

Yellowbilled Stork

Nimmersat

Mycteria ibis

The Yellowbilled Stork is widely distributed in tropical Africa south of the Sahara, and it also occurs in Madagascar (Brown *et al.* 1982). It is mainly a nonbreeding intra-African migrant in southern Africa during the wet season (October–April) (Maclean 1993b); however, the atlas data indicate that it may be more resident than previously thought. In southern Africa it is generally scarce, but regularly present in small numbers at a few localities. It occurs in the eastern parts of the subcontinent with a range corresponding to the distribution of perennial and large ephemeral wetlands. In South Africa it was frequently reported in the Kruger National Park, northern KwaZulu-Natal and the central highveld areas; it is uncommon in the arid western parts and is seldom encountered south of the Orange River. It occurs occasionally in the eastern Karoo and eastern Cape Province after rains. It was frequently reported in the Okavango basin where it is a breeding resident (Penry 1994). It is widespread in Zimbabwe, with local or migratory movements (Irwin 1981; Brown *et al.* 1982).

It is a scarce breeder in southern Africa. Several small colonies of up to 20 nests have been reported from the Okavango Delta (Fraser 1971a; Child 1972; Fothergill 1983), where occasionally a few hundred may breed (*S. Motalaote pers. comm.*). It has also bred at the Nata Delta (Tree 1978b). There is a maximum of fewer than 25 breeding pairs in South Africa (Brooke 1984a); it has bred in small numbers (<20 pairs) at Engelhard Dam (2331DA), Kruger National Park, Pongola Nature Reserve (2731BD), Ndumu Game Reserve (2632C), Lake St Lucia (2832CB) and Nylsvley (2428DA) (Brooke 1984a; Tarboton *et al.* 1987b; Tarboton 1996c). It probably also breeds in Swaziland (Parker 1994). The first breeding records from Zim-

babwe were at Nhora Dam (2131BD), Chiredzi, where it was observed breeding in August 1993, July 1994 and again in 1995, and at Machiniwa Pan (2132AD), Gona-re-Zhou National Park, in July 1994 (Shaw 1994a; Bemont 1995, 1996).

It is usually gregarious in small parties and seldom forms large flocks, but sometimes associates with other large waterbirds. It is an unmistakable bird.

Habitat: Its habitat use is particularly diverse, including dams, large marshes, swamps, estuaries, margins of lakes or rivers, seasonal wetlands where there are areas of vegetation-free shallow water, and even small pools (Hancock *et al.* 1992). During the atlas period it was most regularly encountered at wetlands in the Okavango basin and the Mopane belt.

Movements: Its movements are irregular, somewhat nomadic, and poorly documented (Brown *et al.* 1982). It has been described as 'a facultatively nomadic species, avoiding areas where water and rainfall are inappropriate' (Hancock *et al.* 1992). The atlas data indicate a decrease in numbers in southern Africa May–August, with a more significant and later-summer influx of migrants in southern areas than in the more northerly Zones 1 and 5.

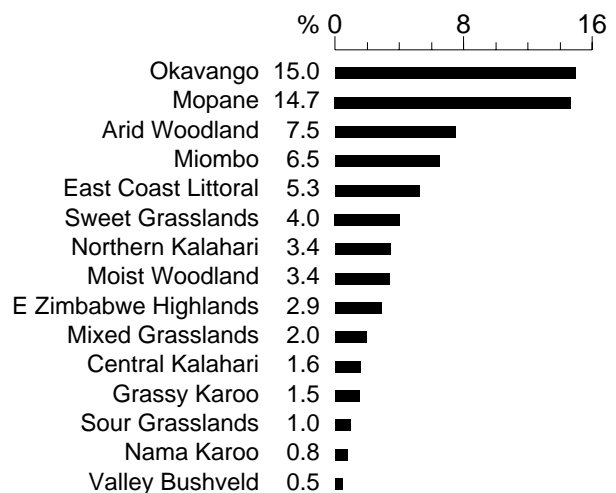
Breeding: Egg-laying is mainly August–September, but earlier, June–August, in KwaZulu-Natal (Fraser 1971a; Maclean 1993b; Penry 1994; Skinner 1996a).

