

European Golden Oriole

Europese Wielewaal

Oriolus oriolus

The European Golden Oriole is a Palearctic migrant which ranges in the nonbreeding season throughout the humid woodlands of the southern tropics in Africa (Curry-Lindahl 1981; Pearson & Lack 1992). In southern Africa it is a widespread, though uncommon, summer visitor which can occur in almost any place where there is lush canopy foliage. It is clearly more common in the north and north-east of the region (Zones 1, 5–6) and mostly avoids areas with few trees such as the Namib Desert, the southwestern Kalahari and the Karoo. Relative strongholds are found in the middle and lower Limpopo River drainage and in the southeastern Zimbabwean lowlands along the Save River drainage.

It is fairly shy, unobtrusive and mostly silent. It is usually solitary, but occasionally occurs in small, loose groups (Maclean 1993b). It is easily overlooked, and most frequently observed in short bursts of fast flight amidst lush foliage, making identification problematic. Birds in female and immature plumages far outnumber adult males (Maclean 1993b), further complicating field identification. The atlas data therefore most likely underestimate its presence in the region.

Habitat: It is typically found in lush foliage in shady tree canopies, with a clear preference for broadleaved trees. Riverine strips are important, particularly in dry areas and upon arrival in southern Africa, before widespread rain has promoted the appearance of new foliage. The vegetation analysis confirms its preference for broadleaved woodlands, especially Mopane, but it avoids evergreen forest.

Movements: It starts arriving in southern Africa from October onwards, but the majority arrive in November. Departure is March–April. In the southernmost Zones,

most records were November–February. It is unclear whether individuals take up temporary residence or stay on the move throughout the summer. There are no accepted records in southern Africa during the austral winter.

Interspecific relationships: There are three closely related orioles in the region in summer: the European Golden Oriole is a Palearctic migrant, the African Golden Oriole *O. auratus* is a partial intra-African migrant and the Blackheaded Oriole *O. larvatus* is resident, possibly with local movements to more lush habitat or concentrated food sources during the dry season. All three have similar habitat preferences and overlap widely. The European Golden Oriole has the largest distribution and widest habitat tolerance, but is also by far the least common in any biome where African Golden Oriole occurs, except for the arid woodlands and Namibian escarpment (compare reporting rates by vegetation type; cf. Herremans 1993c). The European Golden Oriole occurs more in open savannas (including *Acacia*) than the other two species. The Blackheaded Oriole is the most common and prefers a variety of forests and broadleaved woodlands in humid areas, and is absent from the Kalahari and the dry west.

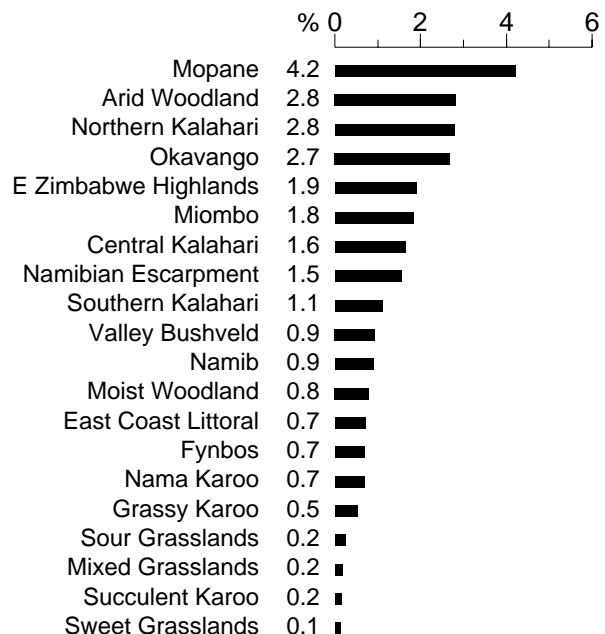
It has a stronghold in the middle and lower Limpopo River drainage, an area where the African Golden Oriole is scarce, while the European Golden Oriole is relatively less well represented in miombo, a stronghold of the African Golden Oriole.

