

**BOOM IN THE BUSHVELD –
Release of Southern Ground Hornbill juveniles, vaccinated against
Newcastle’s Disease onto Madikwe by Mabula Ground Hornbill
Project**



Ben Bothhole, Charles Mpamo, Jamie Rankin, Colin Lombard.

On 29th October, 2008, 2-year-old male and female juveniles, Imvulu and Nkosi, were released onto Madikwe East Game Reserve, with Ben and Charles shepherding them.

They are captive bred chicks from Kruger parents from Umgeni River Bird Park, and hand-reared at Mabula especially for wild release. This is done in silence, with a ghost and puppets so they do not associate people and food, followed by release into the free-roaming group on Mabula Game Reserve where they learn to forage, to avoid predation and the complicated social system of this important, long-lived, slowest breeding co-operative breeding hornbill.

Two Umgeni juveniles were released by the Mabula Project onto Madikwe in 2006 and both died of Newcastle’s Disease. Drs. Michelle Barrows and Gabby Drake from the Johannesburg Zoo with laboratory assistance from Dr. Hannes Swart of Deltammune did vaccination trials on Graeme Hoffman’s Ground Hornbills. Jeanne Marie Pittman vaccinated Nkosi and Imvulu at Mabula, and 3 months later results showed that the release could go ahead, with the assistance of Umgeni and Madikwe.

**The Mabula Ground Hornbill Project
November, 2008**