



## Cape Bulbul

### Kaapse Tiptol

#### *Pycnonotus capensis*

This common to locally abundant resident, the only southern African endemic of its family, is confined to the southern and western Cape Province, from south of the Orange River (2817CD) in the north to the vicinity of Grahamstown (3326BC) in the east, and inland for approximately 250 km.

There are two centres of relatively high reporting rates which may represent two relatively discrete populations, one largely restricted to part of the Succulent Karoo north of Bitterfontein (3118AB), with some spillover into the adjacent Nama Karoo, and the other correlating closely with the Fynbos biome, but also including some of the adjacent Nama Karoo and Valley Bushveld. Atlas coverage was not intensive in the area between these two 'populations', and the lack of records in this area may or may not be significant. The Cape Bulbul is considered monotypic (Clancey 1980b).

Liversidge (1966) determined a breeding population density of 13–19 pairs/20 ha in favourable habitat: coastal dune forest near Port Elizabeth (3325DC) containing alien Rooikrans *Acacia cyclops*, a common food plant. It is typically found in pairs, or in loose groups at good food sources, such as fruiting plants or feeding trays (Maclean 1993b); in winter it often forages in small, vocal, rather mobile parties.

It is vociferous and conspicuous, and the distinctive white eyewattle contrasts against the dark head which makes misidentification unlikely; the atlas data are reliable and comprehensive.

**Habitat:** It inhabits a variety of habitats, mainly within the winter-rainfall region or where rainfall is not seasonal (Liversidge 1970b). Habitats include taller fynbos, scrub, riverine and coastal bush, dune forest, gardens, farmlands, alien wattle thickets (Rooikrans and Port Jackson Willow *A. saligna*) and plantations (Keith *et al.* 1992).

**Movements:** The atlas data reveal no evidence of seasonality when examined on a coarse regional scale, but some local mobility is evidenced by seasonal aggregations at temporal food sources such as flowering *Salvia* spp. (e.g. Underhill & Underhill 1990).

**Breeding:** There are atlas breeding records for all months other than July, with a peak September–December (>75% of records) which accords with published information on egg-laying dates (Winterbottom 1968a).

**Interspecific relationships:** The genus *Pycnonotus* has been regarded by most authorities as consisting of three southern African species, but some have questioned this classification (Meinertzhagen 1954; Clancey 1960b; Lawson 1962; Lloyd 1994). This doubt stems from reports of hybrid individuals or mixed-species pairs, particularly from the zone of contact between Redeyed *P. nigricans* and Blackeyed *P. barbatus* Bulbuls (see relevant texts), but also from that of Cape and Redeyed Bulbuls (Keith 1992; Lloyd 1994) and of Cape and Blackeyed Bulbuls (Lawson 1962; Clancey 1980b; Lloyd 1994). In a recent study in the eastern Cape Province, Lloyd (1994) found evidence of substantial hybridization between Cape and Blackeyed Bulbuls at one locality, and a Cape/Redeyed Bulbul hybrid at another locality. Further investigation is required to assess the width of hybrid zones and the degree of interbreeding.

The Cape Bulbul is a frequent host of the Jacobin Cuckoo *Clamator jacobinus* (Rowan 1983).

**Historical distribution and conservation:** Liversidge (1970b) found records for King William's Town (3227CD) from 1909, East London (3327BB) from 1931, and Grahamstown (3326BC) from 1931; these localities are about 200 km northeast of the current eastern limits. Although endemic to South Africa, the Cape Bulbul is common in favourable habitat, including some modified habitats, and is therefore not a conservation priority.

A.P.L. Hart

Recorded in 263 grid cells, 5.8%  
Total number of records: 14 810  
Mean reporting rate for range: 55.9%

#### Reporting rates for vegetation types



