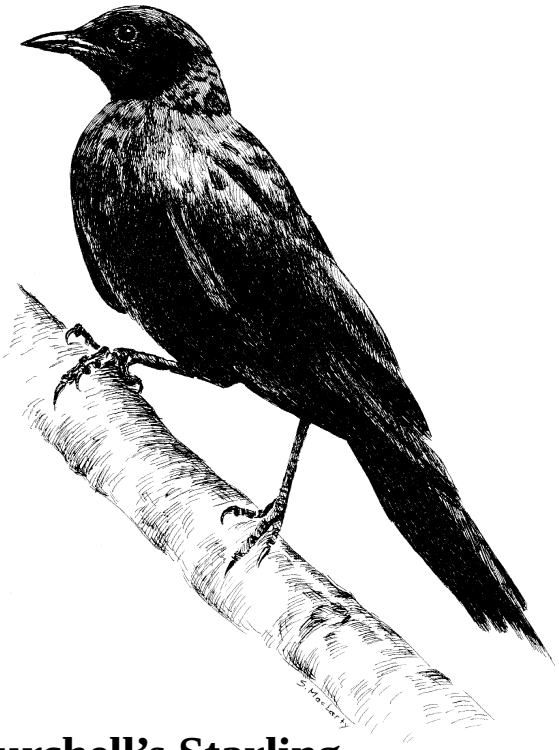

Burchell's Starling

Grootglansspreeu

Lamprotornis australis

Burchell's Starling is endemic to southern Africa, extending marginally into southern Angola and southwestern Zambia (Hall & Moreau 1970). It has an interesting distribution, from the northern half of Namibia throughout Botswana to the northwestern Transvaal and the lowveld of the eastern Transvaal and Swaziland. This coincides roughly with areas where tall Mopane woodland and tall thorntrees occur, especially the Camelthorn *Acacia erioloba.*

In Zimbabwe it occurs marginally along the western border with Botswana (C.J. Pollard pers. comm.) and it is found in parts of Mozambique adjacent to the Kruger National Park (Clancey 1971c). The map in Earlé & Grobler (1987) suggests that it occurs regularly at a number of localities in the Free State, and there is an old specimen record from the province (Hall & Moreau 1970). However, its presence in the Free State was not confirmed during the period 1987–92 and the records in Earlé & Grobler (1987) appear to be erroneous. Any records south of 27°S should be regarded as doubtful, except in Swaziland.

Most of the range is occupied by the nominate race, but the well-isolated population in the Transvaal lowveld and Swaziland has been described as the race *L. a. degener* (Clancey 1980b).

It is large, conspicuous and easy to identify, but superficially similar to the Longtailed Starling *L. mevesii.* It may be that misidentification of these two species contributed to the sharp truncation of the range along the Zimbabwe border with Botswana.

Habitat: It is a bird of savanna woodland with large trees and stretches of uncovered open ground. Hall & Moreau (1970) commented on its association with the Camelthorn, and this explains its stronghold at the southern and western edge of the Okavango and in a band across southwestern Botswana, particularly near the northern fringe of the Gemsbok National Park (2422). In Swaziland it is particularly associated with tall Knobthorn *A. nigrescens* woodland (Parker 1994). Its patchy and restricted distribution suggests that it is a habitat specialist. The gaps in distribution in Botswana coincide mainly with areas of dense scrub and poor tree cover, or with open plains such as the Makgadikgadi (2025). Although it regularly forages on damp ground in the Okavango and drinks frequently, its occurrence as a resident in the southwestern Kalahari indicates that it must be independent of water. In northern Botswana, it was more common in Mopane woodland showing the impact of foraging elephants than in tall, untouched woodland (Herremans 1995a). Being a bulky starling, it needs rather large nesting holes and thus large tree-trunks.

Movements: It is a resident with no evidence of seasonal movements. Outside the breeding season it does undertake daily flights, which may cover considerable distances, to large communal roosts of several hundred birds in reedbeds (Randall 1988b) or dense thorn trees (M.H. pers. obs).

Breeding: The records suggest that peak breeding was earlier in the Transvaal (October–December) than in Namibia and Botswana, where the peak was January–April. This is supported by other data for these regions (Tarboton *et al.* 1987b; Maclean 1993b; Brown & Clinning in press) and follows the pattern of earlier rainfall in the Transvaal than in the northwest of the region.

