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**Survey of the Great Pied Hornbill
nests and determination of breeding
season diet in the Nilgiris**



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Sálim Ali Centre for Ornithology & Natural History

2004

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AND DETERMINATION OF BREEDING
SEASON DIET IN THE NILGIRIS**

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SUMMARY

A short-term study was conducted in the Nilgiri hills and some adjoining parts in Coimbatore Forest Division, 1. to find out potential breeding sites of Great Hornbill, 2. assess the vegetation characteristics of hornbill habitats and 3. document the fruits utilized by the Great Hornbill in the breeding season.

Semi-evergreen, Mixed deciduous, Riverine forests and plantations (coffee) were used by the Great Hornbills. Semi-evergreen forests in the Nilgiri south eastern slopes and along the riparian systems was found to be the major habitat that support the hornbills in this region. Large number of potential food and nesting plants were recorded here. Coffee plantations also support Great hornbills; the shade trees and fig trees in the plantations were visited by hornbills for foraging.

In the Nilgiris, the Great Hornbills are rare as only one pair was observed during this study. Only one nest could be located. The analysis of middens under the nest revealed the utilization of seven species by the Great Hornbill in the breeding season. *Ficus Spp* followed by *Canarium strictum* and *Sterculia guttata* were the major fruits utilized. Consolidated list of fruit species used during breeding season in southern Western Ghats is provided. The sugar rich figs and lipid –rich lauraceous plants are found to be very crucial as they sustain hornbills during breeding season.

Fire was recorded as a major disturbance factor in the study area. Protection of major food plant species, particularly black dammar tree (*Canarium strictum*) and propagation of important nest trees such as *Mangifera indica* are suggested.