Full Account for: Pycnonotus jocosus

System: Terrestrial

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Common name

Pycnonotus jocosus (red-whiskered bulbul) is a bird native to Asia which has become invasive to several parts of the world. It has been found to damage crops, compete with native species and spread invasive plants.

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Species Description

Pycnonotus jocosus (red-whiskered bulbul) is a passerine avian. Adults measure 17-23cm in length with a wingspan of 28cm and weigh 23-42 g. Identifiable characteristics include its distinctive red ear patch and undertail coverts, a dark brown upperside, tan flanks, and white underside, a thin and notched beak, oval-shaped bristled nostrils, and a black shoulder spur and black head with a pointed crest. The legs and toes are usually short and have little strength. Males and females are alike in colour. Immature bulbuls resemble adults except that they lack the red ear patch (Honolulu, undated; Islam and Williams, 2000; Sibley, 2003). During the non-breeding season in North America, they assemble in communal roosts beginning in July and August and ending in January. Roosts usually consist of 40–100 individuals and inhabit a range of about 5.1 km². Birds disperse following gonadal enlargement and begin seeking a mate. After the breeding season they return to their same roost (Carleton and Owre, 1975).

Notes

Pycnonotus jocosus (red-whiskered bulbul) is very gregarious in the nonbreeding season and can often be seen foraging in large communal roosts (Islam & Williams, 2000). Their song is a chattering and musical scolding. Their call is a staccato kink-a-jou (Sibley, 2003).
Lifecycle Stages
Altricial young are cared for and fed by both parents for about 13 days, and are completely independent after 3 weeks (NatureServe, 2007). The young are fed primarily soft-bodied insects in early stages and then drupes and berries (Islam & Williams, 2000). The longest recorded adult life span in the wild is 11 years.

Uses
*Pycnonotus jocosus* (red-whiskered bulbul) is a popularly kept cage bird (Clergeau & Mandon-Dalger, 2001).

Habitat Description
*Pycnonotus jocosus* (red-whiskered bulbul) has colonized many different terrestrial habitats in temperate, tropical, and subtropical climates (Clergeau & Mandon-Dalger, 2001). In its native range it prefers wet habitats 500–2000m elevation and is common along forest edges, woodlands, cultivated areas and urban parks and gardens. In its introduced range it is mostly found in suburban areas, parks and gardens. However, it is also well adapted to native woodland, scrubland and forest of higher elevations (e.g. Islam & Williams, 2000; Linnebjerg *et al.*, in press). *P. jocosus* is known to nest in shrubs, small, trees, hedges, trellises and verandas of buildings or other available ledges or sites 1–9m off the ground. Since they are well adapted to human-altered environments much of their spread is facilitated by human development (Islam & Williams, 2000) but they are also known to reach high numbers on remote and largely unpopulated islands (e.g. Roberts, 1988).

Reproduction
Oviparous. Sexual. Breeding usually occurs in early warm months. In Florida pairs are formed February through July and breeding occurs from March to June. *Pycnonotus jocosus* (red-whiskered bulbul) is capable of up to three broods per year as in India, but usually only rears two. Each clutch usually consists of 2-4 pale pink eggs with red spots. Incubation is done by both sexes and lasts 12-14 days (NatureServe, 2007; Australian Museum, 2003).

Nutrition
*Pycnonotus jocosus* (red-whiskered bulbul) is a frugivore that also consumes insects, spiders, and small reptiles. They have been found to eat fruits, berries, figs, seeds, buds, nectar, pollen, flowers, and leaves from a wide variety of plants throughout the world. Insect diet includes caterpillars, scale insects, flies, moths, ants and beetles (Islam & Williams, 2000).
General Impacts
Pycnonotus jocosus (red-whiskered bulbul) has been found to damage commercial crops, compete with and displace native passerines, prey on endemic young birds and arthropods, and spread invasive plant species (Clergeau & Mandon-Dalger, 2001; Linnebjerg et al. 2009; Linnebjerg et al., in press). In California this species has significantly damaged citrus crops. On Oahu Island, Hawai‘i it consumes commercial fruits and flowers such as papaya and orchids. Damage to agriculture has been documented in other parts of its introduced range in Florida, La Réunion and Mauritius. On Mauritius P. jocosus has also reduced populations of endemic passerine native white-eyes (Zosterops spp.), spiders of the genus Neophilia, and geckos. In Southern Florida it competes for resources with migratory and wintering birds (Islam & Williams, 2000). P. jocosus is also known to distribute invasive alien plant species. Among these include: giant bramble (Rubus alceifolius), jujube tree (Cordia interrupta), Koster’s curse (Clidemia hirta), largeleaf lantana (Lantana camara), bugweed (Solanum mauritianum), Brazilian peppertree (Schinus terebinthifolius), strawberry guava (Psidium cattleianum), privet (Ligustrum robustum) and Indian laurel (Litsea glutinosa) in the Mascarene Islands (Simberloff & Von Holle, 1999; Mandon-Dalger, 2004; Linnebjerg et al., in press); and Brazilian jasmine (Jasminum fluminense), Brazilian peppertree (Schinus terebinthifolius), Bengal fig (Ficus benghalensis), and Lantana spp. in Florida (Carleton & Owre, 1975).