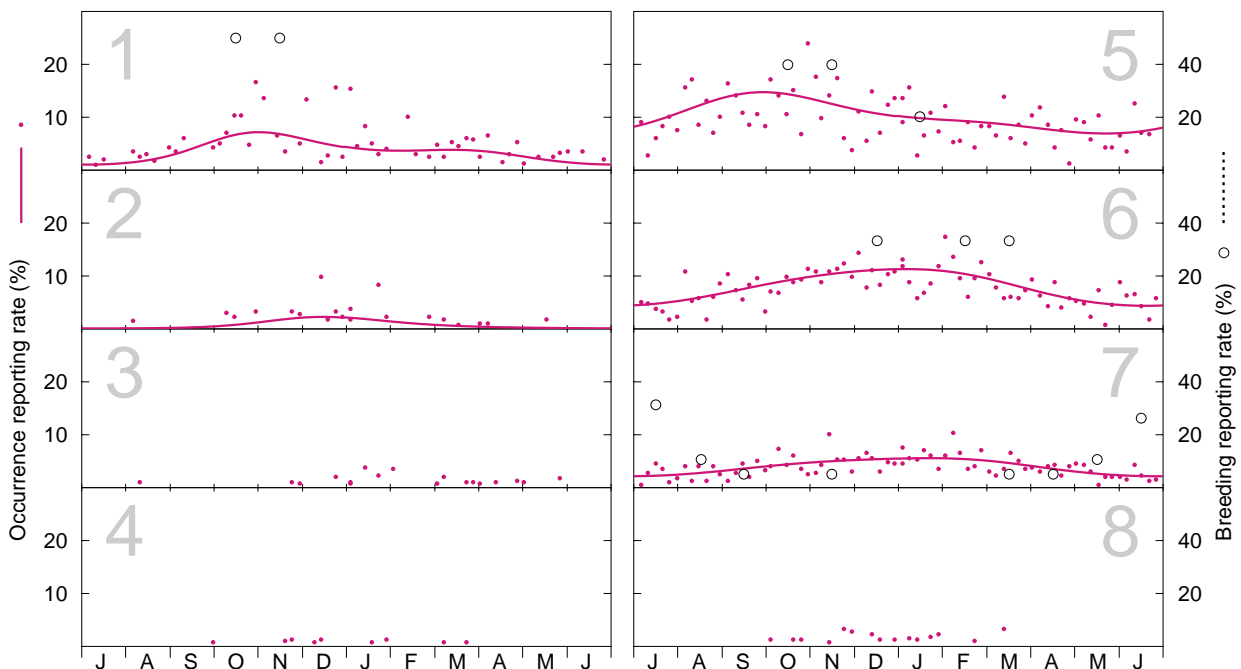
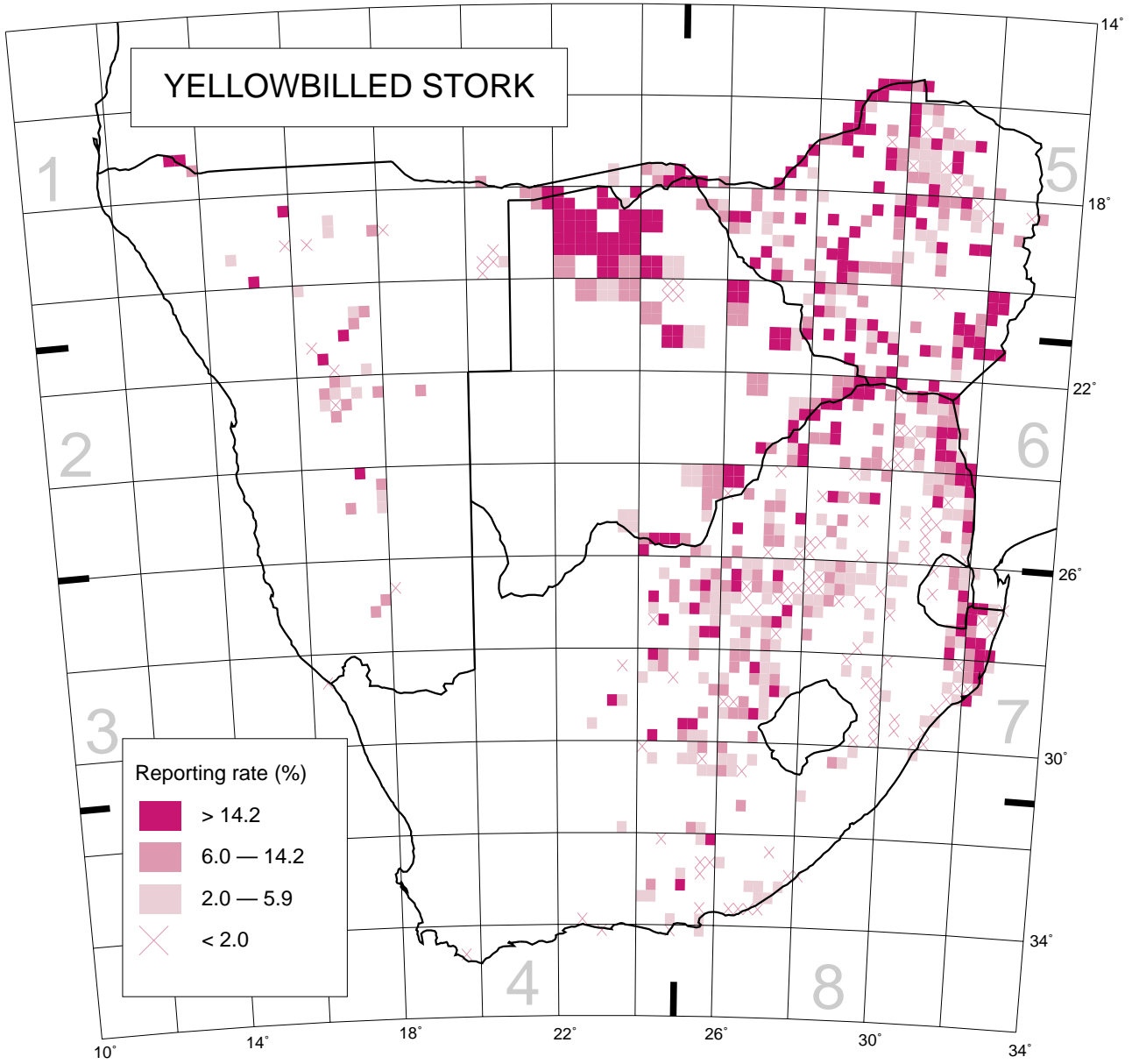
Historical distribution and conservation: Although it is considered 'rare' in South Africa, there is no evidence for a decrease in numbers (Brooke 1984b). However, it may have decreased as a nonbreeding visitor to the eastern Cape Province since the 1960s (A.J. Tree *in litt.*). The overall population may be considered abundant and stable (Hancock *et al.* 1992).

M.D. Anderson

Recorded in 799 grid cells, 17.6%
Total number of records: 4780
Mean reporting rate for range: 7.3%

Reporting rates for vegetation types





Models of seasonality for Zones. Number of records (top to bottom, left to right):
 Occurrence: 112, 24, 19, 10, 913, 901, 776, 20; Breeding: 4, 0, 0, 0, 5, 3, 19, 0.