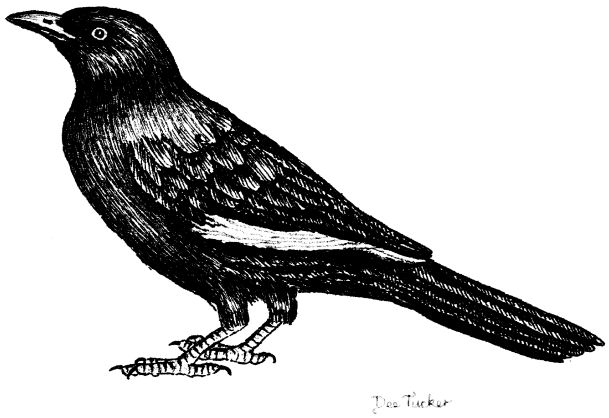


Redwinged Starling

Rooivlerkspreeu

Onychognathus morio

From the southern half of the Cape Province, the Redwinged Starling occurs eastwards through the eastern half of the Free State, throughout Lesotho, KwaZulu-Natal, the Transvaal, Swaziland and most of Zimbabwe. In Botswana it is restricted to the eastern hardveld. It is absent from Namibia. In Mozambique it is found only along the mountainous border with Zimbabwe, in the south along the Lebombo Mountains, on Mount Gorongoza, and in gorges of the Zambezi River (Clancey 1971c). To the north, it extends through the East African highlands to Ethiopia (Craig 1988).

This is a conspicuous bird, distinctive in its calls and plumage, but it was probably occasionally confused with its congener, the Palewinged Starling *O. nabouroup.*

Habitat: Originally a bird of cliffs and rocky areas, it is now a common commensal with humans, nesting on buildings and other man-made structures. The reporting rates show that the Redwinged Starling is most common in highland areas, and less frequent on plains such as those of the Great Karoo, but its presence in a wide range of habitats is strongly influenced by its association with humans. It breeds above 2865 m in the Alpine Belt of the KwaZulu-Natal Drakensberg, but also descends to sub-Alpine altitudes to forage (Brown & Barnes 1984).

Movements: There is only subtle seasonal variation in reporting rates which may be related to the fact that it forms large flocks in winter; these often contain a high proportion of subadult birds (Craig *et al.* 1991). (Flocking tends to depress the rate at which a species is encountered and hence also the reporting rate.) Ringing data indicate that it may disperse widely: birds ringed in Grahamstown (3326BC) have been recovered 60 km to the south, and 100 km to the north (unpubl. data). Bonde (1981) suggested that it moves out of the Sehlabathebe National Park (2929CC) in the Lesotho Drakensberg in winter. This is not supported by counts in summer and winter at high altitudes in the KwaZulu-Natal Drakensberg (Brown & Barnes 1984).

Breeding: The timing of breeding does not appear to vary regionally, with October–January the peak months in all areas. It is commonly double-brooded, which may explain the extended late-summer breeding. These data are in agreement with the southern African records reviewed by Craig *et al.* (1989).

Interspecific relationships: The Redwinged Starling seldom flocks with other species. At the nest site it is aggressive and dominates other birds, including Palewinged Starlings (Craig *et al.* 1991). These two ecologically similar species are largely allopatric and complementary, but they occur sympatrically in the mountains of the southern Cape Province and eastern Karoo. They are often found together at localities in the southern Cape Province, and interspecific interactions do not appear to influence their distribution (Craig & Hulley 1992).

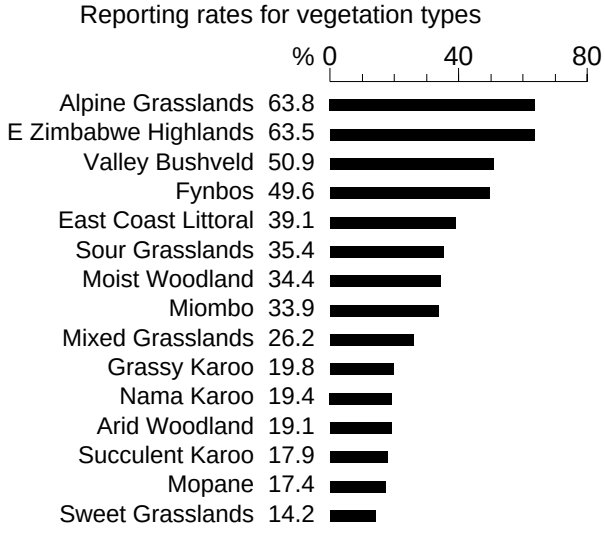
Redwinged Starlings have been observed to perch on Klipspringers *Oreotragus oreotragus* and cows to search for ectoparasites or gland secretions (Maclean 1993b; Roberts 1995).

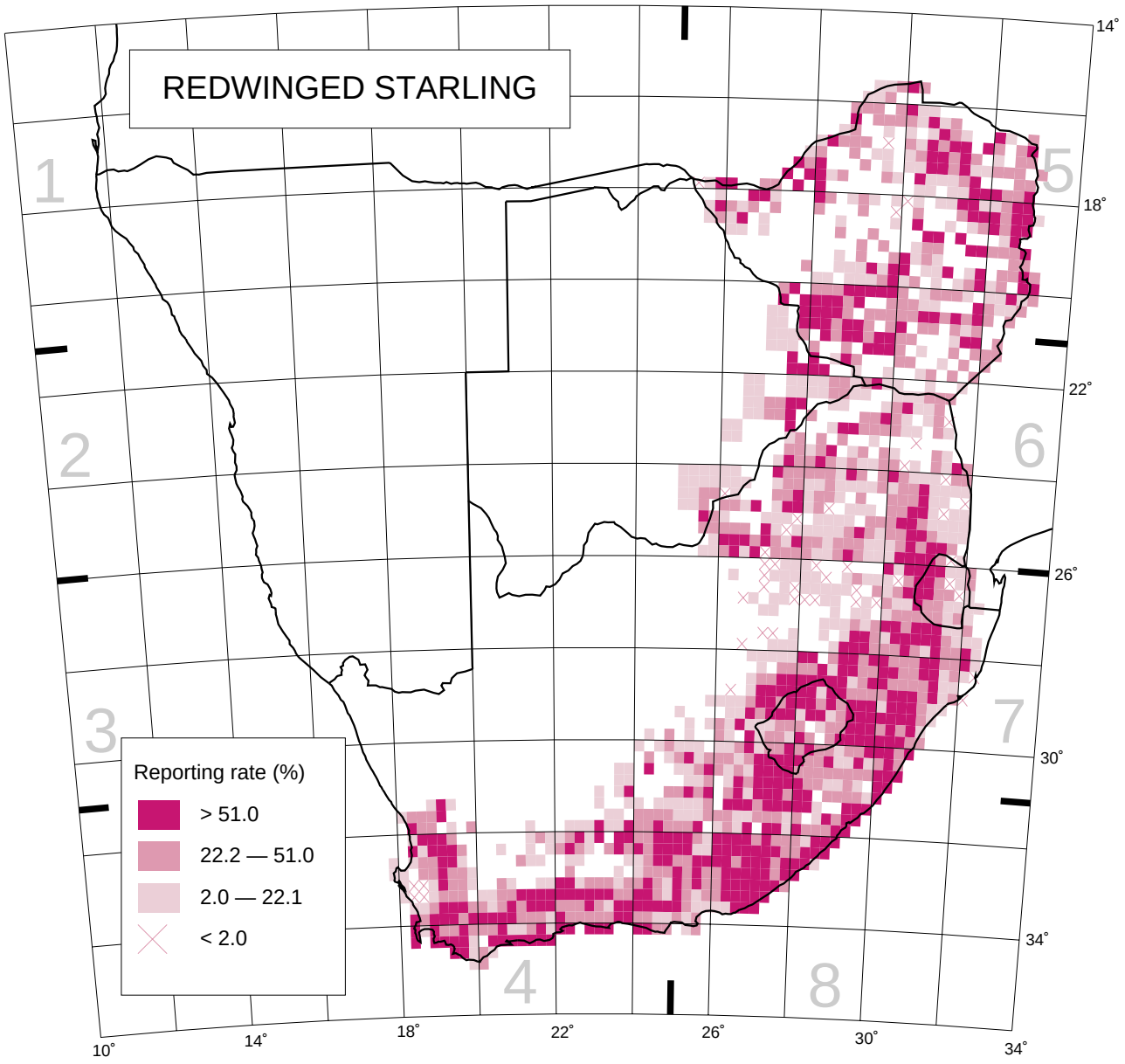
Historical distribution and conservation: Distributional records, including museum specimens, were mapped by Craig & Hulley (1992). The atlas data show more records in Zimbabwe and the Transvaal. In Zimbabwe it has expanded its range into formerly unsuitable areas with the use of tobacco barns and farmhouses for breeding (A.J. Tree pers. comm.). In Gaborone (2425DB), it nested on buildings in an area lacking any natural nest sites (Beesley & Irving 1976), whereas Smithers (1964) had earlier described it as confined to areas where cliffs were available for nesting. In South Africa, it has nested on buildings for more than 100 years (cf. Holub & Von Pelzeln 1882), and is certainly more widely distributed today than in the past.

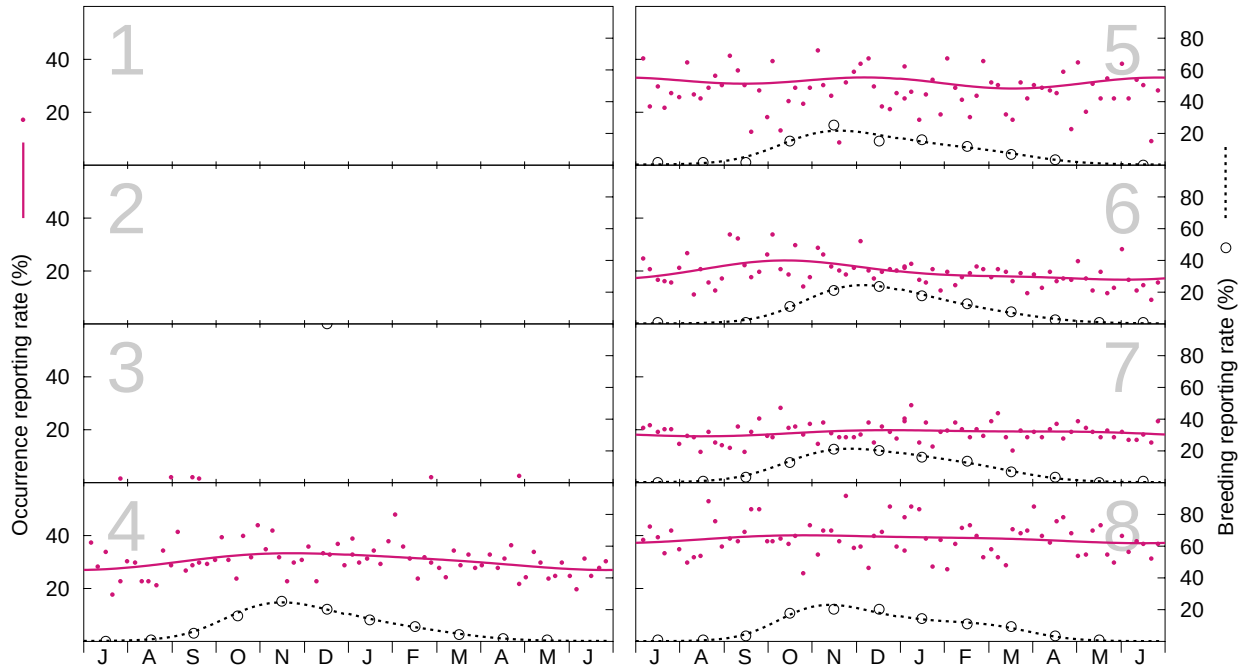
The Redwinged Starling is by far the commonest and most widespread member of its genus, and it is likely to continue expanding its range through its association with humans. In some areas, such as the Cape Province, it has pest status and may be shot by fruit-growers.

A.J.F.K. Craig

Recorded in 1500 grid cells, 33.1%
Total number of records: 42 120
Mean reporting rate for range: 38.6%







Models of seasonality for Zones. Number of records (top to bottom, left to right):
Occurrence: 0, 0, 10, 2640, 2746, 2238, 3698, 2132; Breeding: 0, 0, 1, 337, 182, 182, 459, 260.