Interspecific relationships: It may be found foraging in association with Glossy Starlings *L. nitens* and Greater Blue-eared Starlings *L. chalybaeus.* Roosts in reedbeds can be communal with various herons and other piscivorous birds (Randall 1988b). Although Burchell's and Longtailed Starlings do commonly occur together in the Caprivi and Okavango regions where a complex mosaic of moist and dry habitats exists, they do not overlap significantly elsewhere; mutual competitive exclusion may be a further factor determining their distributions. Although both species do occasionally forage in mixed flocks (e.g. Herremans-Tonnoeyr *et al.* 1995), Burchell's Starling consistently dominated Longtailed at an artificial food source (Herremans & Herremans-Tonnoeyr 1995). Burchell's Starling is a host of the Great Spotted Cuckoo *Clamator glandarius.*

Historical distribution and conservation: There are old records from the border between the Transvaal and northern KwaZulu-Natal (Clancey 1964b), but it was not recorded during the Natal atlas (Cyrus & Robson 1980). There is no evidence for any changes in distribution, except for the reassessment of the Free State records. Common in protected areas such as national parks where it becomes a camp-follower, Burchell's Starling is not threatened.

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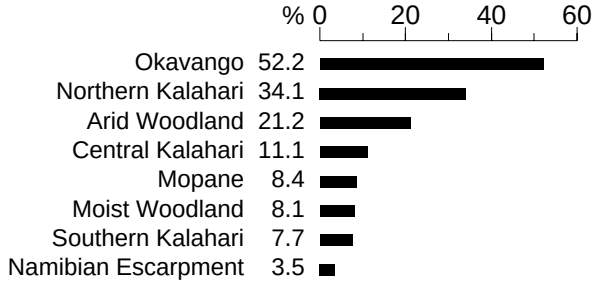
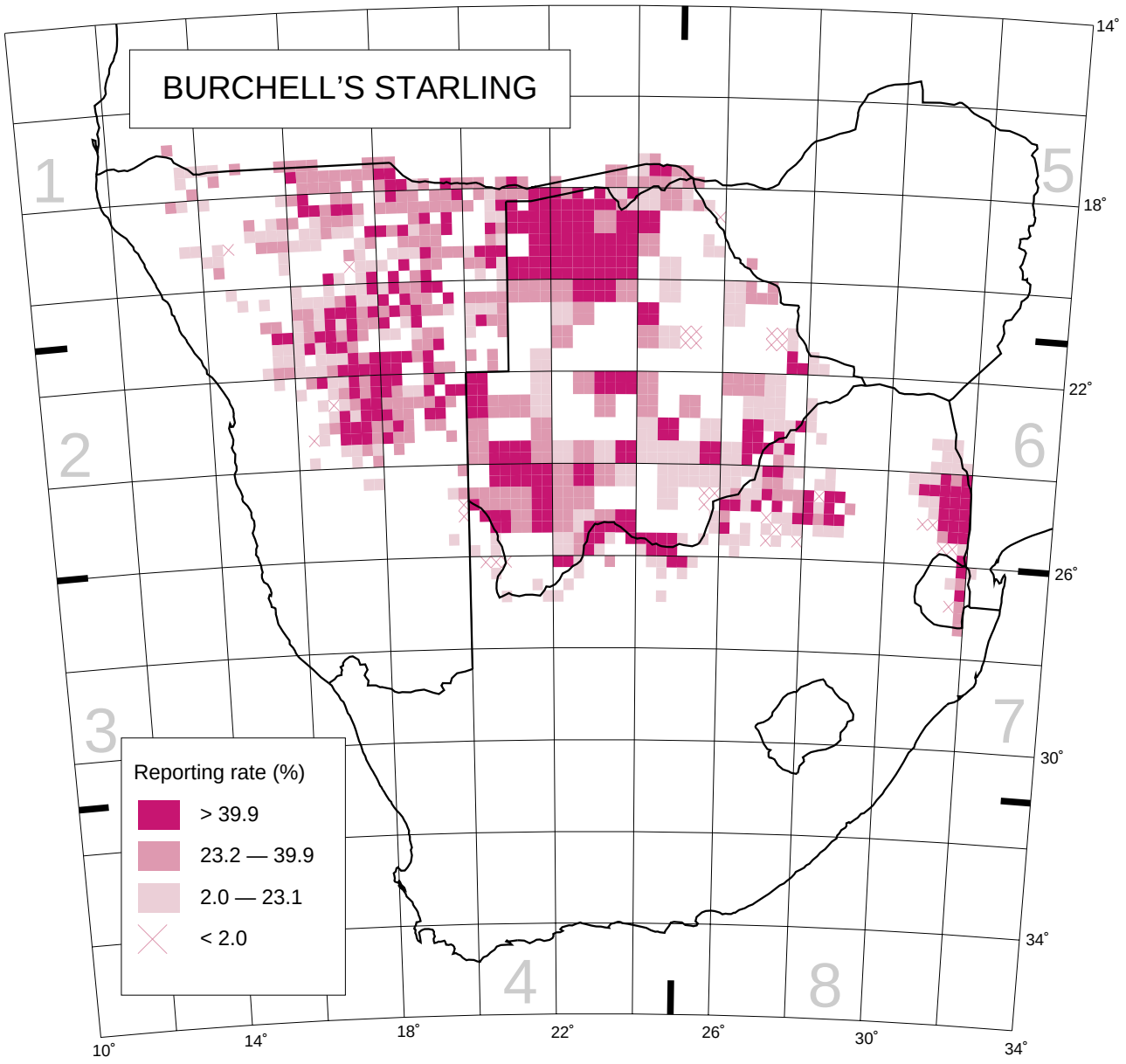
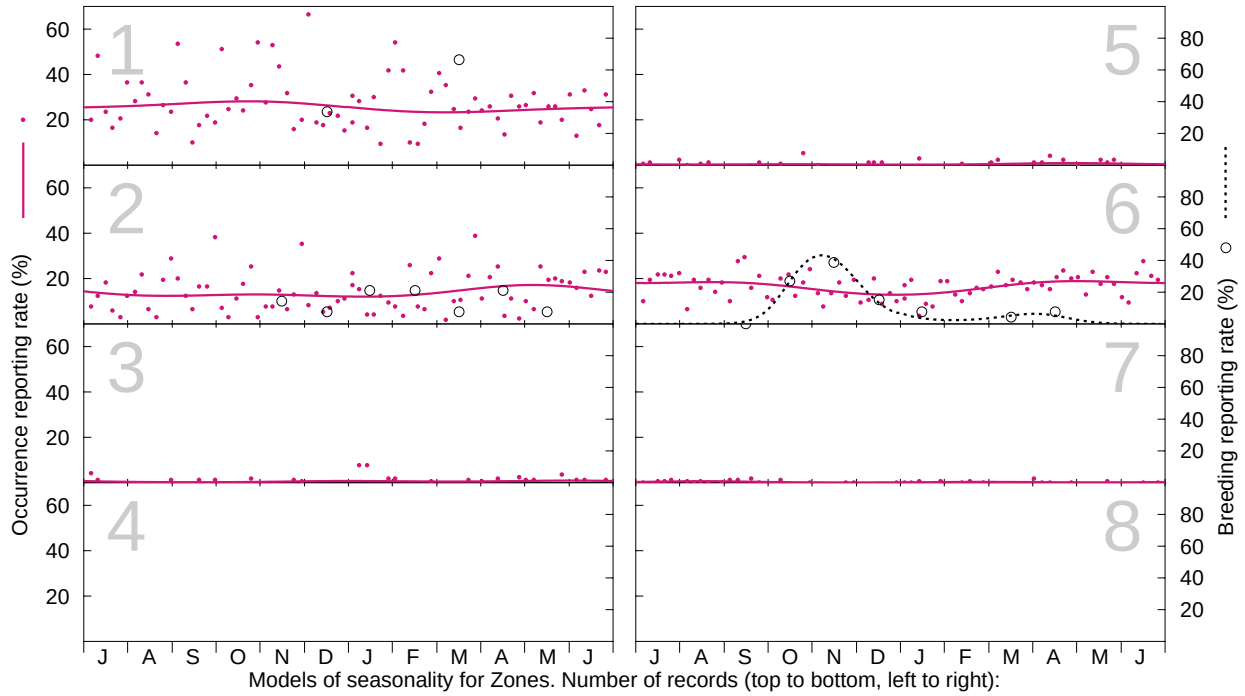
Recorded in 1033 grid cells, 22.8%
Total number of records: 7350
Mean reporting rate for range: 31.1%

Reporting rates for vegetation types







Models of seasonality for Zones. Number of records (top to bottom, left to right):
Occurrence: 846, 509, 30, 0, 40, 1896, 53, 0; Breeding: 3, 14, 0, 0, 0, 26, 1, 0.