

*Boscia albitrunca*

## Witgat

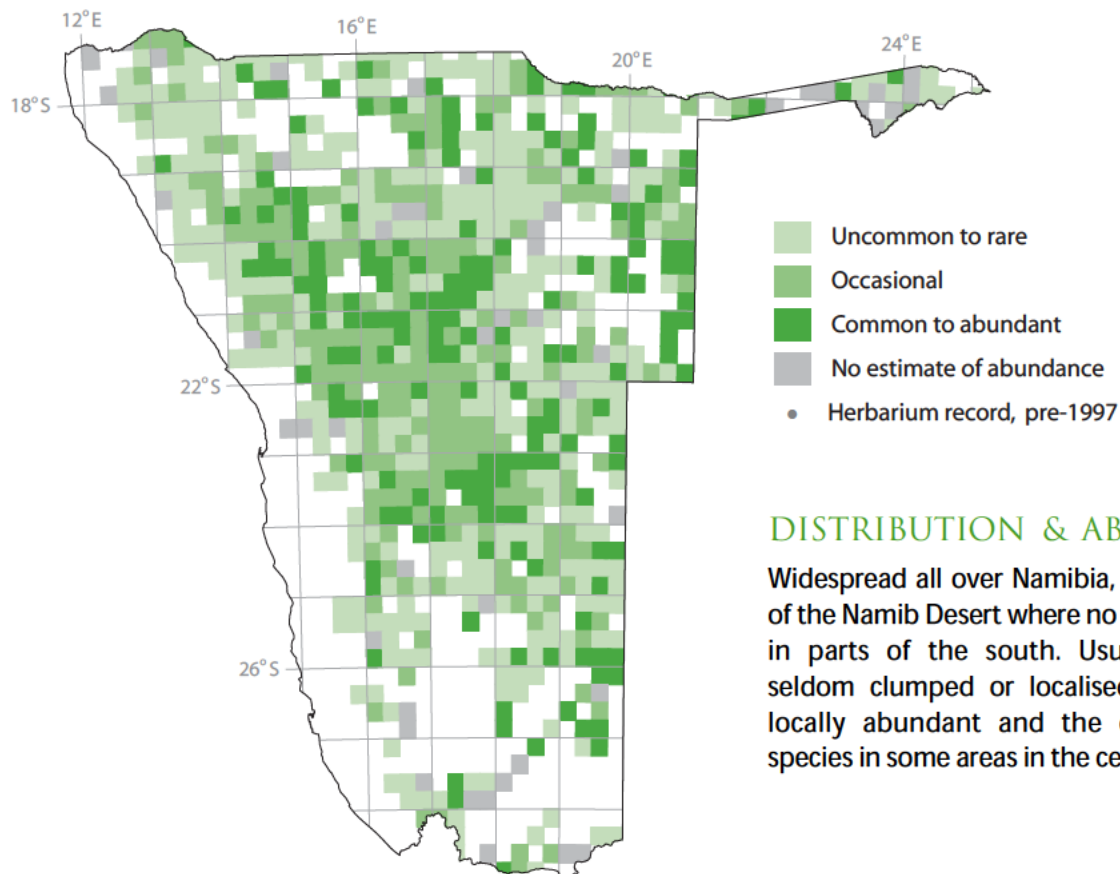
Shepherd's tree (E); Weisstamm (G);  
omutendereti (H); /hunib (K);  
omunghudi (O)

[2,844 records from 780 (73%) squares]



Usually a single-stemmed tree, with a neat, rounded crown; sometimes a low or prostrate shrub. BARK usually **pale, yellowish or almost white**, sometimes dark. LEAVES **oblong-elliptic, thick, leathery, brittle, slightly rough**; grey to dark green; apex blunt, often shallowly notched or with minute, hair-like tip; **petiole short**. FLOWERS small, green-yellow, in conspicuous masses. FRUIT round, with brittle, light brown shell.

Low-growing forms and small-leaved individuals may be confused with *B. foetida*, especially in the south. In the north-west, *B. albitrunca* may look like *Maerua schinzii* from a distance.

