



Photo: Mick Roderick

# Rufous Scrub-bird

## Poorly known denizen of the Gloucester Tops

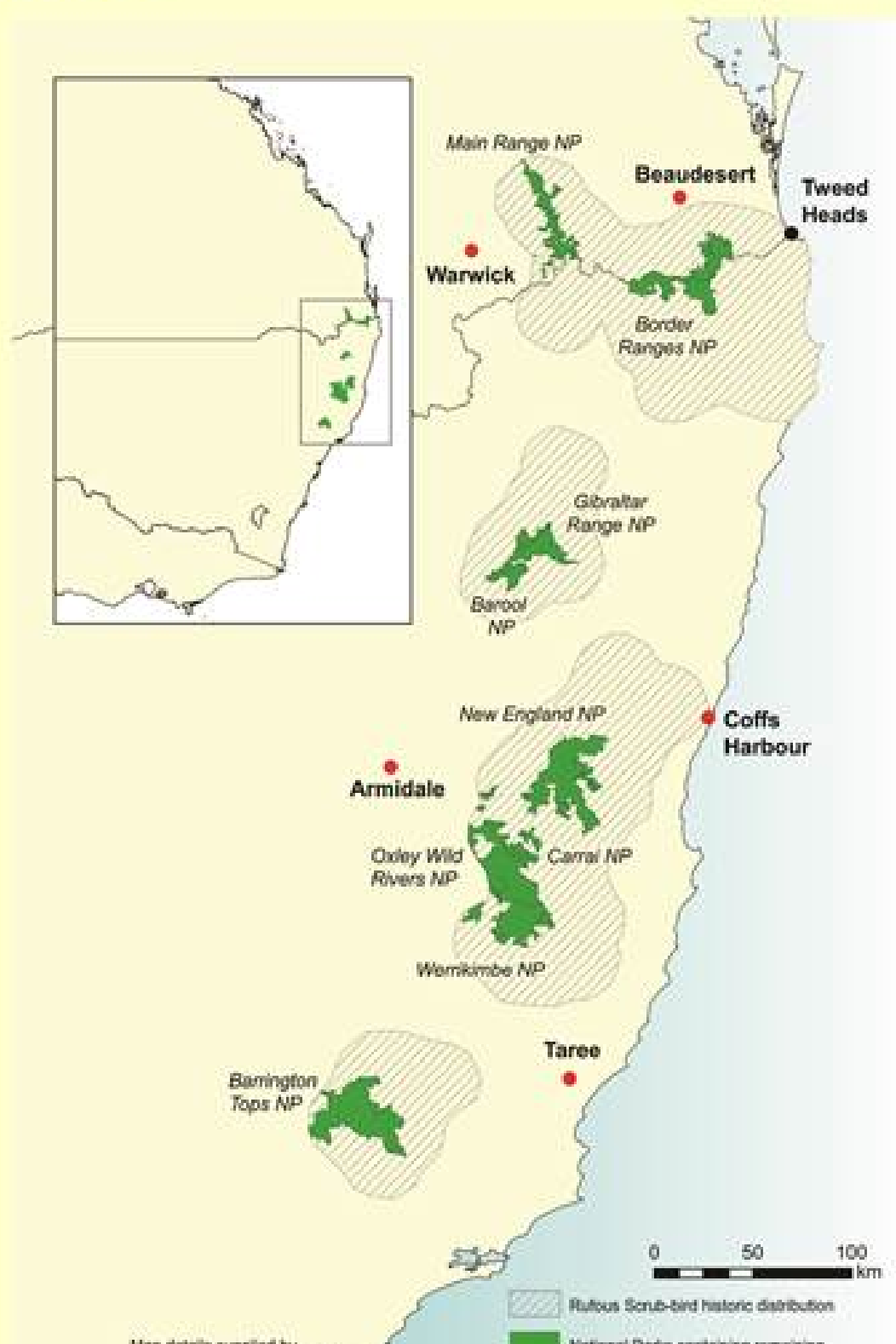
### A study by members of HBOC



Photo: David Stowe

### Cryptic ... and in trouble

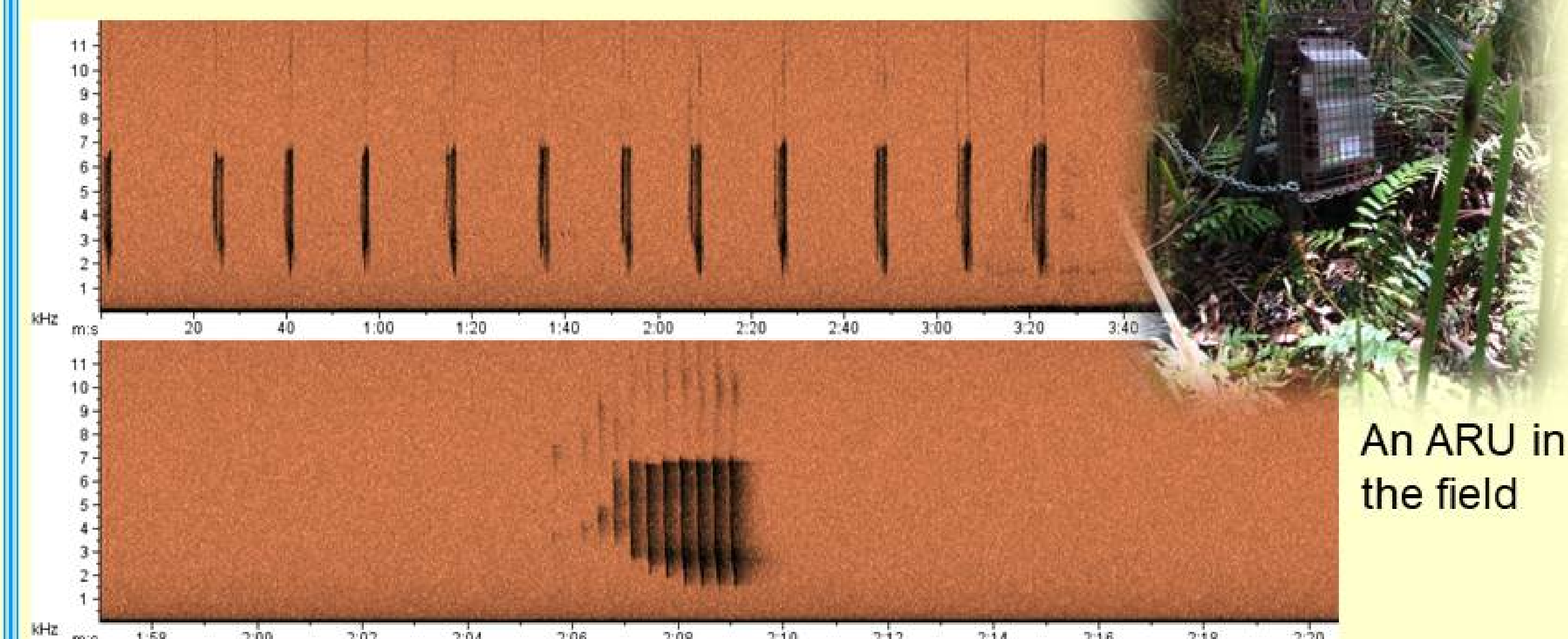
- Endangered
  - 1981 finding: 80% decrease in territories since European settlement
  - Further population decreases have occurred
  - Has disappeared from the lower altitude former parts of its range
- Five isolated remnant populations.
