

Ziziphus mucronata

Buffalo-thorn

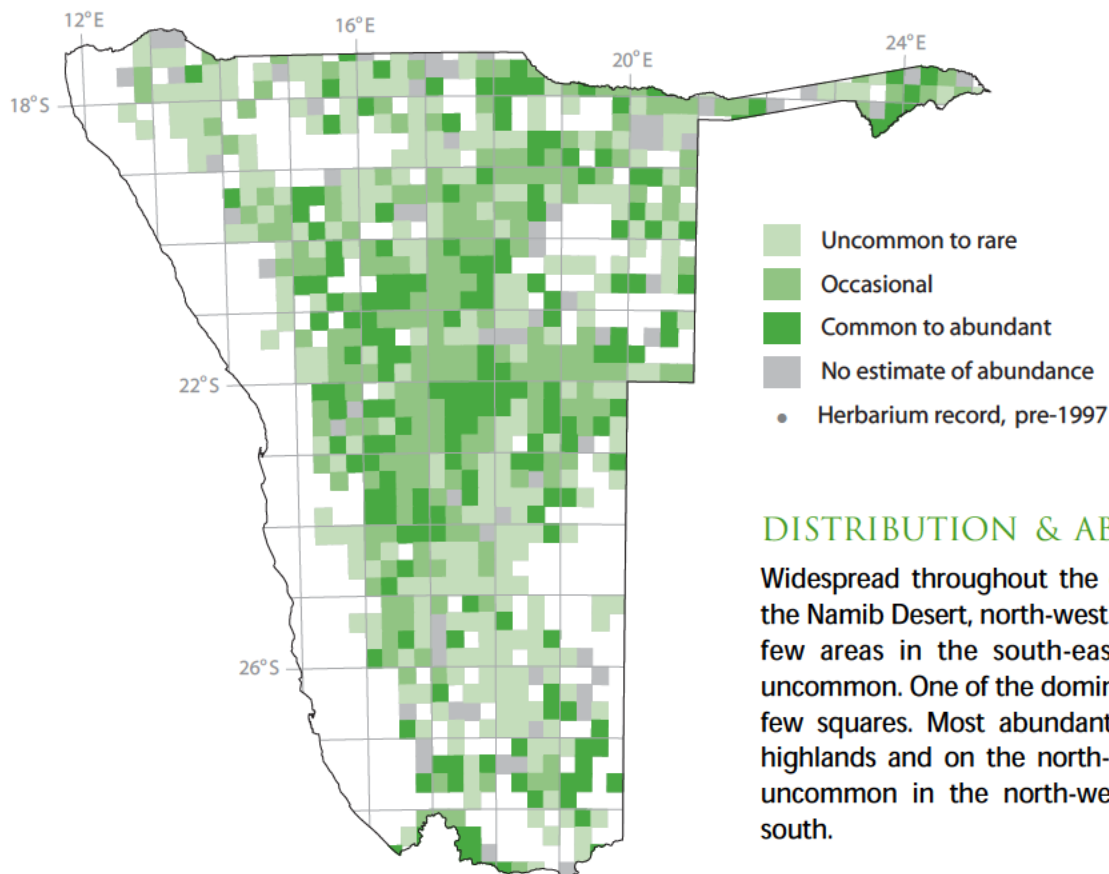
Blinkblaarwag-'n-bietjie (A); omukaru (H); faros (K); mukalu (L); omukekete (O); omusheshete (Od); mukekete (Rk)

[2,454 records from 751 (70%) squares]



Semi-deciduous tree with a spreading crown and rough, grey bark which is deeply and **vertically fissured**. **BRANCHLETS mostly zig-zag and often drooping when young**. **THORNS** one pair per node, comprised of **one straight and one curved**. **LEAVES** simple, alternate; **ovate, shiny green with two characteristic lateral veins originating together with midrib at base; apex pointed, often with a hair-like tip**. **FLOWERS** in axillary clusters, small, green to yellow-green. **FRUIT** a small, round red-brown berry, with thin, dry flesh.

Flowers and young fruit can be overlooked; ripe fruit are conspicuous when plentiful. This species cannot be mistaken.

