



Goldentailed Woodpecker

Goudstertspieg

Campethera abingoni

Endemic to the Afrotropical region, the Goldentailed Woodpecker has an extensive range across the continent, following the savanna belt from West Africa eastwards to Sudan and southwards into southern Africa. It is widespread in the subcontinent and is represented in virtually all savanna types, from those in low-annual-rainfall regions (200–300 mm in central Namibia) to those in the humid east (>900 mm along the eastern coastal plain). In places, its range extends beyond the savanna biome into the grassland and Karoo biomes. For example, it extends along the Vaal and the Orange rivers as far west as Kambreek (2818DD), following the occurrence of riparian woodland. In the northern Transvaal a density of about 1 pair/75 ha was recorded in mature broadleaved woodland (Tarboton 1980; Tarboton *et al.* 1987b). In Botswana, abundance was similar in Arid Woodland (1 bird/42 ha), lower in Kalahari woodlands (1 bird/>200 ha), but higher in tall mopane (1 bird/18 ha) and Okavango fringing woodland (1 bird/11 ha) (M. Herremans unpubl. data).

It is encountered singly, in pairs, or, for a short period after breeding, in small family parties. It is not a conspicuous or particularly vocal species and is likely to have been under-reported throughout its range. It is superficially similar to Bennett's Woodpecker *C. bennettii* in size, shape and plumage, and the two are easily confused in their largely overlapping ranges. It can also be confused with the Knysna Woodpecker *C. notata*, which also has a similar call, but the ranges of these two species barely overlap.

Habitat: It frequents a wide spectrum of woodland and savanna types, from those dominated by *Acacia* spp., *Colophospermum mopane*, or *Commiphora* spp. in the semi-arid areas, to moist savanna types such as miombo and *Baikiaea*

woodland. As a rule, it is not found inside Afromontane forest, an exception being in northwestern Swaziland (Parker 1994), and it may occur in coastal and riparian forest. It avoids commercial monocultures of alien trees such as pines and eucalypts. The vegetation analysis and models indicate that it had its highest reporting rates in the eastern parts of the subcontinent.

Movements: It is resident and sedentary throughout its southern African range. The slight peak during early summer in some of the models may reflect increased vocal activity at the beginning of the breeding season.

Breeding: Most atlas records were from September–March. There is some indication that breeding may peak later in the western Zones 1–3 than in the eastern Zones 5–7. Egg-laying in Zimbabwe and the Transvaal spans August–December, with a September–November peak (Irwin 1981; Tarboton *et al.* 1987b).

Interspecific relationships: The southern limit of its range in southern KwaZulu-Natal adjoins the northern limit of the range of the closely allied Knysna Woodpecker. The ecological relationship between the two species in their contact zone is unknown, but the Knysna Woodpecker is typically a forest bird, at least in the north of its range, compared with the more usual savanna habitat of the Goldentailed Woodpecker. The close relationship between this species and the Knysna Woodpecker is highlighted by the comment (since retracted) that the two species are 'almost certainly' conspecific (Clancey 1958, 1980b). No hybridization has been recorded in their contact zone. The relationship between Bennett's and Goldentailed Woodpeckers is discussed under the former. This species is also sympatric with the Cardinal Woodpecker *Dendropicos fuscescens*, which is half the size but similarly plumaged, although not closely related. These two species often forage in close proximity and as members of the same mixed bird parties.

Historical distribution and conservation: Although the past distribution of the Goldentailed Woodpecker has not been documented, it is unlikely to have been different from the present distribution. The type specimen was collected near Zeerust (2526CA) in the western Transvaal, an area where the species still occurs.

