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

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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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ring number</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Mass (g)</th>
<th>Wing length (mm)</th>
<th>Head length (mm)</th>
<th>Culmen length (mm)</th>
<th>Tarsus length (mm)</th>
<th>Tail length (mm)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PA2342</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>216.0</td>
<td>237</td>
<td>117.3</td>
<td>91.2</td>
<td>35.7</td>
<td>221</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PA2343</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>138.5</td>
<td>205</td>
<td>99.6</td>
<td>72.9</td>
<td>32.8</td>
<td>190</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ring number</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Mass (g)</th>
<th>Wing length (mm)</th>
<th>Head length (mm)</th>
<th>Culmen length (mm)</th>
<th>Tarsus length (mm)</th>
<th>Tail length (mm)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>641882</td>
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<td>184.0</td>
<td>221</td>
<td>113.4</td>
<td>89.0</td>
<td>36.0</td>
<td>215</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PA07902</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>162.4</td>
<td>211</td>
<td>98.9</td>
<td>71.5</td>
<td>33.6</td>
<td>190</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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