- Found on mountain “islands” with no escape route from climate change
- Secretive, skulking with limited flight
- Heard, but seldom seen
- Require dense understorey; deep leaf litter
- Little else is known about them!



Past and present distribution

### Singing behaviour of male Scrub-birds

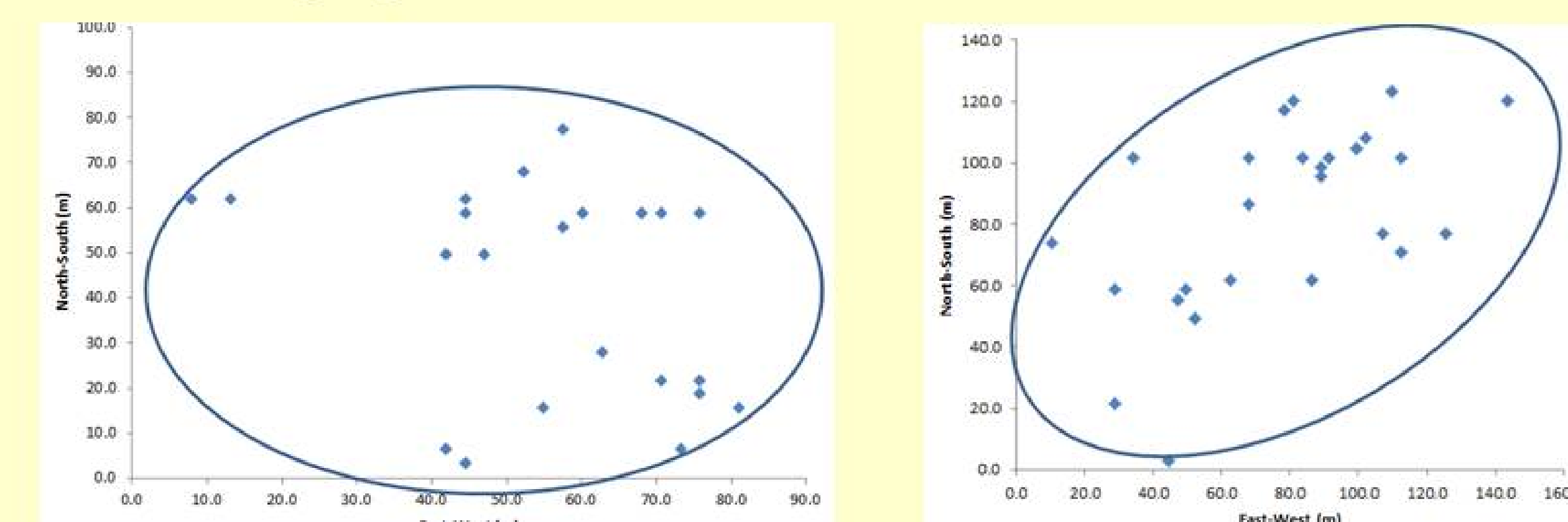
- Using automated recording units (ARU) to study singing patterns of males at their territories
- ARU produces sonograms = digital records of a bird's call



