

Diospyros mespiliformis

Jackal-berry / Omwandi

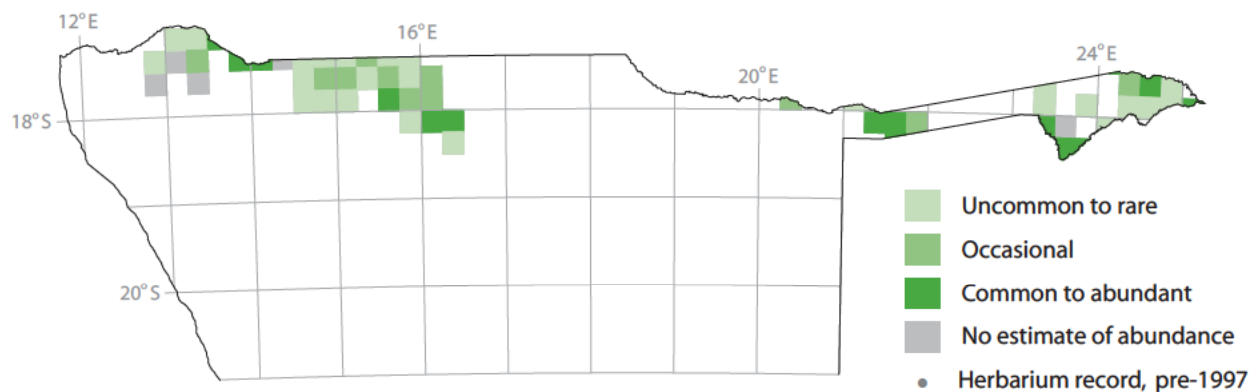
African ebony (E); jakkalsbessie (A);
omunjande (H); muchenje (L);
ohutunda (T)

[176 records from 59 (6%) squares]



A tall, erect tree, up to 16 m high, with dark foliage. BARK grey to black-grey, rough; transversely fissured, crumbly. LEAVES simple, elliptic, leathery, 40–140 mm long; shiny, dark green above; pale green below. FLOWERS cream-coloured to pale yellow. FRUIT almost spherical, up to 25 mm in diameter, with a fine, hair-like tip; fleshy, yellow to purple when ripe; calyx persistent, encircling one-third of the fruit.

Flowers and fruit can easily be overlooked unless one goes close up to the tree.

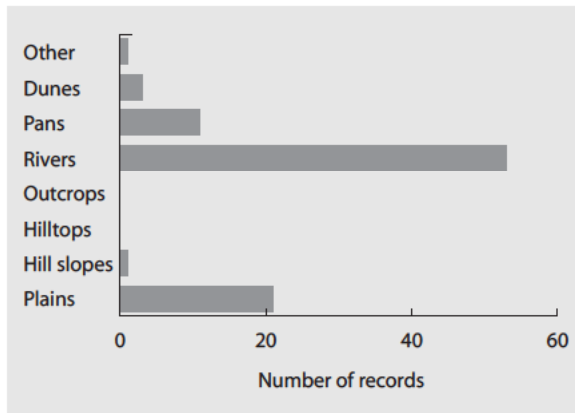


DISTRIBUTION & ABUNDANCE

Common to locally abundant in the Cuvelai, along the eastern Okavango River and the eastern Caprivi rivers; occasional to uncommon west of the Cuvelai, and in the central areas of eastern Caprivi.

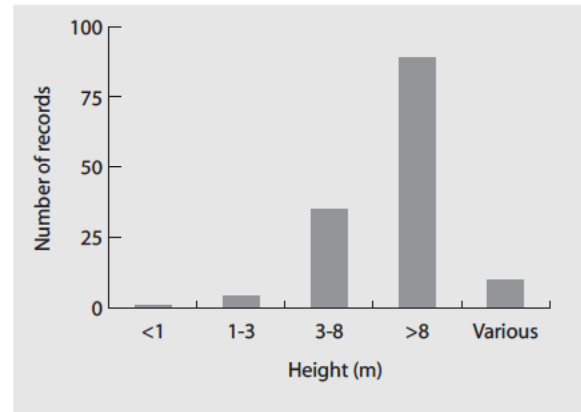
HABITAT

Most often found on river banks and floodplains, generally on sandy substrates. Never far from water. Abundant only on river banks and around deeper pools in the Cuvelai.



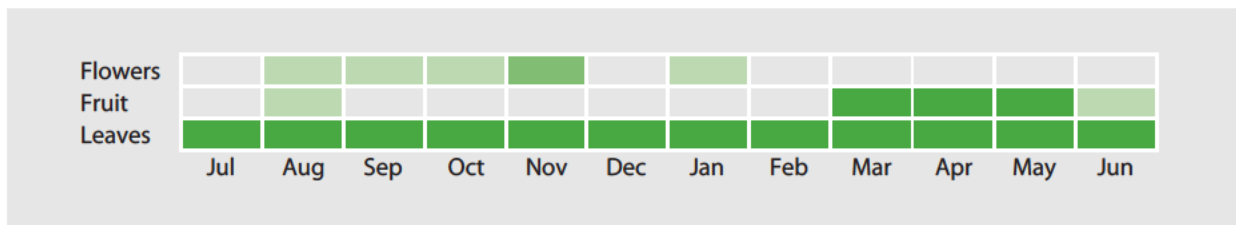
GROWTH FORM

A tree, sometimes up to 8 m tall, but generally taller. There were a few records of shrubby forms less than 3 m high.



ANNUAL CYCLE

FLOWERS August to January with a slight peak in November, but few records per month. **FRUIT** a few were recorded in almost all months, but mostly March to May. **LEAVES** evergreen, with young leaves in October.



GENERAL

An important constituent of riverine and oshana vegetation, and a good shade tree. The fruit flesh and kernels are edible; they are dried and stored for later use or sold in markets and used to produce wine, beer and brandy. Animals, including jackals, also eat the fruit; the leaves are used for fodder. The wood is used for firewood, charcoal production and as timber; watos (dugout canoes), household utensils, as well as traditional assegais are carved from the wood. The leaves and bark are used medicinally; the twigs and roots used as tooth brushes.

CONSERVATION CONCERNS

Because this is such a valuable species, the older trees are protected locally. The distribution range has not decreased in comparison to earlier herbarium records, but it is a serious concern that so few young trees were recorded.