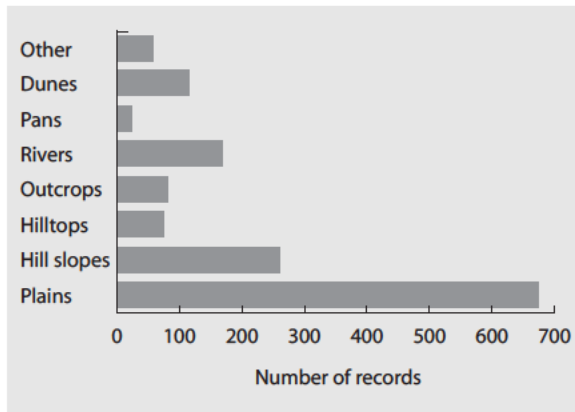


## DISTRIBUTION &amp; ABUNDANCE

Widespread all over Namibia, except in areas of the Namib Desert where no trees grow, and in parts of the south. Usually scattered, seldom clumped or localised. Common to locally abundant and the dominant tree species in some areas in the central highlands.

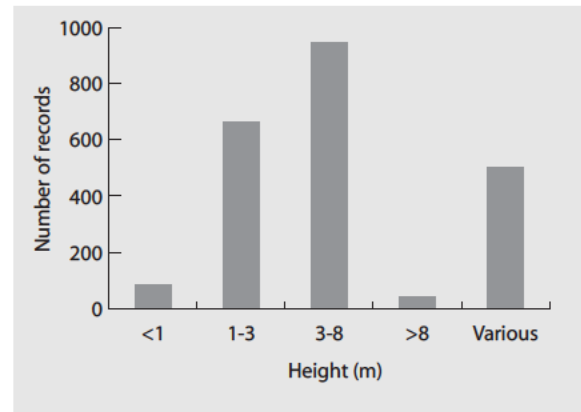
## HABITAT

Found in all habitats, but most often on plains and hill slopes; sometimes abundant on river banks in the north-west and north-east. Grows on sandy or rocky substrates, including calcrete, schist, granite; often in association with termite mounds.



## GROWTH FORM

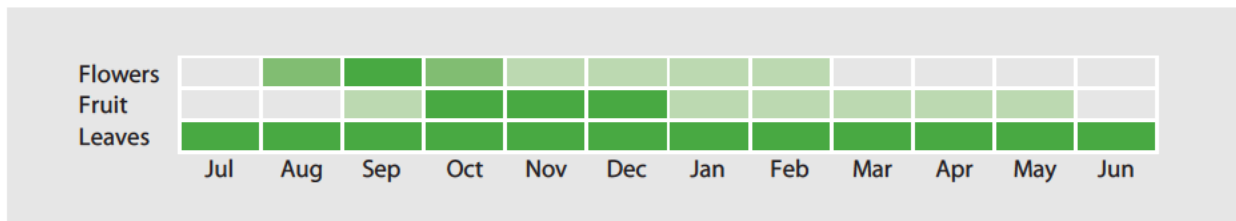
Predominantly a tree of 1–8 m; less often a shrub under 3 m high. Trees over 8 m found in the north; some of over 20 m were reported from the Kunene River. In the south, *B. albitrunca* is more often a shrub and sometimes a rock-hugging creeper. Populations of variable height occur throughout the country.



## ANNUAL CYCLE

FLOWERS mainly August to October with a peak in September, but intermittently until February with single records at other times of the year. FRUIT peaks from October to December, but has been recorded all year. LEAVES evergreen.

Flowering and fruiting varied from season to season – in some seasons, such as 2002/03, it was very heavy, in other seasons there was very little. Flowering was very poor in 1997/98, with no flowering from August to October, but single records from December to February. In 2000, flowering continued until April.



## GENERAL

Trees of up to 5 m high with 'a very strange growth form altogether – multi-stemmed and broom-like, with very long, slender, dark stems and no neat canopy' were reported from 2117AC (MAN1).

A frost-hardy and drought-tolerant plant. Seeds germinate easily, but are often reliant on 'nursery plants' such as *Euphorbia* spp., *Acacia* spp. and mopane to provide protection to the seedlings until they are established, as they are a favourite browse of livestock and game. Seedlings seldom transplant well. *Boscia albitrunca* coppices readily when chopped, and can continue to grow if the tree has fallen. Apart from being browsed by a variety of animals, the bark is also gnawed. The tree is sometimes totally defoliated by caterpillars and often susceptible to parasites such as *Viscum* and *Tapinanthus*. Birds such as White-browed Sparrow-weavers and Lappet-faced Vultures nest in the trees; one tree observed, had two leopards in it!

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