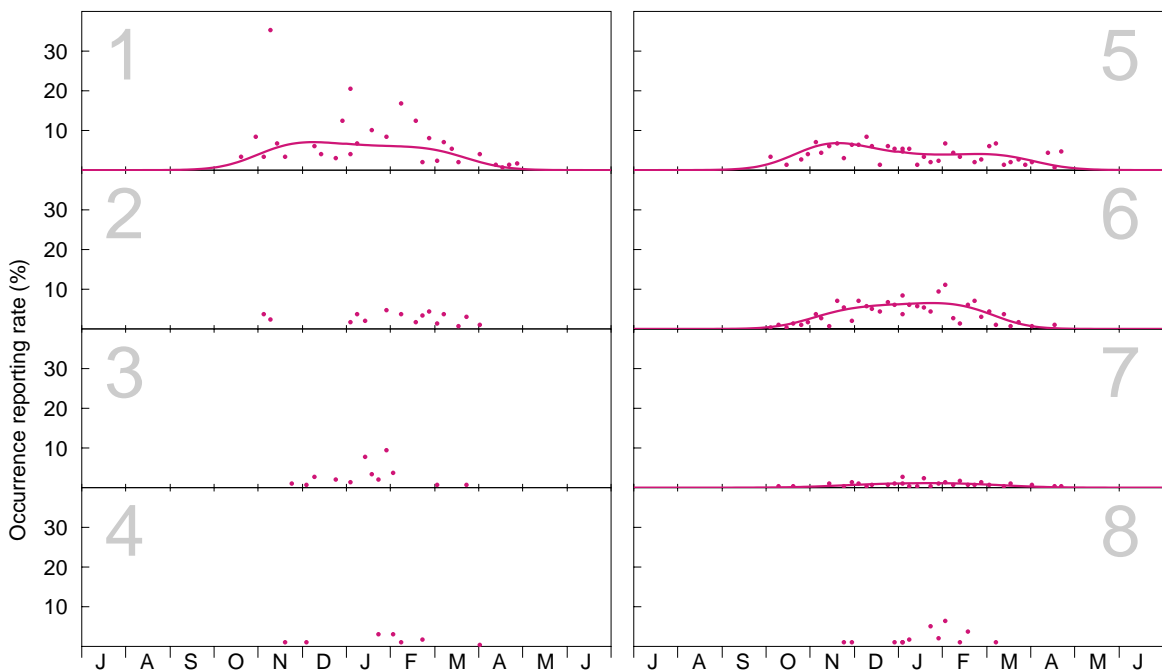
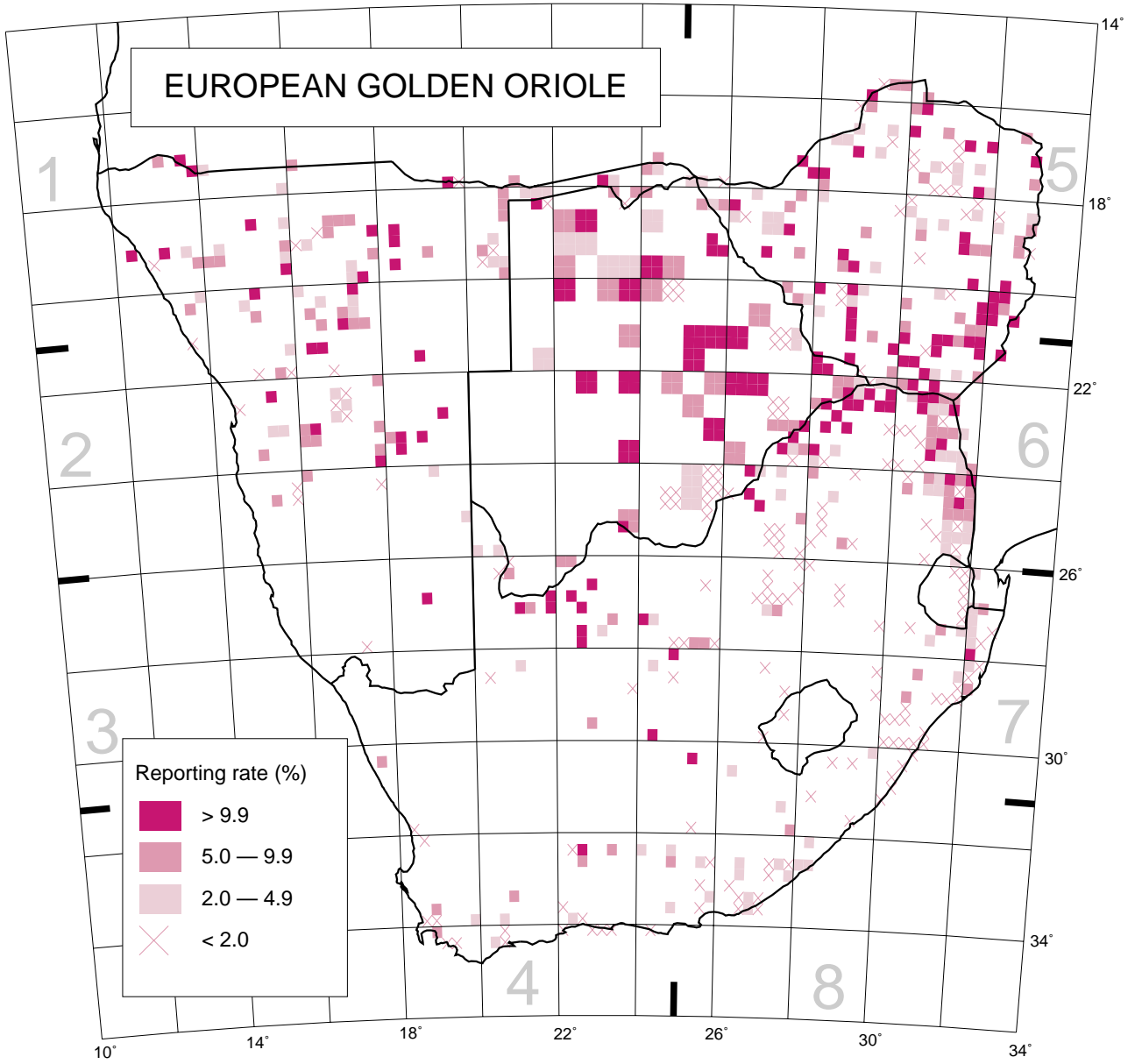
Historical distribution and conservation: Although undocumented, it is likely that plantations of exotic trees and lush gardens have provided new habitat for the European Golden Oriole. It is not known to be threatened while in southern Africa.

M. Herremans

Recorded in 708 grid cells, 15.6%
Total number of records: 1732
Mean reporting rate for range: 3.0%

Reporting rates for vegetation types





Models of seasonality for Zones. Number of records (top to bottom, left to right):
 Occurrence: 67, 20, 19, 11, 202, 242, 71, 20.