Burkea africana

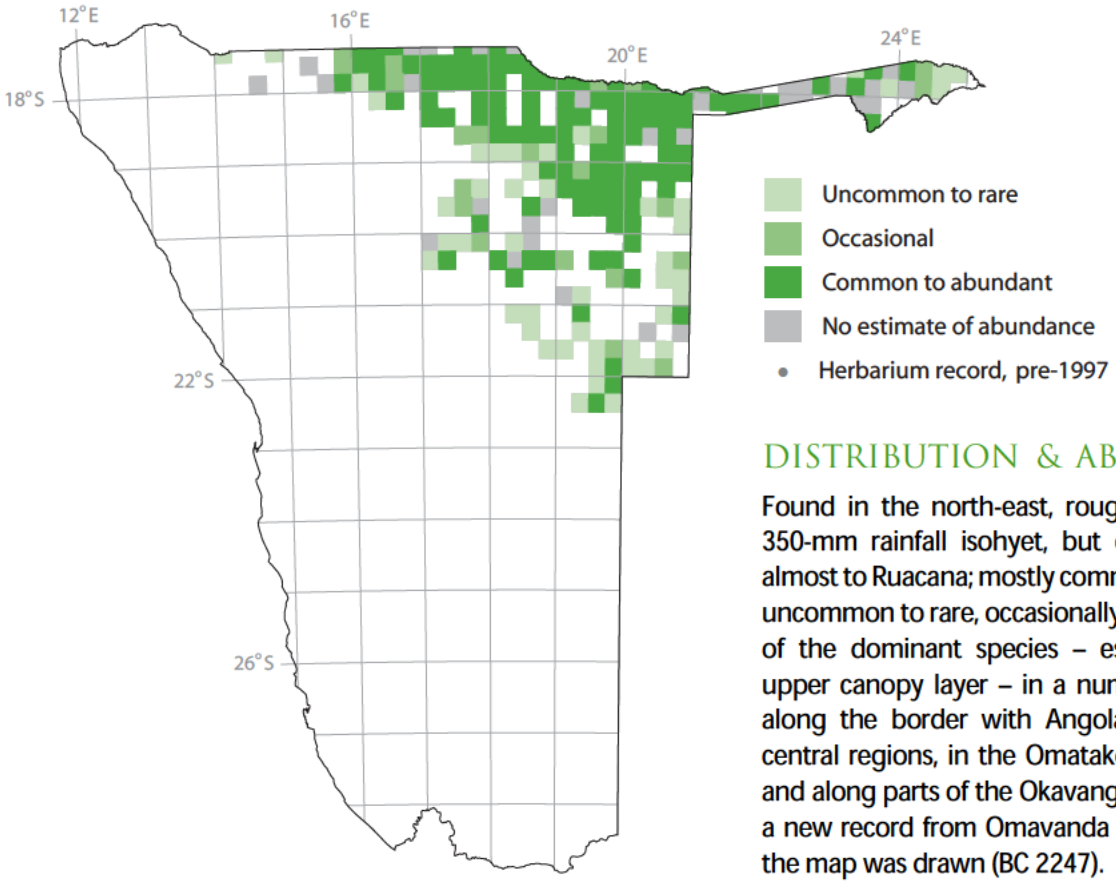
Omutundungu/Burkea

Sandsering, wildesering (A); musheshe (L); muhehe (T)

[490 records from 218 (20%) squares]

Deciduous tree with rounded to flattened crown. BARK grey, rough, longitudinally grooved; **young branchlets and growth points with a rust-brown, woolly-velvety covering**. LEAVES twice compound, clustered at young growth points; leaflet elliptic to obovate, **blue-green above, grey-green below with prominent mid-rib**; base asymmetric. INFLORESCENCE a hanging spike, occasionally branched, especially at young growth point. FLOWERS small, whitish; may appear before the leaves. FRUIT thin, pale brown, flattened, oblong-elliptic pods; in clusters.

May be confused with *Erythrophleum africanum* or *Albizia antunesiana* when not in flower. Both lack the velvety, brown covering characteristic of *B. africana* growth points.

