

*Sclerocarya birrea*

## Marula / Omungongo

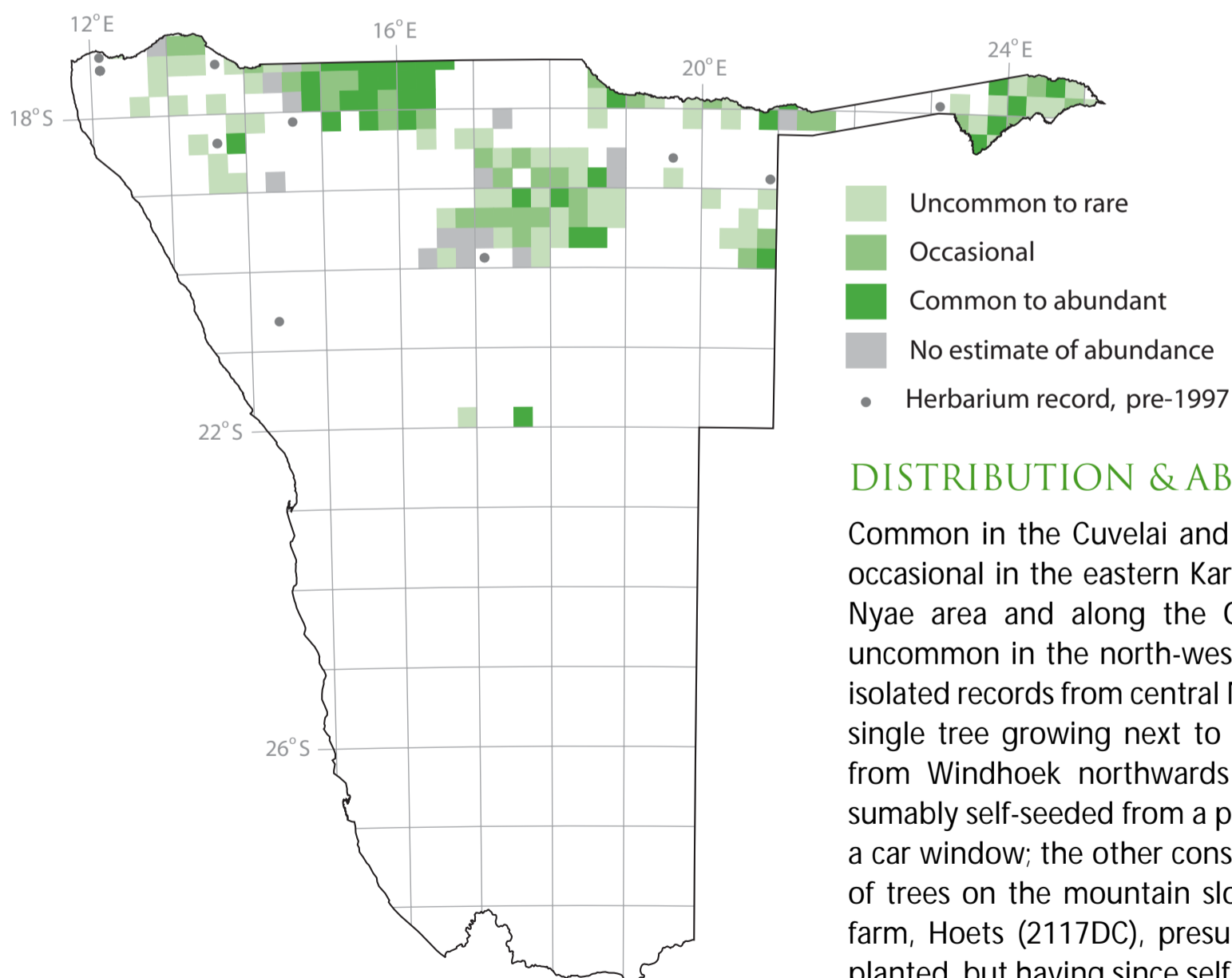
Maroela (A); malula (L); goarus (K);  
omugongo (Od); uwongo (Rk)

[492 records from 153 (14%) squares]



Large deciduous tree with dense, spreading crown. BARK yellowish to grey, **covered with irregular, flat, dark grey scales; young branchlets with conspicuous leaf-scars**. LEAVES compound, up to 300 mm long; **leaflet margin entire or coarsely toothed (especially in young plants); characteristic tip**. FLOWERS with red sepals and yellow petals; male and female flowers on separate plants. FRUIT almost round, tough-skinned, up to 40 mm in diameter; pale creamy yellow when ripe.

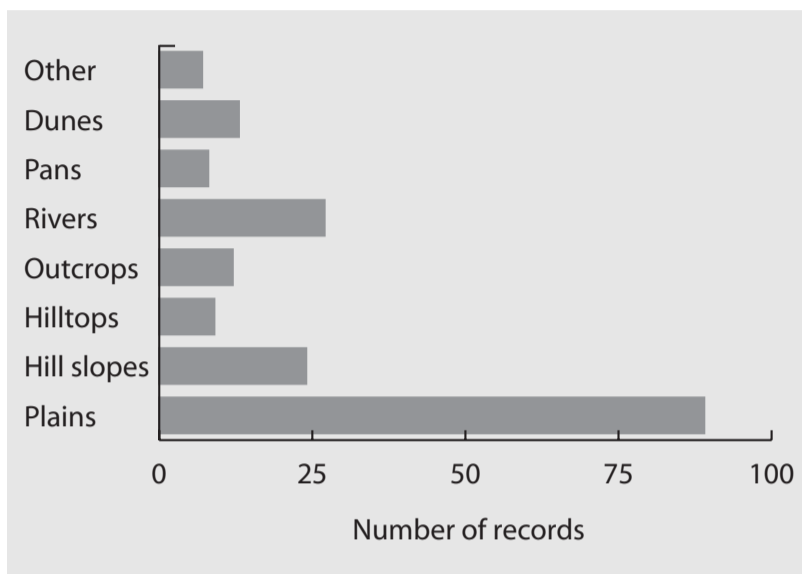
There are possibly two subspecies of the marula present in Namibia. The most widespread is subsp. *caffra*; it is uncertain whether subsp. *birrea* occurs in Namibia.