Management Info
It is recommended that management actions for Pycnonotus jocosus (red-whiskered bulbul) be taken within the first few years of introduction in order to be effective. This is to take advantage of its period of slow dispersal and population growth following introduction. Research has shown that P. jocosus spreads slowly for the first five or more years. After this initial period, which is variable by location with some instances taking as long as ten years, the populations spread and grow more rapidly, rendering eradication arduous and ineffective. Researchers cite its roosting behaviour as the cause of this low initial dispersion rate (Clergeau, 2001)
Preventative measures: Most of its spread may be contributed to human transport, be it accidental escape from zoos or gardens or intentional and unintentional release of cage birds. More care in the keeping and transport of red-whiskered bulbuls would greatly reduce its spread to new locations. Governmental preventative measures have been fairly successful in the United States. The U.S. Department of Agriculture Code of Federal Regulation strictly prohibits their importation to the U.S. and its territories. The Hawai‘i Department of Land and Natural Resources distributed brochures and flyers to the public in the 1980s informing them about P. jocosus and requesting that any sightings be reported. No new populations were established outside of Oahu (Islam & Williams, 2000).
Cultural: Since red-whiskered bulbuls are common cage birds in many parts of the world, the public should be informed of environmental threats they impose and be cautious in their keeping and transport.
Physical: Eradication or relocation is an option in invaded areas. P. jocosus was successfully captured using cages with a decoy and fruit as bait by a pest control program in La Réunion (Amiot et al., 2007).
Chemical: The use of pesticides and bird lime by farmers to protect their crops from bulbuls in the Mascarenes has been successful (Clergeau & Mandon-Dalger, 2000). Repellents methiocarb, ziram, and methyl anthranilate were successfully used to reduce the consumption of papaya by the closely related red-vented bulbul (Pycnonotus cafer) by 65% (Islam & Williams, 2000).
Pathway

Principal source:

Compiler: National Biological Information Infrastructure (NBII) & IUCN SSC Invasive Species Specialist Group (ISSG)

Review: Jannie Linnebjerg, National Environmental Research Institute, Department of Arctic Environment, Aarhus University
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ALIEN RANGE

[1] ZIMBABWE

Red List assessed species 2: VU = 1; NT = 1;
*Hypsipetes nicobariensis* NT  *Hypsipetes olivaceus* VU

BIBLIOGRAPHY
31 references found for *Pycnonotus jocosus*

Management information

Summary: Journal article describing morphological differences in isolated populations of Red-whiskered Bulbuls in Reunion.


Summary: Available from: [Accessed August 19 2010]


Summary: Available from: [Accessed 14 August 2007].


Summary: Website offered by The Australian Museum containing factsheets on resident species.

Available from: [Accessed 14 September 2007].


Summary: Database of possibly threatened bird species.

Available from: [Accessed 13 August 2007].


GLOBAL INVASIVE SPECIES DATABASE
FULL ACCOUNT FOR: Pycnonotus jocosus


Summary: Article focusing on the interaction between alien birds and plants describing many examples and the ecological feedback that takes place between an introduced bird and plants it unknowingly introduces as food.


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Summary: Ce papier analyse le r?le des oiseaux exotiques dans la diss?mination de certaines plantes exotiques envahissantes de la R?union.


Summary: Field guide to birds of North America[Accessed 13 August 2007].


Summary: Journal article depicting some plants spread by P. jocosus
