

Tamil Nadu, West Bengal.

Elsewhere: Philippines, Sri Lanka.

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COMMUNAL FORAGING OF INDIAN GREY HORNBILL *Ocyrceros birostris* ON THE LEAVES OF *Ailanthus excelsa* TREE

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On 18 May 2006 evening we visited the cultivation of Krishi Mahavidyalaya adjacent to Maharajbagh garden, in Nagpur city of Maharashtra. The geographical location of this place is 21°08'58"N-79°04'52"E. Around 1730hr we saw an Indian Grey Hornbill *Ocyrceros birostris* on the top of *Ailanthus excelsa* called *Maharukh* in Marathi. Then we could locate a female bird on the same tree. Soon five more Indian Grey Hornbills (2 males and 3 females) arrived. All the birds were plucking and swallowing the leaves of this tree. On three occasions the leaves fell down from their bill.

The birds were rubbing their beaks on branches of the tree to clean them. We observed the birds till 1800hr when the weather changed and became stormy.

Indian Grey Hornbills are frugivorous birds and are known to eat fruits as well as small reptiles like lizards and geckos. Ali (1996) reported its food as "mainly fruit, but also large insects, lizards, young mice, etc." Grewal (2000) also has mentioned of similar food taken by the species. Patil *et al.* (1997) studied the excreta contents of the species and listed various food items including green leaves of unknown plants. Indian Grey Hornbills are known to forage for figs or fruits in groups of many birds. Neelakantan (1953) has reported the species to take the poisonous fruits of Yellow Oleander. Newnham (1911) has described an event, which indicates the species taking young Parakeets from nest holes.

The leaves of *Ailanthus excelsa* has medicinal properties and is known to be wormicidal (Asolkar *et al.*, 1992). This is the first report on communal foraging on leaves of *Ailanthus excelsa* is not reported in the Indian Grey Hornbills.

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