

## Population decline of Malabar Pied Hornbill in Janjgir-Champa, Chhattisgarh



Malabar Pied Hornbill perched on *Bombax ceiba* trees at Pacheda Village, Janjgir-Champa. © Kumar Singh.

Malabar Pied Hornbill *Anthracoceros coronatus* (Aves: Bucerotiformes: Bucerotidae) is found in the Western Ghats, and Dandeli, Haliyal, Kulgi, Ambika nagar and Ganeshgudi, Uttara Kannada District, Karnataka (between 14.75<sup>o</sup>–15.416<sup>o</sup> N and 74.416<sup>o</sup>–74.833<sup>o</sup> E) and Amboli, Sindhudurg District, Maharashtra, Goa State are key areas for its occurrence (Mudappa & Raman 2009; Sneha & Davidar 2011). It is a resident species in the peninsular hills and is also found in West Bengal and Bihar, northern Andhra Pradesh, the Western Ghats (mainly along the eastern edge), southern Maharashtra (Ratnagiri), and Sri Lanka (Rasmussen & Anderton 2005). It is a Near Threatened species (BirdLife International 2015) and its population is declining due

to poaching (Ripley 1982; Dev 1992) and habitat destruction (Reddy et al. 1990; Zacharias & Gaston 1999). This has caused drastic population decline during the last few decades. According to Pande et al. (2003), it is a resident of the Konkan, Malabar and the Western Ghats up to an elevation of 1,000m.

Malabar Pied Hornbill *Anthracoceros coronatus* was reported by the first author in Janjgir-Champa District of Chhattisgarh State and monitored every year. This species was recorded here since 2001. There is, however, lack of knowledge about their presence in the forest of Janjgir and Baloda block. The first author often observed this species in the villages of Janjgir District, viz.: Jobi, Birgahni, Jarve, Pacheda, Kasundi, Munund,

and forest range of Khisora & Pantora Baloda block. Mostly, they were seen on large-sized Arjun trees *Terminalia arjuna* located in Nala areas. Apart from this, they were observed in Mango *Mangifera indica*, Neem *Azadirachta indica*, 'Pipal' *Ficus religiosa*, 'Bargad' *Ficus benghalensis*, and 'Semal' *Bombax ceiba* trees. Malabar Pied Hornbill was seen foraging on the fruits of *Ficus* spp. an abundant tree species in the studied area. According to Reddy & Basalingappa (1993), most of the fruit species utilized by this species contain a high percentage of water; the most favored fruits, *Strychnos* and *Ficus benghalensis*, contain 79.86% and 72.90% water, respectively.

In the month of September, they were found in small flocks of 3–5 individuals but later on during December to January, their flock size increased to 22 individuals. They were also recorded up to 30km away from Janjgir in Khisora and Pantora forest range of Baloda block. For the last 2 years, however, Malabar Pied Hornbills have not been seen in Janjgir forest, most probably due to large scale illegal tree felling. Observations and photographs were started from the year 2013 and every year their population is decreasing in some of the areas. Malabar Pied Hornbill visits selected forest areas every year, possibly due to less disturbance in such areas. Due to habitat degradation and illegal poaching, however, their population is decreasing. This species should be considered for conservation initiatives/ programmes by the forest department on priority basis as well as by local communities of the area to support birding tourism in Chhattisgarh.

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