**DISTRIBUTION & ABUNDANCE**

Common in the Cuvelai and eastern Caprivi; occasional in the eastern Karstveld, the Nyae Nyae area and along the Okavango River; uncommon in the north-west. There are two isolated records from central Namibia: one is a single tree growing next to the B2 highway from Windhoek northwards (2116DD), presumably self-seeded from a pip thrown out of a car window; the other consists of a number of trees on the mountain slopes of the NDF farm, Hoets (2117DC), presumably originally planted, but having since self-propagated.

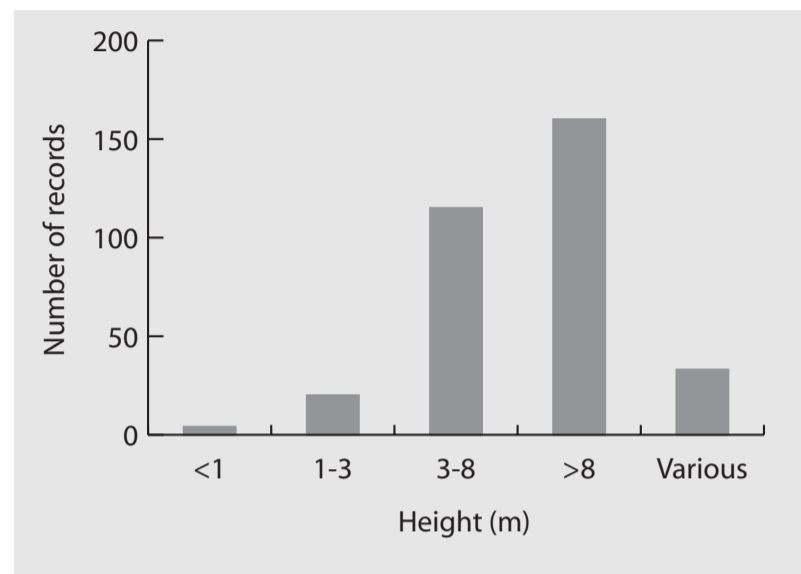
## HABITAT

Found in various, but mainly on plains. Also found on hill slopes in the Karstveld and north-west; along rivers in the north-east and north-west; on dunes and around pans in the Cuvelai. Generally grow on a sandy substrate, but sometimes on gravel, stony ground or dolomite.



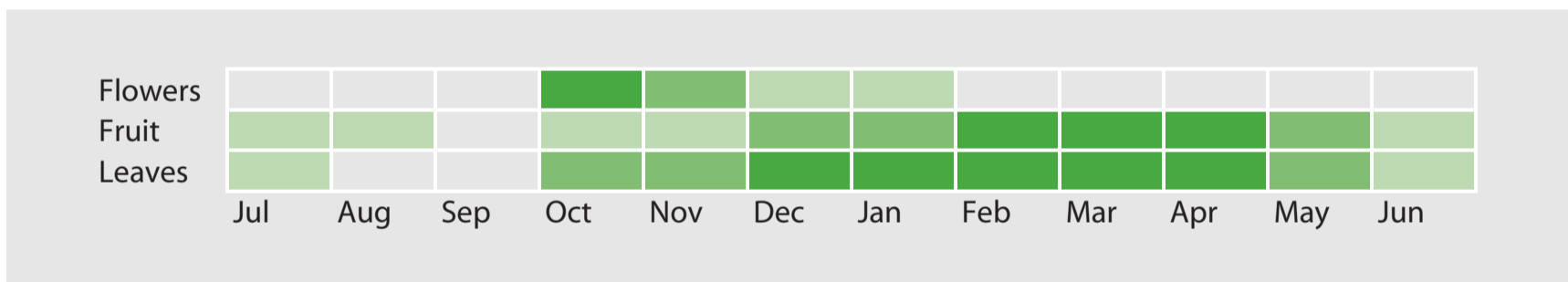
## GROWTH FORM

A tree of over 8 m high. Young trees probably overlooked as the leaves are different from the leaves on older trees; in Kavango many young trees may be observed near mature trees, presumably dispersed by people eating the fruit and dropping the seed.



## ANNUAL CYCLE

**FLOWERS** October to January, with individual records until July. **FRUIT** October to August. **LEAVES** mainly October to May, with young leaves October to December.



## GENERAL

The marula is a very important fruit and shade tree, utilised by people and animals. The fruit flesh, which is nutritious and high in vitamin C, is eaten fresh; the juice is drunk unfermented as a beverage, or is fermented to make wine which may be further distilled to make brandy. The kernel is edible. Oil expressed from the kernel is protein-rich; it is eaten with porridge and also used for cooking, as well as for dressing hides and leather. The oil and fruit are also exploited commercially for use in cosmetics and for the production of alcoholic beverages. The fruit can be used as an insecticide. The wood is used for carvings and the branchlets for fire-sticks. The leaves and bark are used medicinally. Elephants eat the bark and fruit.

## CONSERVATION CONCERNS

Protected locally by the communities that use them and by forestry legislation.