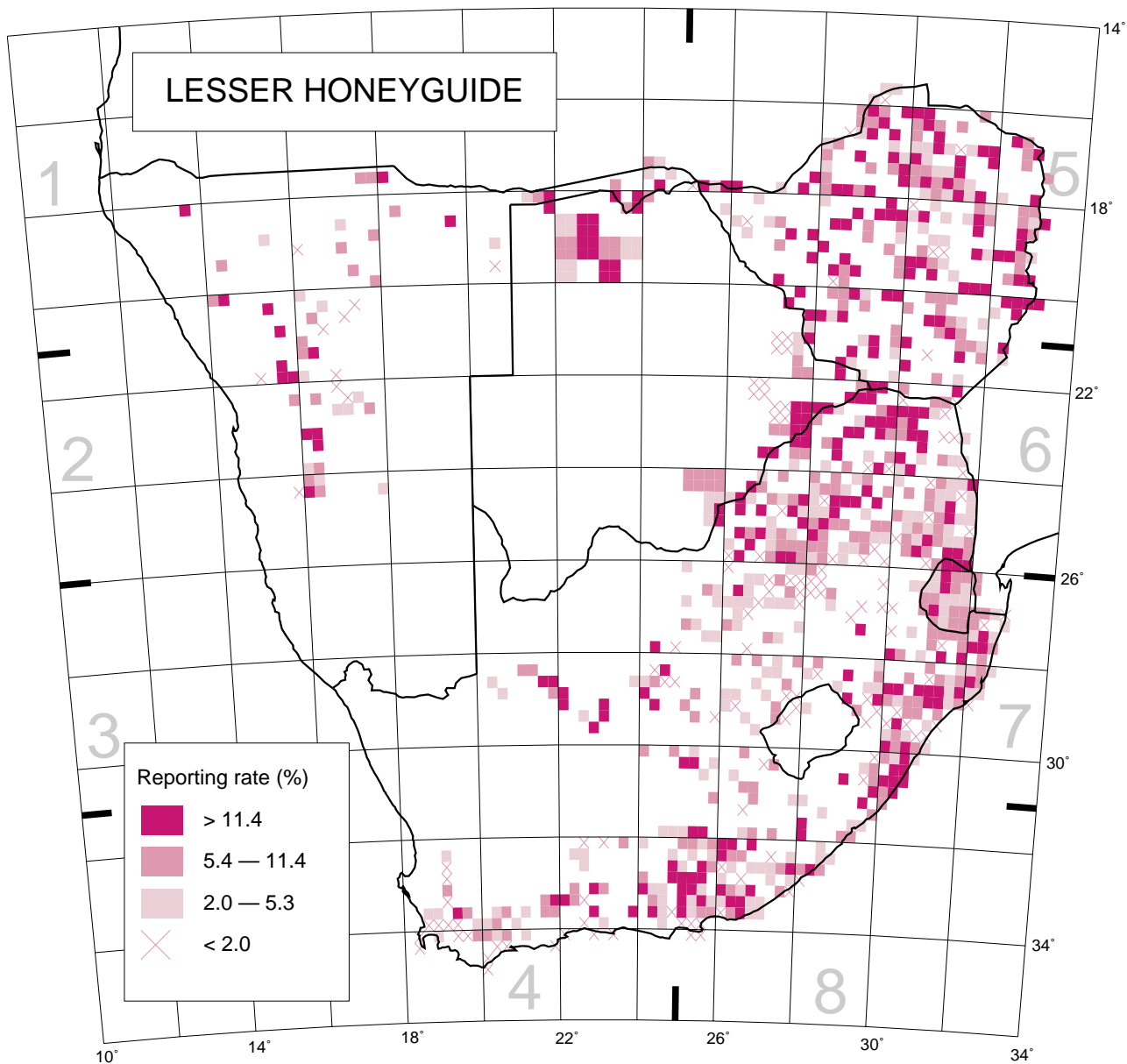
Historical distribution and conservation: It expanded its range considerably during the 20th century, particularly in the southwestern Cape Province; this has been attributed to its following of its main host, the Pied Barbet, into the Australian *Acacia* infestations of the fynbos biome. The Lesser Honeyguide is not of conservation concern.

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Recorded in 973 grid cells, 21.4%
Total number of records: 6132
Mean reporting rate for range: 7.1%

Reporting rates for vegetation types





Models of seasonality for Zones. Number of records (top to bottom, left to right):
 Occurrence: 48, 20, 35, 84, 601, 568, 656, 257; Breeding: 1, 1, 0, 2, 2, 5, 7, 1.