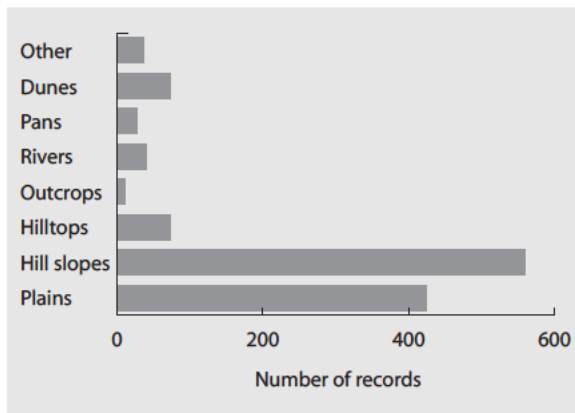


DISTRIBUTION & ABUNDANCE

Widespread throughout the country, except the Namib Desert, north-west of Etosha and a few areas in the south-east. Common to uncommon. One of the dominant species in a few squares. Most abundant in the central highlands and on the north-central plateau; uncommon in the north-west and central-south.

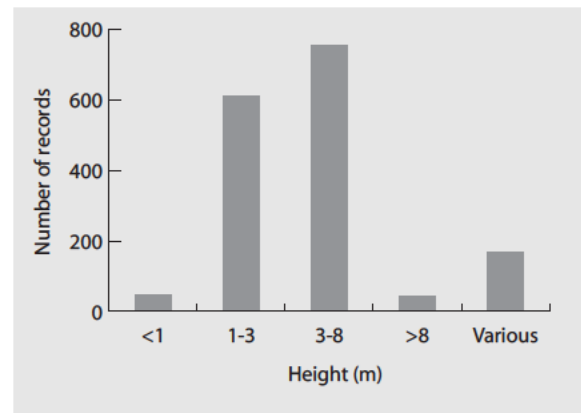
HABITAT

Found in various habitats, but chiefly on dry riverbeds, river banks and plains. Often found around farm dams; also around pans, especially in the north-east and south; on hills in the central highlands and north-central plateau; and dunes in the south-east. Substrates include sand, clay, calcrete, gravel and stony or rocky areas.



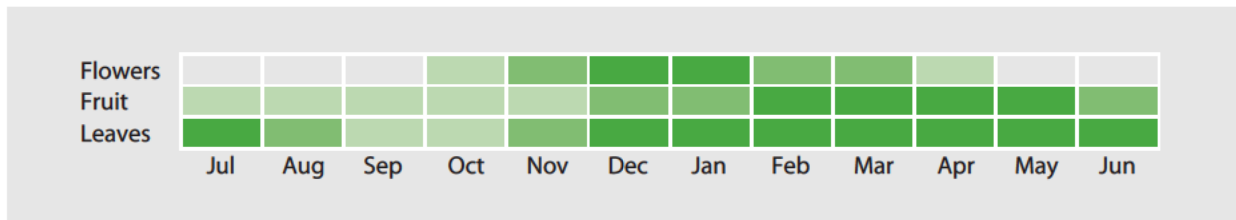
GROWTH FORM

Mostly a shrub up to 3 m high (45% of records), or shrubby trees up to 8 m (52%). Often grows as trees near water. About 3% of records higher than 8 m, in the central highlands and around Ruacana. In general, the average height of this species was greater in the western half of the country than the eastern half, with the exception of eastern Caprivi. Roughly 33% of the stands observed ranged in height from small to large, mostly in the central highlands and north-east.



ANNUAL CYCLE

FLOWERS mostly November to March, though there were recordings throughout the year. **FRUIT** all year, but mostly December to June, with ripe fruit from March. **LEAVES** mainly November to August, but present on some trees all year; young leaves mainly October and November.



GENERAL

Many animals, including birds, insects, mice, bush squirrels, giraffe, kudu and rhino feed on either the leaves or fruit. Weavers nest in the trees. The fruit are edible and are used to make 'ombike', an alcoholic beverage; the wood is used for carving; the roots, bark and leaves are used medicinally. An excellent garden plant as it is fast-growing, drought- and frost-resistant (although some trees are damaged by severe frost), and attracts birds and insects.

Often infested by parasites, such as *Tapinanthus*. Many trees were reported dying in 2217CC and 2216BD (ELL1 and WIS1). Overgrazing has resulted in low shrubs in some areas.

CONSERVATION CONCERNS

None recorded.