

## IN BRIEF

# Allopreening by the Yellow-casqued Hornbill *Ceratogymna elata*

Hornbills inhabiting the canopy of closed tropical forest are difficult to observe. As a result, almost nothing is known of hornbill courtship behaviour or pair relations prior to actual nesting activity. On the morning of 3 February 1979, I observed allopreening by a female Yellow-casqued Hornbill *Ceratogymna elata* of a male in primary rain forest bordering Lac Tisongo in the Reserve de Fauna de Douala-Edéa, c. 35 km SW of Edéa, Cameroun. I had been observing visitors to a fruiting vine of *Ficus* sp., and at least one pair of *C. elata* was among the regular visitors. At 0820, a pair landed in the crown of the 25 m tall leguminous tree supporting the *Ficus* vine, perching about 2 m from one another. Each began to self-preen, attending primarily to wing and breast feathers. After less than one minute of self-preening, the female approached the male and began to preen him while he continued to self-preen. The male bent his head forward, spreading the nape feathers. The female preened the spread feathers for 15 sec. Then, each bird self-preened for 30 sec. The male continued to self-preen as the female preened the side of his head nearest to her, then preened body coverts beneath the anterior edge of the male's wing on her near side. The male raised this wing slightly, and the female continued to preen beneath the male's wing for 30 sec. This was followed by 60 sec of self-preening by each bird, immediately after which both birds flew, the female following the male in flight. Males leading the females in flight of pairs of *C. elata* was commonly seen by Allen (1930).

Little has been published describing courtship or presumed courtship behaviour in hornbills. Ranger (1951) included comments on pre-copulatory behaviour of the Crowned Hornbill *Tockus alboterminatus australis*, but did not mention allopreening. To my knowledge, nothing has been published on courtship behaviour of *C. elata*. Frequent sightings by myself and R. B. Payne of at least one pair (probably several pairs), but of no larger groups, of *C. elata* at Lac Tisongo from 28 January to 7 February 1979 suggest an early phase of breeding activity at that time. Mackworth-Praed & Grant (1970) note no records of breeding, nests, or eggs for *C. elata*, although they state that breeding probably occurs from December to April.

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