

# RHINOCEROS HORNBILL

- Male rhinoceros hornbills have orange and red eyes, while the females have white eyes.
- Both sexes have long, thick, curly eyelashes, making them one of the few birds to have feathery “eyelashes”.

## Native habitat and diet

- Rhinoceros hornbills are found in peninsular Malaysia, Indonesia, Sumatra and Java where they rely on dense lowland forest for shelter and nesting habitat.
- The species is extinct in Singapore and is vulnerable to habitat loss and hunting in its remaining range.
- Their diet consists of fruit from trees as well as figs, mice, lizards, frogs, other birds, and large arthropods.

## Why do they have a ‘horn’ on top of their beak?

- The extra “horn” is called a “casque”. Once fully grown, it resembles a rhinoceros horn. It is thought to act as a resonating chamber that amplifies the bird’s calls through the thick jungle.
- The casque may look heavy, but it’s actually a very light, hollow structure.

## Do you see the hole in the tree? What do you think it is used for?

- Rhinoceros hornbills are cavity nesters – they make their nest in hollow trees.
- The female enters the tree cavity and the male covers the surface of the hole with mud and feces, leaving only a small opening through which to pass food
- The female stays inside the entire length of time needed to lay, incubate and hatch the eggs; she remains while the chicks grow their feathers. The male feeds the whole family through the tiny gap in the “door”!
- After 3 months, the female breaks out of the nest and helps the male feed the chicks. The parents once again close the nest hole to protect the chicks until they are older. The chicks remain sealed in the nest and are fed by both parents until they are about 5 months old and are able to break out of their nest!

***DID YOU KNOW? Although they look similar, hornbills and toucans are only distantly related.***