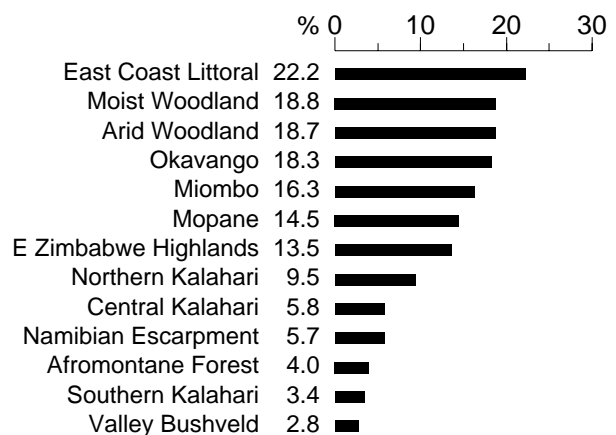
W.R. Tarboton

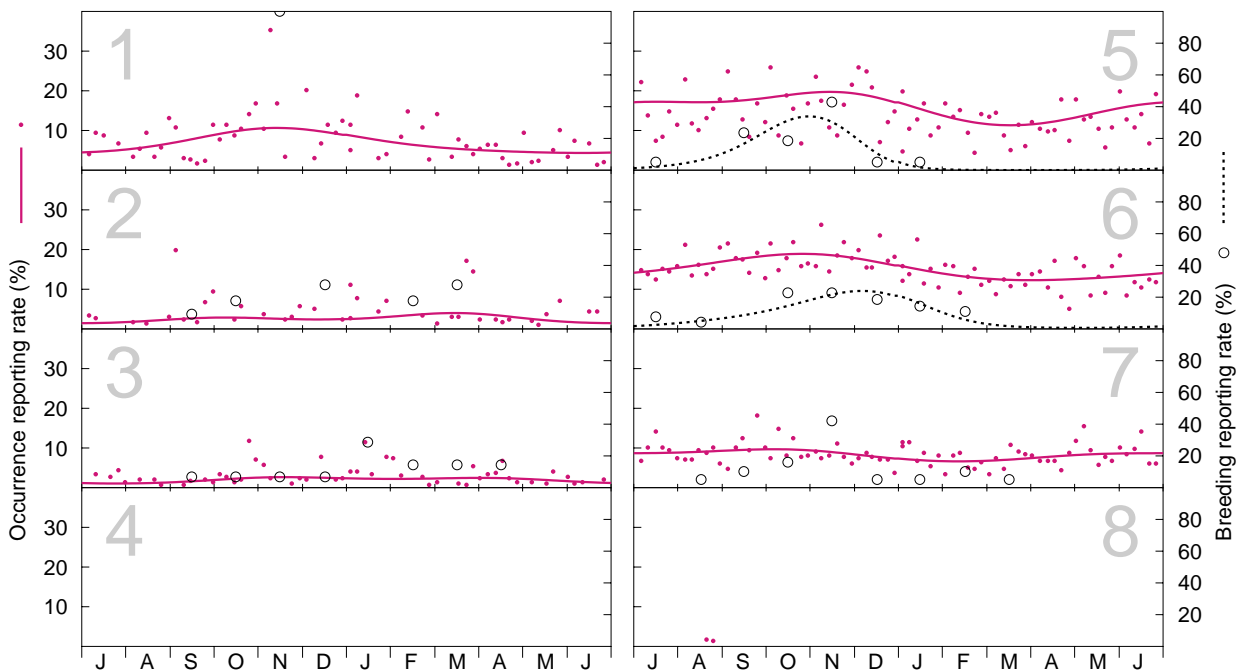
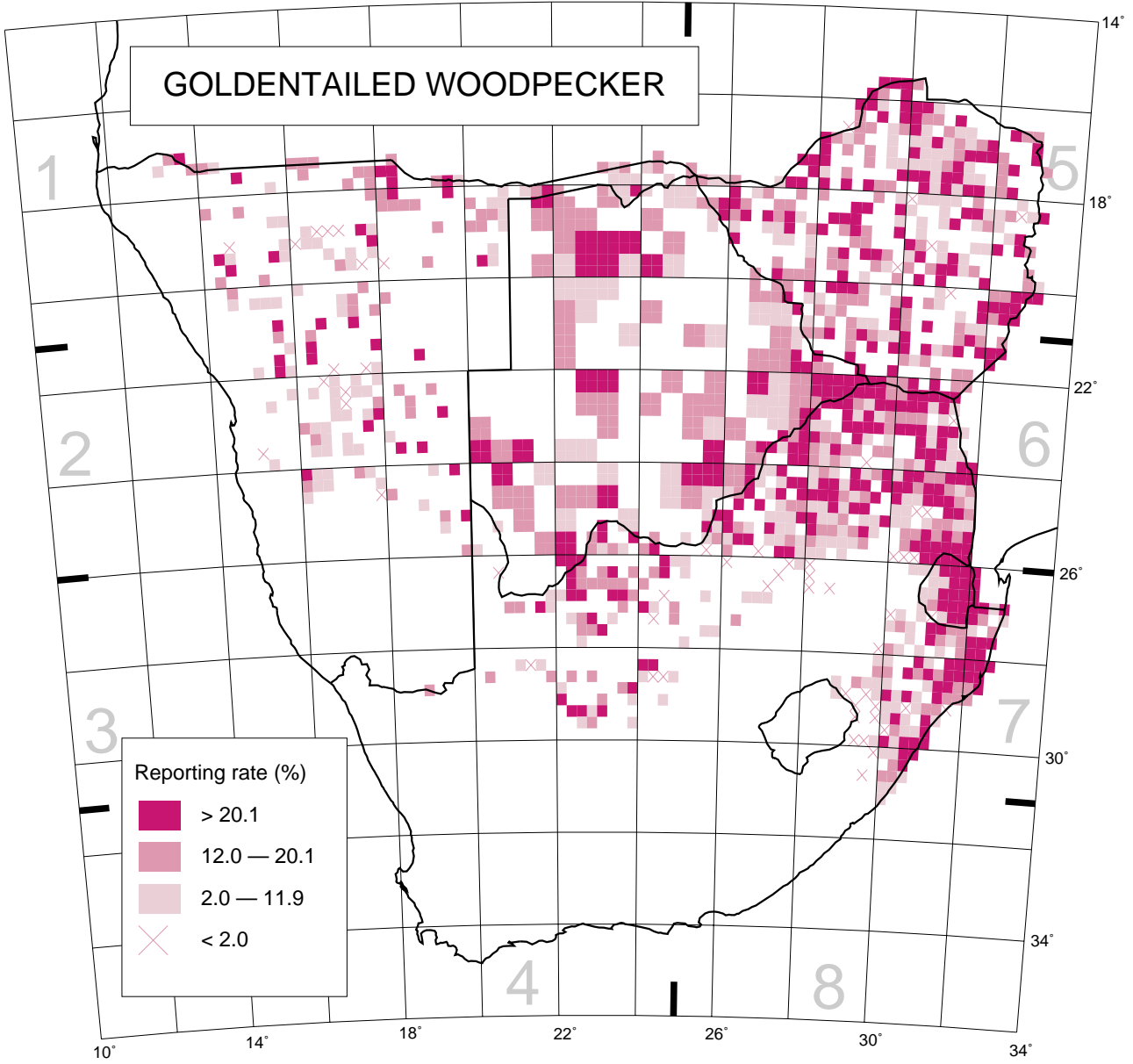
Recorded in 1368 grid cells, 30.2%

Total number of records: 11 907

Mean reporting rate for range: 17.3%

Reporting rates for vegetation types





Models of seasonality for Zones. Number of records (top to bottom, left to right):
 Occurrence: 212, 95, 107, 0, 1397, 1728, 1617, 2; Breeding: 1, 11, 14, 0, 21, 27, 19, 0.