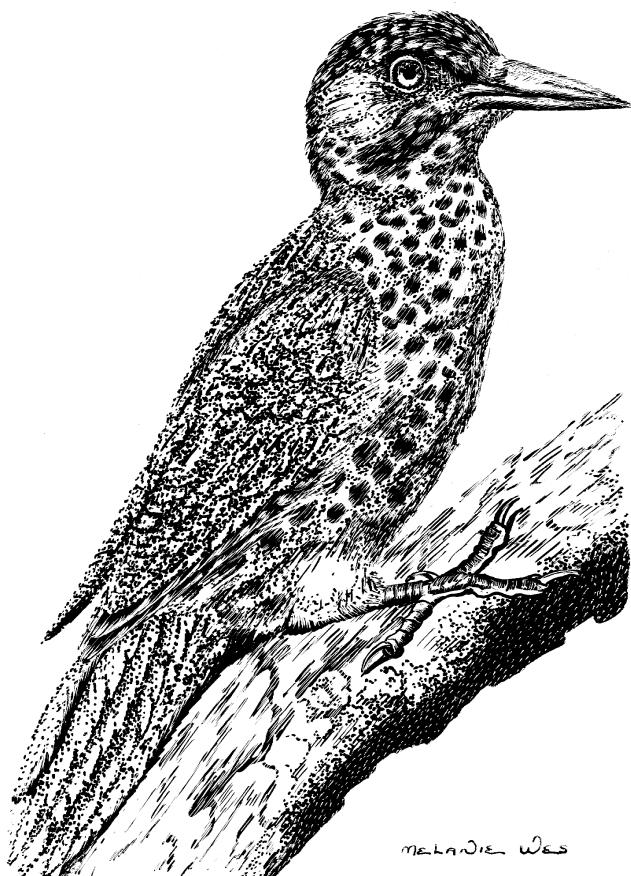




Knysna Woodpecker

Knysnaspeg

Campethera notata

The Knysna Woodpecker is endemic to South Africa and is virtually restricted to the southern coastal belt. It extends marginally into southern KwaZulu-Natal to south of Ifafa (3030BC) (Nichols 1983). The western limit of its range lies in the vicinity of Bredasdorp (3420CA) (Uys & Macleod 1967). It is found mainly along the coastal plain but extends inland in places. Reporting rates were highest in the eastern Cape Province. The total range is less than 50 000 km² and its total population has been estimated at between 1500–5000 individuals (Siegfried 1992). It is thinly dispersed, everywhere described as scarce or uncommon. It is closely related to the Goldentailed Woodpecker *C. abingoni*, with which it forms a superspecies. The two have virtually allopatric ranges, just meeting in southern KwaZulu-Natal. The Knysna Woodpecker is found singly, in pairs, or, after breeding, in small family parties. It is retiring and easily overlooked, and its presence is usually revealed by its harsh call (Skead 1964a). The low reporting rates were probably a consequence of this. Knysna and Goldentailed Woodpeckers are much alike in appearance and in vocalizations and could be misidentified in the area where their respective ranges meet.

Habitat: It frequents a wide cross-section of arboreal habitats: dry thornveld, wooded valleys, *Euphorbia* scrub, coastal bush, evergreen forest, even extending into stands of *Protea* trees in nearby fynbos, and it can be found in copses of alien trees (Hockey *et al.* 1989). In parts of its range it apparently avoids Afromontane forest, although Clancey (1958, 1980b) proposed that the more northern of the two races he described for this species (*C. n. relicta*, which is smaller, darker and more heavily spotted than the nominate race) is restricted to such forest, whereas the nominate race is found in drier environments. The frequency with which it is reported to use nest boxes (Buttiker 1960), agave stumps (Ginn *et al.* 1989) and eucalypts (Schmidt 1961) for nest sites suggests a shortage of natural nest sites in parts of its range.

Movements: It is sedentary throughout its range and the models reveal no evidence for seasonal movements. The slight increase in reporting rates in the southern Cape Province (Zone 4) during the summer is probably due to enhanced conspicuousness through increased calling when breeding.

Breeding: Breeding was recorded August–February. Other sources indicate that it nests during early to mid-summer (Maclean 1993b).

Interspecific relationships: The close relationship between this species and the Goldentailed Woodpecker is highlighted by the comment that the two species are ‘almost certainly’ conspecific (Clancey 1958). This statement, however, has since been retracted (Clancey 1980b). No hybridization has been recorded in their contact zone.

Historical distribution and conservation: In the 19th century it extended further north along the KwaZulu-Natal coast than it does now; Woodward & Woodward (1899) recorded it at Illovo (3030BB) and Ifafa (3030BC), whereas currently its northernmost occurrence in KwaZulu-Natal is about 80 km south of this, inland from Port Shepstone (3030CB). This range contraction has been attributed to the clearance of coastal bush for sugar-cane farming and township development (Nichols 1983).

Despite its restricted distribution and apparent scarcity within its range, the Knysna Woodpecker was not considered at risk in South Africa by Brooke (1984b). However, its general rarity, small numbers, restricted range, and the apparent contraction of range in KwaZulu-Natal from loss of habitat, suggest that a review of its conservation status is required. Siegfried (1992) estimated that 1001–1500 individuals occur in nature reserves in South Africa. It is listed as globally ‘near-threatened’ (Collar *et al.* 1994).

W.R. Tarboton

Recorded in 108 grid cells, 2.4%
Total number of records: 1241
Mean reporting rate for range: 8.6%

Reporting rates for vegetation types

