

# Red-billed hornbill

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*T. rufirostris*

The **red-billed hornbills** are a group of hornbills found in savanna and woodland of sub-Saharan Africa. They are now usually split into five species, the northern red-billed hornbill (*T. erythrorhynchus*), western red-billed hornbill (*T. kempfi*), Tanzanian red-billed hornbill (*T. ruahae*), southern red-billed hornbill (*T. rufirostris*) and Damara red-billed hornbill (*T. damarensis*), but some

authorities considered them all to be subspecies of a single species.



The northern red-billed hornbill has a black stripe on the back of its head, reddish ocular skin and dark eyes.

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## Description

This group of conspicuous birds have mainly whitish underparts and head, grey upperparts, long tails, and a long and curved red bill which lacks a casque. The sexes are similar, but the female has a smaller bill. They are generally large, at 42 centimetres (17 in) long, but the entire group is considered as one of the smaller hornbills.

## Behaviour

### Breeding

During incubation, the female lays three to six white eggs in a tree hole,

### Red-billed hornbill



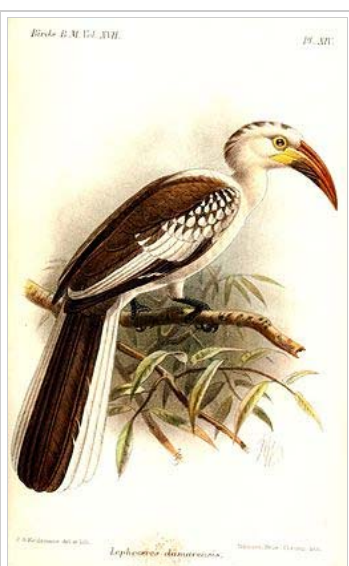
At Samburu National Reserve

### Scientific classification

Kingdom:	Animalia
Phylum:	Chordata
Class:	Aves
Order:	Bucerotiformes
Family:	Bucerotidae
Subfamily:	Bucerotinae
Genus:	<i>Tockus</i> sp.



Distribution of Red-billed Hornbills



*T. damarensis*, illustration by Keulemans, 1892



*T. kemp* is the only species with both dark eyes and blackish ocular skin

which is blocked off with a plaster of mud, droppings and fruit pulp. There is only one narrow aperture, just big enough for the male to transfer food to the mother and the chicks. When the chicks and the female are too big for the nest, the mother breaks out and rebuilds the wall. Then both parents feed the chicks.

### Feeding

They are omnivorous, taking insects, fruit and seeds. They feed mainly on the ground and will form flocks outside the breeding season.

## In popular culture

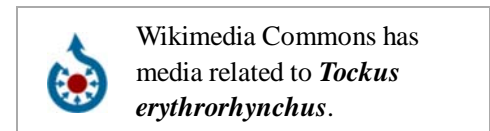
Zazu, a character in the *Lion King* animated film series, is a red-billed hornbill.

## References

- BirdLife International (2004). *Tockus erythrorhynchus*. 2006. *IUCN Red List of Threatened Species*. IUCN 2006. www.iucnredlist.org (http://www.iucnredlist.org). Retrieved on 11 May 2006. Database entry includes justification for why this species is of least concern
- Birds of The Gambia* by Barlow, Wachter and Disley, ISBN 1-873403-32-1

## External links

- Red-billed Hornbill videos, photos & sounds (http://ibc.lynxeds.com/species/red-billed-hornbill-tockus-erythrorhynchus) on the Internet Bird Collection
- Red-billed Hornbill - Species text in The Atlas of Southern African Birds (http://sabap2.adu.org.za/docs/sabap1/458.pdf).



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Categories: Tockus | Birds of Kenya | Birds of Africa | Birds of Cameroon

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