

Silverycheeked Hornbill

Kuifkopboskraai

Bycanistes brevis

The Silverycheeked Hornbill is the largest arboreal hornbill in southern Africa, weighing nearly twice as much as the Trumpeter Hornbill *B. bucinator*. It is a canopy species in East African forests, both lowland and montane, from Ethiopia to Mozambique (Kemp 1995). In the atlas region, it is mainly found in the montane and submontane forests of the Zimbabwe–Mozambique border region. Within this small range, it is quite common, and when fruit is abundant, flocks of 20 or more may be encountered. The Trumpeter Hornbill, on the other hand, seldom occurs in such large flocks in the area of range overlap.

The only similar species is its smaller relative, the Trumpeter Hornbill. The name ‘Silverycheeked’ refers to the silvery-grey feathering of the bird’s face. The best field character, however, is the large pale casque. Both casque and face of the Trumpeter Hornbill are black. Females have smaller casques and browner bills. In flight, both species show a white rump; in the Silverycheeked Hornbill the white also extends over most of the back. The call is lower-pitched than that of the Trumpeter Hornbill, and without the peculiar quality that recalls the crying of a human baby in the latter.

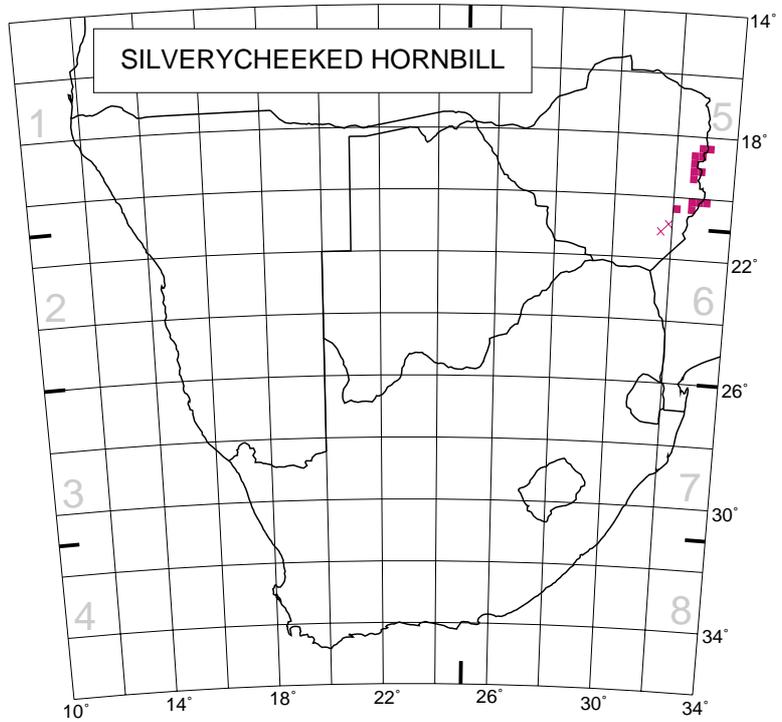
Although omnivorous, its chief food is fruit. Flocks wander far and wide in search of fruiting trees, especially figs *Ficus* spp., often in association with Trumpeter Hornbills; it has been recorded far out of its normal range, for example, at Great Zimbabwe, near Masvingo (2030B) (Irwin 1981).

Habits, ecology and food are similar to those of the Trumpeter Hornbill. It has been recorded at Partridge Hill (1932BA) in all months, sometimes in quite large parties. It breeds at Wildwoods (1932BA) where *Craibia* trees provide nest holes.

The few breeding records during the atlas period span October–January; Irwin (1981) reported egg-laying in September, October and April. It breeds mostly during the earlier part of the wet season (Kemp 1995). Nests are built in a hollow tree, wherein the female seals herself during incubation and remains in the nest until the chick fledges (Kemp 1995).

It has a restricted range in the atlas region, but is locally common. The population may, however, not number more than a few hundred birds and must be regarded as vulnerable (Irwin 1981). It has become scarce in the Honde Valley (1832DB) because of habitat destruction (Irwin 1981). The future of the Silverycheeked Hornbill in the region is dependent on careful conservation of the lowland and mid-altitude forests in Zimbabwe.

R.M. Harwin



Recorded in 15 grid cells, 0.3%
 Total number of records: 274
 Mean reporting rate for range: 27.7%

Reporting rates for vegetation types