Sonogram of the Rufous Scrub-bird's main song (expanded view below)

### Size of male Scrub-bird singing area

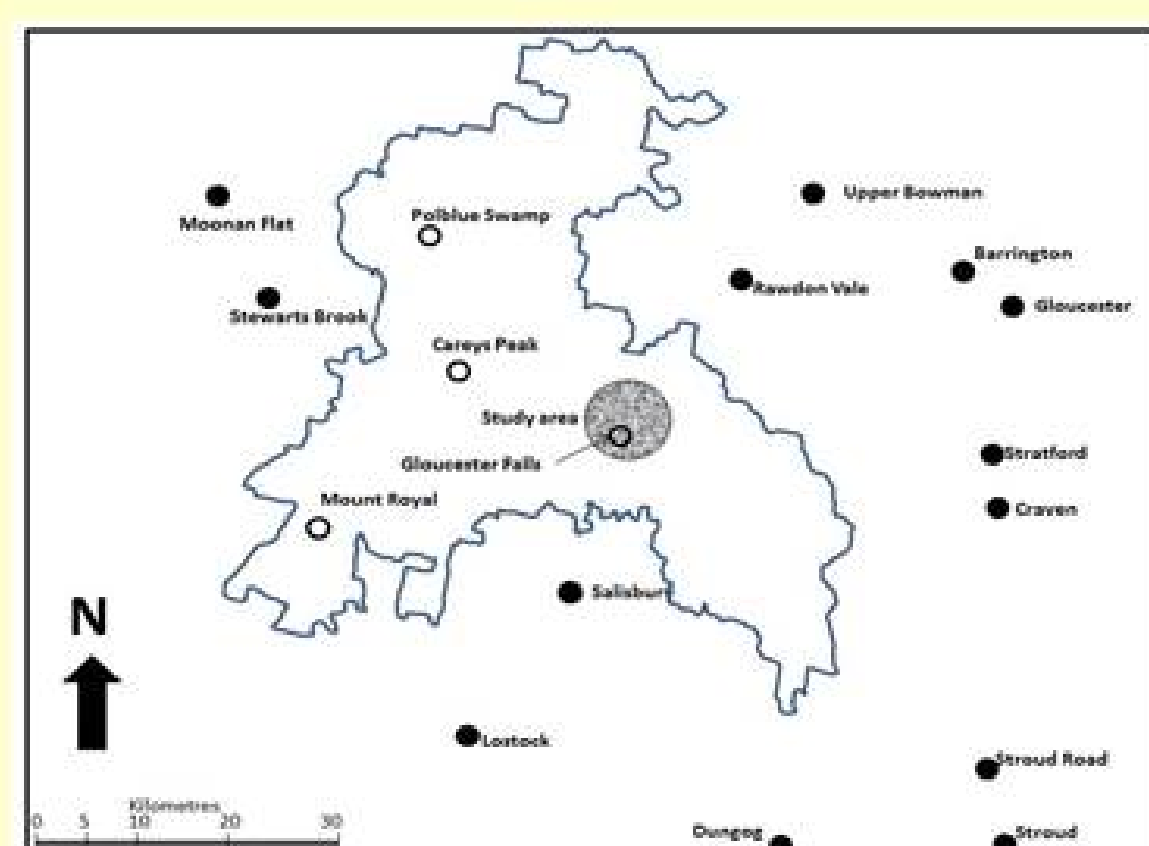
- Males call from elevated perches and from the ground
- Singing area is very small: about 1 ha
- In the breeding season the male seems never to leave this small area
- Is this the territory size? Where do males go when they aren't singing?



