

Boom in the Bushveld

Mabula Ground-Hornbill Project

July 2012



training & reintroductions & threat mitigations & more...

At last we can share our latest news with you.



HORNBILL FIRST AID WORKSHOP

We hosted a fully attended hornbill first aid course in February led by Dr. Brett Gardner from the Johannesburg Zoo for all field workers who may handle ground-hornbills. We learnt basic skills on how to attend to an injured bird in the field and to provide the best possible interim care whilst getting the bird to a qualified vet as well as how to do a field post mortem to ensure we gain valuable information from any dead hornbill. The course was a great success (skills have already been applied to both a hornbill and a Malachite Kingfisher) and much fun was had though few will look at roast chicken in quite the same way again.

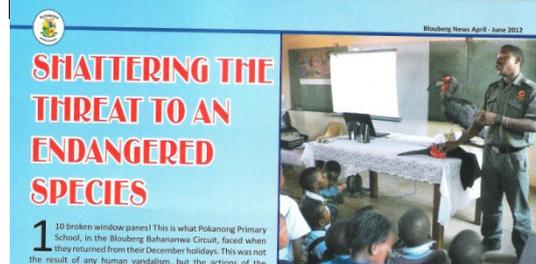
SCIENCE COLLOQUIUM TO SHARE RESEARCH & INSIGHTS

In May we hosted 30 researchers and interested parties working on ground-hornbills to share their current and past research and to share their expertise. Twelve presentations were given by researchers from the various institutions, including a talk from Zimbabwe. This proved to be an excellent forum and we, as managers on the ground, are thrilled to have all the latest data available to us.

Problem: persecution for window breaking

Solution: opaque window film

Ground-hornbills are aggressively territorial and will fight the 'enemy' when seeing their reflection in a window or a mirror. Needless to say the windows break and land-owners, bearing the brunt of the cost and inconvenience, are likely to shoot the birds. This is one of the greatest threats to the birds – particularly in farming communities. A rural school in the Limpopo Province was left with 110 broken windows and no means of fixing this themselves. PG Glass Polokwane kindly sponsored the glass and we, together with some of the village elders, fitted the new glass. We also used this as an opportunity to experiment with one-way vision generously sponsored by a corporate branding company (Graffiti). This perforated film, when layered onto the glass, cuts reflections thus the hornbills no longer have an 'enemy' to fight. We have since assisted a hunting camp in the Limpopo Valley install the window film to prevent further window-smashing. This is not only positive intervention but creates excellent awareness about the plight of the bird.



1 10 broken window panes! This is what Pokanong Primary School, in the Bloubaerg Bahanwanwa Circuit, faced when they returned from their December holidays. This was not the result of any human vandalism, but the actions of the critically endangered Ground Hornbill birds, which live in the area. Their breeding season occurs over the festive season and when they see their reflection in the windows, they presume it is another bird coming to take over their territory. They attack the

Charles Mphahlele, MGHP conservation officer, teaches the learners about Ground Hornbills.



donate @ <http://groundhornbillproject.givengain.org>

Newly released birds at play



Two releases done! After much planning there are now four new hornbills finding their feet, after being released back into the wild.

✓ **Mabula:** Two youngsters were released into the resident Mabula group and were readily accepted. They immediately took to the wing after the release, but the resident birds attracted them to the ground and after some deliberation the alpha male took the lead with a grand tour of their new territory. One bird was reared by its captive parents at Loskop (thanks to National Zoological Gardens and Delecia Gunn, MTPA) and one was a hand-reared (by Delecia) redundant chick from the APNR reserve harvest, both from the 2010/11 breeding season.

✓ **Madikwe East:** Two birds were released into the resident group on Madikwe East from the splendid release boma sponsored by Montecasino Bird Gardens. They are also sponsoring the shepherd's salary and renovations to his accommodation and are committed to the long-term nature of this project. One bird is from the Limpopo Valley harvest and the other from a Kruger National Park harvest (both reared by Delecia).

These sites are both 'bush schools' where the resident hornbills teach the new youngsters all the skills needed to survive in the wild - where to sleep, what to eat and what to be afraid of. All the released birds were fitted with tail transmitters.

CyberTracker for hornbills

DATA HOME
General Activity
1 Hour Special Watch
Visual Lost
Visual Regained
Supplementary Feeding
Sample
Final roost site
Other Conservation Interest

All released birds will be monitored using the CyberTracker system, as used by the Kruger National Park rangers. These data, with data from wild populations, will help us assess how well the hornbills are doing in their new territories and help us look at the finer scale needs of the hornbills. Thanks to CyberTracker for use of the software and San Diego Zoo Safari Park for sponsoring the handheld Trimble units. These data will form the basis of an MSc research project.



Godfree



Thabo



Mandla

Training new hornbill shepherds

We welcome Godfree Motsisi, Mandla Sibiyi & Thabo Kgomotso

Our highly experienced Charles Mphamo was responsible for training the new shepherds (for releases at Madikwe East and Loskop Dam Nature Reserve), sharing all the field skills and knowledge they would need for day-to-day monitoring and management of newly released ground-hornbills, including using the new CyberTracker system. Charles has also compiled a new shepherd's manual that will be distributed to all the new shepherds as a quick reference guide in accordance to their training and thus equip them to handle any issues that may arise with confidence and ease.

The Ground Hornbill Team

Without all of our sponsors we could do nothing.

For our full sponsor list please see our website. Our major sponsors for this financial year below:

