

Yellow Canary

Geelkanarie

Serinus flaviventris

The Yellow Canary is near-endemic to southern Africa, extending marginally into Angola as far north as southern Huila in the west and into the Cubango basin in the east. In southern Africa, the species is found in the Cape Province, Free State, western Transvaal, Lesotho, marginally along the western edge of KwaZulu-Natal, over most of Botswana (mainly in the south and southeast), and most of Namibia (but marginally in the Namib Desert and extreme north). There is a cluster of records associated with the Pietersburg Plateau (2329). This is substantially the same range as that reported by Skead (1960), except that the better coverage of Bushmanland and the southern arid savanna during the atlas period has shifted the core distribution to the north.

Confusion between the Yellow Canary and the similar Bully Canary *S. sulphuratus* is likely along the southern coast, and with the Yelloweyed Canary *S. mozambicus* in the area of overlap (Skead 1960). Similarly, confusion between the Yellow Canary and the superficially similar Cuckoo Finch *Anomalospiza imberbis* is possible in the eastern highveld grassland of the Transvaal and north-western KwaZulu-Natal. However, vetting seems to have eliminated problems and the data appear comprehensive and reliable.

Habitat: The Yellow Canary occurs in a relatively wide variety of habitats, including arid and semi-arid dwarf shrublands, arid savanna, alpine shrublands in Lesotho, dry grassland habitats in the eastern parts of its range, and clearings at the edge of forests in the Amatole Mountains (3227C) (Skead 1960). In the southwestern Cape Province it is most abundant in strandveld, renosterveld and dune fynbos; it avoids mountain fynbos and is uncommon in mountainous areas generally in this region (Hockey *et al.* 1989). In comparison with the Bully and Yelloweyed Canaries, the Yellow Canary is a species of relatively dry, open and scrubby habitats.

Movements: The models show that there may be some movement from the northern Karoo to the southwestern

and southern Karoo in the winter, supporting the observation by Skead (1960) that Yellow Canaries apparently move away from the Orange River mouth in late winter. Hockey *et al.* (1989) suggested that Yellow Canaries move out of the southwestern Cape Province after the breeding season. There are also reports of irruptive movements into areas where it does not usually occur (Skead 1960). These may account for some of the records in northern and far eastern Transvaal (Tarboton *et al.* 1987b).

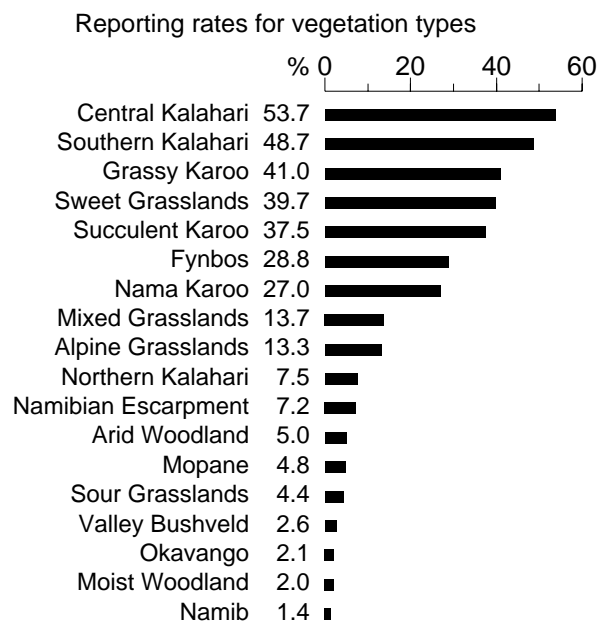
Breeding: The models suggest that breeding starts earlier in the winter-rainfall region (most of Zone 4 and part of Zone 3) but extends for longer in the summer-rainfall region (Zones 2, 7 and 8). This is confirmed by egg-laying data from the southwestern Cape Province (Winterbottom 1968a) which spanned August–December with an August–October peak, and the Transvaal (Tarboton *et al.* 1987b) which spanned August–April with a September–November peak.

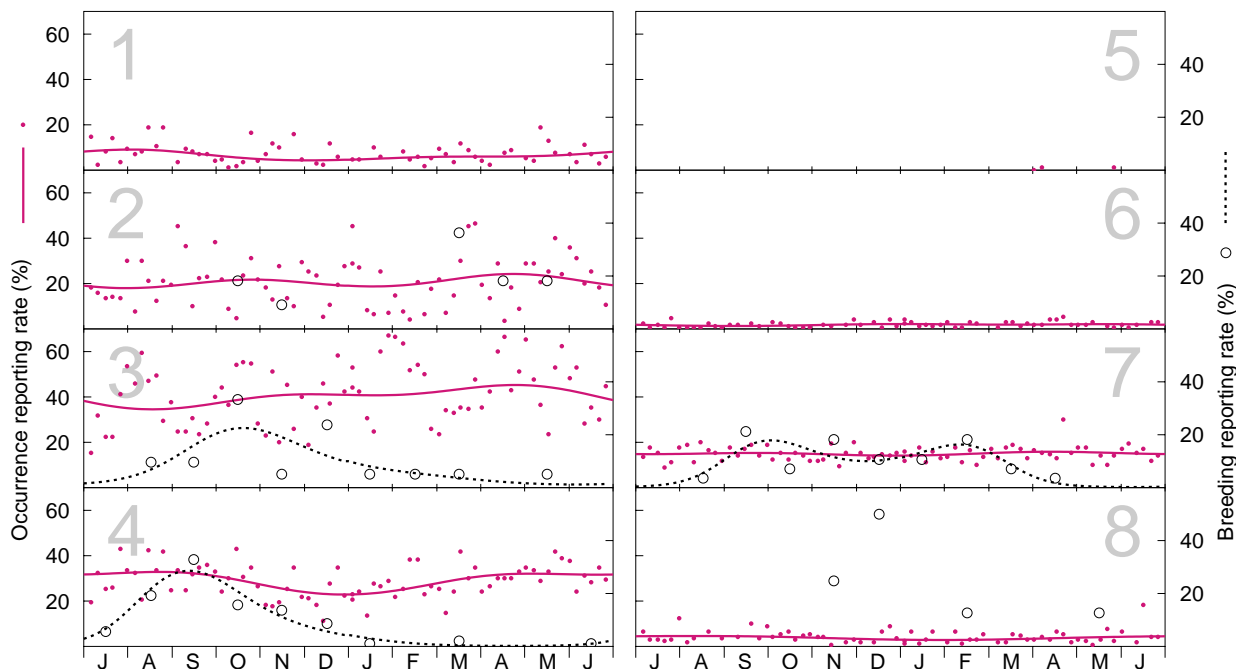
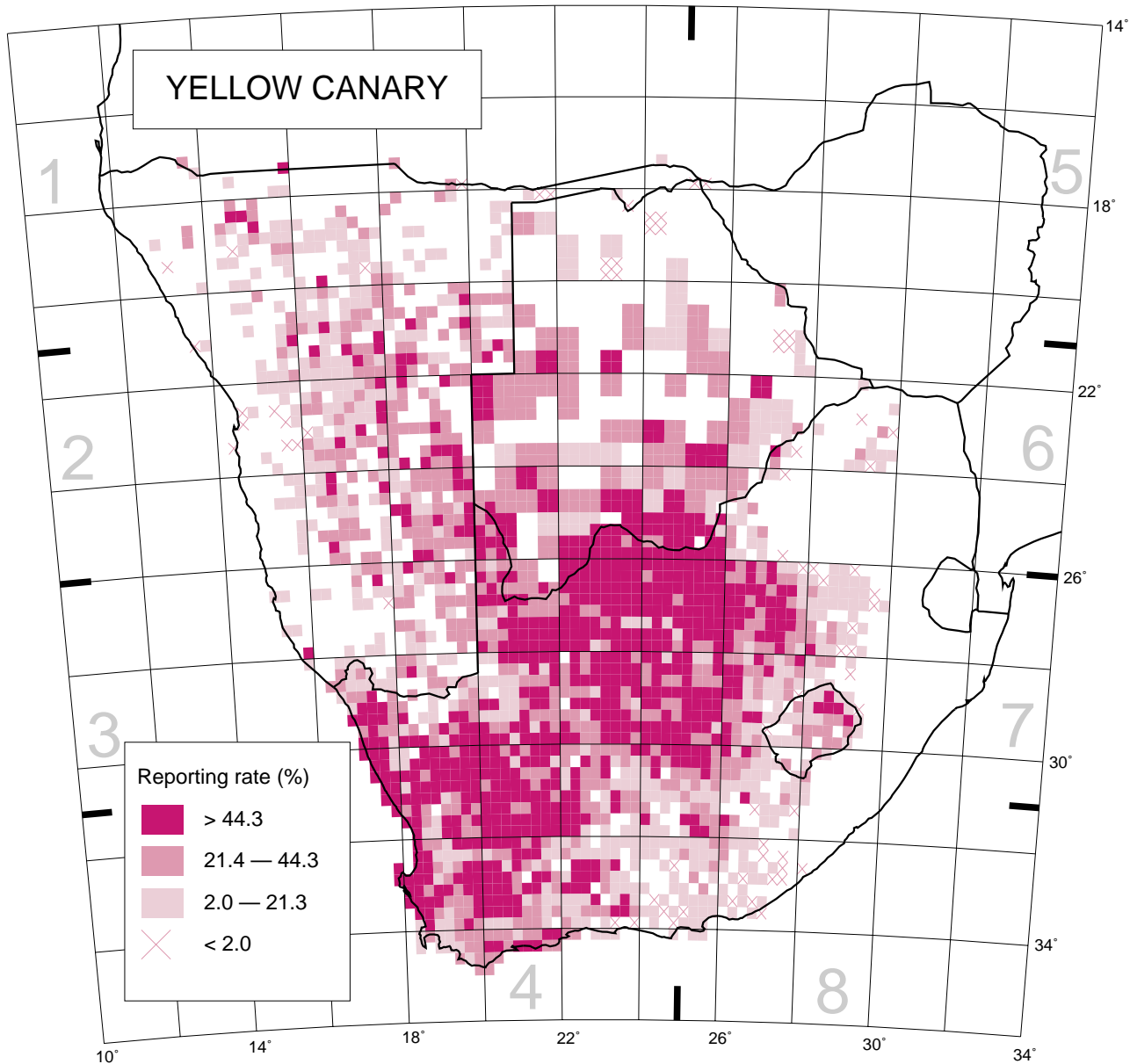
Interspecific relationships: Yellow Canaries are a component of mixed-species flocks in the Karoo (pers. obs) and southwestern Cape Province (Hockey *et al.* 1989). Associations have been recorded with Yelloweyed Canaries and Goldenbreasted Buntings *Emberiza flaviventris* at Fort Beaufort (3226DC), and with Pied Starlings *Spreo bicolor* at Cape Agulhas (3420CC) (Skead 1960). Competitive interactions with Yelloweyed and Bully Canaries are a possibility. The Yellow Canary appears to be replaced by these species along the coast north from East London (3327BB) and in KwaZulu-Natal, northern Transvaal, Zimbabwe, northeastern Botswana and northern Namibia.

Historical distribution and conservation: There is no evidence of any recent change in the distribution of the Yellow Canary. The species is not considered threatened.

W.R.J. Dean

Recorded in 2229 grid cells, 49.1%
Total number of records: 20 517
Mean reporting rate for range: 25.6%





Models of seasonality for Zones. Number of records (top to bottom, left to right):
 Occurrence: 217, 752, 2229, 2565, 3, 208, 2933, 208; Breeding: 0, 11, 21, 94, 0, 0, 28, 8.