

Green Woodhoopoe

Phoeniculus purpureus



Class: *Aves*

Order: *Bucerotiformes*

Family: *Phoeniculidae*

Characteristics:

Green woodhoopoes are medium-sized birds with distinct red, curved beaks (the beak is longer in males than females), a dark iridescent body and white spots along the outside edge of the tail. Their short, bright red legs are an obvious contrast to their dark bodies.

Behavior:

Green woodhoopoes are highly sociable, chattering birds (considered one of the noisiest birds of the African bush) which live in small flocks of up to 15 birds. They follow each other from tree to tree foraging in cracks and crevices. They will climb trees in a similar fashion to woodpeckers, using their sharp claws to cling to the tree bark. During the dry season, they will feed on the ground.

Reproduction:

In most flocks of green woodhoopoes, there is generally one monogamous breeding pair, usually the oldest in the flock. They compete with other flocks for good breeding sites as their nests are heavily preyed upon by mammals, other birds, and particularly driver ants. They build nests in live tree cavities or use old woodpecker or barbet nests. They lay 3-5 blue eggs up to twice per year if food sources are good. They breed in July-October and have an incubation period of 17-18 days. The breeding pair will have help from the rest of the flock to feed the young and fledging happens at around 30 days. Once the young fledge, they will help feed the next group of hatchlings. The young will stay with the flock for up to five years as non-breeding helpers (Coraciiformes TAG).

Diet:

Wild: Invertebrates

Zoo: Insectivore diet, dog food, feline diet, mealworms, chopped pinky mice

Conservation:

Least Concern despite heavy natural predation on eggs, nestlings

FYI:

Green woodhoopoes have a distinct musky odor produced in their “preen” (uropygial) gland. The strong smell is believed to deter predators.



Range & Habitat:

Widespread range, found in most habitats in Africa EXCEPT arid zones and forests



Lifespan: up to 15 years in captivity, average 8 years in the wild.

Special Adaptations: Hoopoes are one of the only families of birds found exclusively in Africa

IUCN Conservation Status:

Least Concern