Positions of two different male Rufous Scrub-birds within their singing areas

### Population monitoring

- Focus on understanding a population in known core habitat (~4km radius site, ~5,000ha).
- Spring surveys when male Scrub-bird are advertising their territories
- 37 territories identified and monitored annually



Study area in the Gloucester Tops



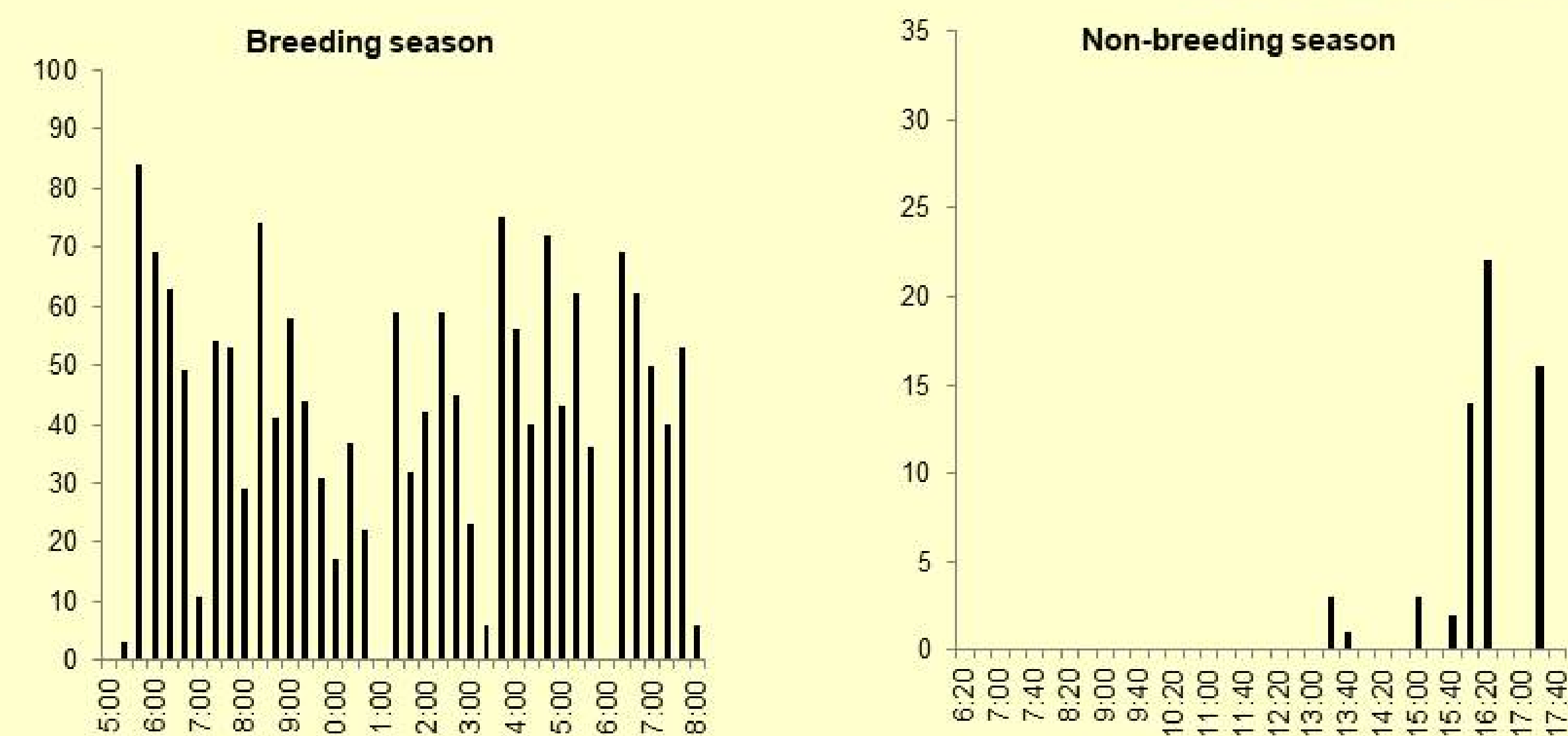
Some members of the study team

### How often does a Scrub-bird sing?

- 1500-2000 calls/day in breeding season
- Rate drops substantially in remainder of the year



Photo: Allan Richardson



Calls per 20 minute interval. Huge daily variability in the non-breeding season.

### Examples of other Scrub-bird calls