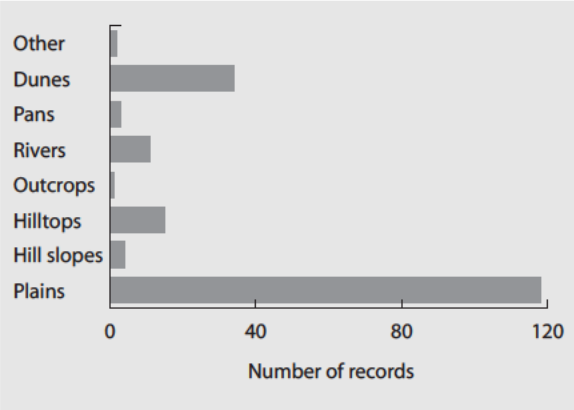


DISTRIBUTION & ABUNDANCE

Found in the north-east, roughly east of the 350-mm rainfall isohyet, but extending west almost to Ruacana; mostly common, sometimes uncommon to rare, occasionally abundant. One of the dominant species – especially in the upper canopy layer – in a number of squares along the border with Angola in the north-central regions, in the Omatako drainage area and along parts of the Okavango River. There is a new record from Omavanda (1713 AA) since the map was drawn (BC 2247).

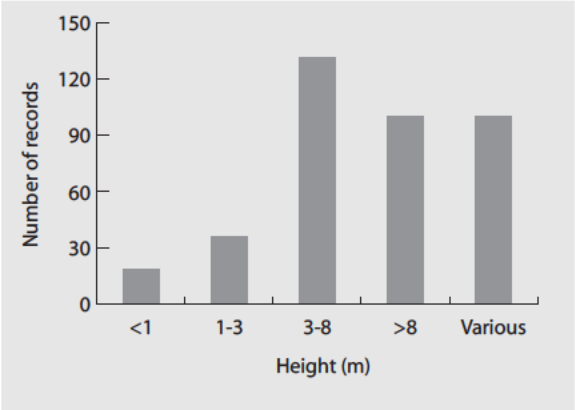
HABITAT

Most often on plains, also on dunes in the north-east. Always on sandy substrates.



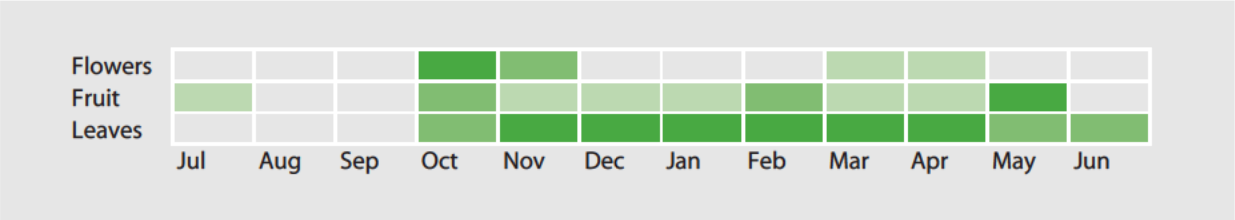
GROWTH FORM

A tree 3–8 m high and higher. Trees over 8 m found mainly in the Cuvelai and central-east.



ANNUAL CYCLE

FLOWERS in spring and autumn, with most in October. FRUIT found occasionally most of the year round, but most often in May. LEAVES November to April, with new leaves mostly in October.



GENERAL

This species is browsed by game, including springbok, zebra and eland; it is host to edible caterpillars of the family Saturniidae during the rainy season. The wood has numerous uses, including fuel, the construction of kraal fences and 'sitting places'; the stumps are used as stools, as well as mortars and pestles for grinding mahango. The resin is edible but inferior; crushed bark is used to enhance the colour of beer; the sap, bark and roots are used medicinally. Ash from charred roots is used ritualistically by Ju|'hoansi hunters. Also known as omukongo (H) (PIE1, 2017BB).

The tree is difficult to cultivate, with poor germination and poor survival of seedlings. Dead or dying trees were noted in occasional squares, but regeneration was noted after fire in 1820BC. Young trees and coppice growth were noted in several squares, particularly in the degree-square 1919, but overall recruitment was not high, or not noted.

CONSERVATION CONCERNS

Excessive fire may be compromising recruitment by destroying seeds. Overharvesting for timber may also be of concern in future. Protected by forestry legislation.