

Ornithological Observations



An electronic journal published by the Animal Demography Unit at the University of Cape Town and BirdLife South Africa



Ornithological Observations accepts papers containing faunistic information about birds. This includes descriptions of distribution, behaviour, breeding, foraging, food, movement, measurements, habitat and plumage. It will also consider for publication a variety of other interesting or relevant ornithological material: reports of projects and conferences, annotated checklists for a site or region, specialist bibliographies, and any other interesting or relevant material.

Editor: Arnold van der Westhuizen

SOUTHERN YELLOW-BILLED HORNBILL BREEDING IN ELECTRICITY POLE

Ernst F Retief

Recommended citation format:

Retief E 2014. Southern Yellow-billed Hornbill breeding in electricity pole. Ornithological Observations, Vol 5: 251

URL: <http://oo.adu.org.za/content.php?id=132>

Published online: 14 June 2014

- ISSN 2219-0341 -



SOUTHERN YELLOW-BILLED HORNBILL BREEDING IN ELECTRICITY POLE

*Ernst F Retief**

BirdLife South Africa
PO Box 515, Randburg, 2194

* Corresponding author: ernst.retief@birdlife.org.za

The Southern Yellow-billed Hornbill *Tockus leucomelas* is a common species which is found in Acacia and broad-leaved savannas in the northern parts of South Africa. It is near endemic to southern Africa (Hockey et al. 2005).

It usually nests in a natural hole in a tree or one excavated by a woodpecker (Tarboton 2011). I could find no reference in the literature of a Southern Yellow-billed Hornbill breeding in a man-made structure.

During an atlasing outing in May 2008, I saw a Southern Yellow-billed Hornbill flying with a worm in its beak and entering a nesting hole in a wooden electricity pole. A week later I returned to the nesting site and obtained video footage of the male feeding its chicks.

The nest was about 5 m high with the entrance facing north. The nest site was in a pole alongside a gravel road used by cars and a pedestrian path which is used by hundreds of school children. While taking a video of the nest, children walked past the nest on the way to school for more than an hour. During this period the male waited patiently with a berry in its beak, not far from the nest, and just after 08:00, with all the children at school, it flew straight to the nest to deliver the berry.



Fig 1 - Male bird bringing a berry to the nest.

The nesting hole was plastered closed with only a narrow gap in the middle, as is the normal practice for this species.

I was unfortunately unable to see how many chicks were in the nest. I could see two bills – the one bill was that of the female and the other of a chick. However, there might have been other chicks which were out of view in the nesting cavity.

For a video of the nest as well as some feeding activity see <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hPOb9LSAI0c>

- oo0oo -

References

Hockey PAR, Dean WRJ, Ryan PG (eds) 2005. Roberts Birds of Southern Africa. 7th edn. John Voelcker Bird Book Fund, Cape Town. p993-995.

Tarboton, W. 2011. Roberts nests and eggs of southern African birds. John Voelcker Bird Book Fund, Cape Town. p301.