



413/D

Feeding behavior and habitat preferences of *Pycnonotus penicillatus* (Yellow - eared bulbul) in the Knuckles mountain range

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Pycnonotus penicillatus (Yellow - eared bulbul) is an endemic resident bird in the wet zone highlands of Sri Lanka. The study was carried out from December 2011 to May 2012 in the Northern flank of the Knuckles mountain range at different altitudes having specific habitat types highlighting the effect of altitude and habitat on the presence and abundance of the Yellow eared bulbul. Daily counts and observations of the birds were made from 600 hrs to 1800 hrs in selected habitats ranging from 850 – 1250 m along 2 km transects. Behavioral data were collected using scan sampling and focal animal sampling techniques. Individual sampling was done at 15 minute intervals. The population of *Pycnonotus penicillatus* increased with increasing elevation. The total bird population of *Pycnonotus penicillatus* represented 23.73% in the study sites. Of the three passerine bird species recorded in the study site the Yellow - eared bulbuls contributed to 42.62%. The results revealed that there is a variation in abundance of the bird in the study area with the month. The Yellow - eared bulbul preferred sub canopy feeding more than canopy and understory feeding. They showed five major types of feeding techniques, i.e. pecking, stand pick, hangpick, flypick, dropping. Of the five techniques pecking and stand pick were the most frequently used. Yellow - eared bulbuls were observed in small flocks of 3 – 17 and as pairs. They were observed foraging alone or with other bird species. If in mixed flocks they were the first to come for feeding. There were 4 main feeding trees such as *Ilex knucklesensis*, *Eurya nitida*, *Rauvolfia densifolia* and *Maesa indica*, which Yellow - eared bulbul preferred. In addition to fruites they fed on insects and worms. Feeding was observed mostly from 8.00 – 10.00 hrs and 15.00 – 16.00 hrs within a day. Yellow - eared bulbuls preferred mostly bamboo trees as their resting places. They were frequently seen sun bathing in the bamboos. They were more abundant in the Riverstan at a higher altitude where feeding trees are abundant.