Afring News

An electronic journal published by SAFRING, Animal Demography Unit at the University of Cape Town

Afring News online accepts papers containing ringing information about birds. This includes interesting ringing trips, interesting captures, faunistic observations relating to ringing, and analyses of ringing data. It will also consider for publication a variety of other interesting or relevant ornithological material: reports of projects and conferences, and any other interesting or relevant material.

Editor: H. Dieter Oschadleus

NOTES ON THE MORPHOLOGY AND BEHAVIOUR OF THE AFRICAN GREY HORNBILL (*TOCKUS NASUTUS*)

Pieter van Eeden

Recommended citation format: van Eeden P. 2012. Notes on the morphology and behaviour of the African Grey Hornbill (*Tockus nasutus*). Afring News 41:24

URL: http://safring.adu.org.za/content.php?id=14

Published online: 19 December 2012

-ISSN 2222-341X -

NOTES ON THE MORPHOLOGY AND BEHAVIOUR OF THE AFRICAN GREY HORNBILL (*TOCKUS NASUTUS*)

Pieter van Eeden

EcoMonitor cc, PO Box 13434, Norkem Park, 1631
pieter@ecomonitor.co.za

On 17 July 2011, I caught a pair of African Grey Hornbills at Foothold (Johannesburg Hiking Club camping site; 25° 50' 41.5"S 27° 19' 6.4"E). Both were adult birds. Both showed no wing moult and no tail moult. Head moult was only visible on the female. The female also had no brood patch. Both birds were taken to be a pair because they were caught together, at the same time, and in the same place in my mist net.

On 3 July 2012, I caught my second pair of African Grey Hornbills at the camping site in the Nylsvley Nature Reserve (24° 38' 50.1"S 28° 39' 51.8"E). Both were adult birds. Both showed no wing moult and no tail moult. Head moult was only visible on the male. The female did not have a brood patch. Both birds were taken to be a pair because they were both caught at the same time and in the same place (in separate claptraps located within 2m from each other).

Table 1: Mensural data of Foothold hornbills

Ring number	Sex	Mass (g)	Wing length (mm)	Head length (mm)	Culmen length (mm)	Tarsus length (mm)	Tail length (mm)
PA2342	1	216.0	237	117.3	91.2	35.7	221
PA2343	2	138.5	205	99.6	72.9	32.8	190

The mensural data (Tables 1,2) for both sexes compares very well and it is clear that the male birds are much larger than the female birds. However, the tail lengths are much longer than those provided in Roberts (Kemp 2005). All other measurements compare well with those provided in Roberts (Kemp 2005).

Table 2: Mensural data of Nylsvley hornbills

Ring number	Sex	Mass (g)	Wing length (mm)	Head length (mm)	Culmen length (mm)	Tarsus length (mm)	Tail length (mm)
641882	1	184.0	221	113.4	89.0	36.0	215
PA07902	2	162.4	211	98.9	71.5	33.6	190

There were two observations about these captured birds that stand out, namely:

1. Roberts (Kemp 2005) states that these hornbills occur either singly or in pairs and in family parties after breeding. The two pairs of captured birds indicate that the pairs remain together, even during the non-breeding season (i.e. mid-winter).
2. Roberts (Kemp 2005) mentions that African Grey Hornbills sometimes take food from the ground, especially when occurring in flocks during the dry season. The pair caught at Nylsvley indicate that they regularly do take food from the ground, will take food that is not "natural" (i.e. bread in this case) and will do so as a pair – not in a flock situation.

Acknowledgements

I wish to thank the Chairman of the Johannesburg Hiking Club for granting permission to catch and ring birds on their Foothold property. I wish to thank the Nylsvley Nature Reserve Manager for granting permission to catch and ring birds in the reserve.

References

Kemp AC 2005 African Grey Hornbill. In Roberts – Birds of Southern Africa, 7th Edition, Hockey PAR, Dean WRJ, Ryan PG (Eds.) The Trustees of the John Voelcker Bird Book Fund, Cape Town, p. 154