



Blackeyed Bulbul

Swartoogtiptol

Pycnonotus barbatus

The Blackeyed Bulbul is a common to locally abundant resident. In southern Africa it occurs in the moister summer-rainfall areas of the eastern Cape Province, the eastern Free State, throughout KwaZulu-Natal, Swaziland, Transvaal and Zimbabwe, in eastern and northern Botswana and far northern Namibia. It is absent from the Kalahari and Lesotho, although it is present all around the eastern borders of that country (Osborne & Tigar 1990; Bonde 1993). Further north in Africa it is widely distributed outside the arid areas, and has been described as perhaps the most widespread and abundant bird in Africa (Keith *et al.* 1992). There are clear strongholds in the subtropical lowlands of KwaZulu-Natal and the Transvaal lowveld. Clancey (1980b) recognized five races in the atlas region, all with continuous ranges on the present map.

It is usually found in pairs, or in loose groups, particularly at good food sources such as fruiting trees (Maclean 1993b). Highly vocal and conspicuous, and a familiar garden bird, it is unlikely to be misidentified. However, juvenile Redeyed Bulbuls *P. nigricans* and Blackeyed Bulbuls are similar; possible misidentifications were carefully vetted.

Habitat: A wide range of habitats is used: moister woodland and savanna, riverine bush, forest edge and regenerating forest (but not normally the forest interior), dense montane scrub, plantations of alien trees and orchards, gardens and parks, and scrubby vegetation (Keith *et al.* 1992).

The high reporting rate for East Coast Littoral is influenced by the fact that the area supports a considerable human population and this species flourishes in gardens, around villages and in forest-edge situations. The relatively high reporting rates for Eastern Zimbabwe Highlands and Afromontane Forest need interpretation, because this is a bird of the forest edge in these areas. Similarly, correlations with grassland vegetation types (all four, but highest reporting rate for Sour Grasslands) should not be taken at face value, because it would not be found in open grassland, but rather along wooded watercourses, in patches of bush and in gardens. The reporting rate for Arid Woodland does not accurately reflect the situation in the Arid Wood-

land of KwaZulu-Natal and the eastern Transvaal, because the statistic includes large areas of Arid Woodland in Namibia and eastern Botswana where the species is absent.

Movements: The atlas data reveal little evidence of seasonality. Ringing recoveries, largely from urban areas, indicate that it is sedentary (SAFRING). But, in Zimbabwe, influxes and disappearances of large numbers of Blackeyed Bulbuls have occasionally been observed in response to drought conditions and, in the eastern Cape Province, influxes in response to fruiting of *Ficus natalensis* have occurred (A.J. Tree *in litt.*).

Breeding: Breeding is in spring and summer. The models indicate that peak breeding is earlier in Zimbabwe than further south, and this is confirmed by published egg-laying data which indicate a peak September–November in Zimbabwe, but October–December in the Transvaal and

KwaZulu-Natal (Dean 1971; Irwin 1981; Tarboton *et al.* 1987b). There are only few records from northern Namibia and northern Botswana.

Interspecific relationships: Hybrid birds or mixed pairs have been reported from the zone of contact with Redeyed Bulbul (White 1956; Irwin 1958; Markus 1963a, 1965, 1966, 1967; Winterbottom, J.M. 1966a; Liversidge 1985b) and Cape Bulbul *P. capensis* (Lawson 1962; Clancey 1980b). In the eastern Cape Province, Lloyd (1994) found extensive hybridization along most of the length of the zone of contact between Blackeyed and Redeyed Bulbuls, and substantial hybridization at a locality in the contact zone between Blackeyed and Cape Bulbuls.

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

Historical distribution and conservation: There has probably been little change to the current distribution limits during the 20th century. The Blackeyed Bulbul is not a conservation priority because it is widespread and common, and has benefited from its association with humans.

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Recorded in 1490 grid cells, 32.8%
Total number of records: 58 920
Mean reporting rate for range: 68.9%

Reporting rates for vegetation types



