

Mabula Ground-Hornbill Project

Reporting Period:
April 2014 – September 2014



Summary: The last six months have seen a growing focus on community-based conservation projects at three sites in KwaZulu-Natal: Melmoth, Hlokozi and Creighton. These areas hold the greatest populations outside of Kruger National Park and although there is a strong cultural protection, a growing human population with growing land-use requirements and an erosion of cultural values amongst younger residents means we have to work hard to ensure this protection is nurtured. A partnership with a local NGO is proving hugely successful, with a new reserve pending, growing conservation awareness in these areas and an opportunity for us to grow conservation capacity. With an expanding schools education programme and our latest releases ticking along nicely, we are now just waiting for arrival of the rains to herald the new breeding

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(016-183 NPO & 13/00/00/723 PBO)

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE PAST SIX MONTHS

SPRING HAS SPRUNG AND NEW PARTNERSHIPS ABROAD

Storm, and his new female, Kapama, bonding in the shade



Natasha & Hein are married 😊

A partnership to grow conservation capacity in southern KwaZulu-Natal

We have partnered with a NGO, Woman's Leadership and Training Programme (WLTP), to help build conservation capacity under their biodiversity portfolio and to allow us an understanding of the status of the Southern Ground-Hornbill in their focal areas. The pilot project was an astounding success, with one of the outcomes being the Hlokozi Traditional Authorities setting aside part of their land as a reserve, a refuge for wildlife while they work on some of the more pressing conservation issues; another is formal protection for the species. The reserve will be an estimated 18 000 ha; big enough for two hornbill families. Since then we hosted some of WLTP team leaders for a week of training in GPS use, mapping, data collection, management and analysis so that they can run with their Ground-Hornbill Project. We can't wait to learn from their findings.



The Hlokozi Traditional Authorities and elders choosing the best site



Learning mapping



The WLTP + MGHP team

Mpumalanga Tourism and Parks Agency commit to land & support for a new hand-rearing centre

Mpumalanga Tourism and Parks Agency (MTPA), the nature conservation authorities in the Mpumalanga Province have committed to assisting us with land and support for a specialized hand-rearing and socialising centre for the harvested 'doomed' second chicks. Now that we have their commitment we can start the planning, fund-raising and building. We are hosting a workshop at Loskop Dam reserve in early October at the site of the new centre, in order to get the best advice from all stakeholders on how to design the best centre for the purposes. Once we have decided what is best then the fund-raising starts. We aim to have the centre up and running by the 2015 breeding season. A really important step forward to the sustainability of the programme – exciting and a little daunting.

ACTIVE THREAT MITIGATION

Lead poisoning: A research paper is in press and will be used as the basis of an awareness campaign.

Window-breaking: Continued discussion with affected farmers. We co-authored the Ground-Hornbill section of the EWT publication 'Humans & Birds'. Window-breaking at the schools in the Melmoth region is rife and we hope to ask forestry companies to assist in repairing and then covering the windows so the problem does not continue.

Habitat destruction & degradation: We are happy to be collaborating with Megan Loftie-Eaton from the Animal Demography Unit at the University of Cape Town as her PhD is going to start to try and unravel the effects of bush encroachment on Ground-Hornbill declines. We will be working closely with her and are thrilled she has taken on this challenge.

Loss of nests: We have five nest designs of various materials being built to start testing for temperature, humidity and general suitability from early November.

Electrocution: Eskom came to Mabula and insulated one transformer box. Their consulting engineers also attended to see what the issues are in order to start working on new, more cost-effective designs of transformer box insulation.

LOWLIGHTS

This was a very productive six months for us with the only lowlight being the closure of the Madikwe release site since the dispersal of the female to Botswana and the return of the habituated bird to captivity. This, in a way though, can also be seen as a highlight as this site has taught us so much in terms of habitat suitability, individual preferences, risk of a group without a wild leader and more.

PLANS FOR THE NEXT FEW MONTHS

Nest checks: we will be monitoring the Limpopo River Valley nests, the known KwaZulu-Natal nests and looking for new nests.

Swaziland: we did a preliminary assessment trip to Swaziland to discuss the current status of the species in the Kingdom and what potential exists for recovery. We will follow this up with surveys during the breeding season.

Genetics samples: We will be spending time in the lab processing the latest batch of samples from museums around the world.

Mobile Boma: We have sponsorship from Montecasino Bird Gardens for two mobile units and once the plans are complete we will start construction.

Loskop release: We are still looking for funding for the salary of a monitor but this release will be initiated in the next month.

Museum samples: We will continue gathering museum samples for analysis.

Reintroduction Plan: We have completed a draft plan now out for circulation and comment.

Education & Awareness: We will focus on the Limpopo River Valley for the rest of this year.

Threat mitigation: Once our paper is published we will use that to spring-board the education campaign about 'green' ammunition.

Custodianship Programme: We will complete the first draft of a custodianship agreement to start testing the model on a sub-set of landowners.

EDUCATION & AWARENESS in the last six months

*all sponsors and collaborators are acknowledged in presentations and reports

Print media:

- We had an article published in the SA Vet newsletter calling for information of past hornbills brought in and to contact us if there are any further cases.
- The Hornbills of the World book got an excellent review in the May/June Birdlife magazine.
- Mercury newspaper article (Durban)
- Field Guide Association of South Africa (FGASA): an article was printed in the FGASA newsletter and an ID card with an ID kit on one side and SGH information on the other was distributed with each newsletter so that field guides have the card with them for telling their guests the latest information, being able to age and sex the birds and our contact details for sightings.

Online: We have a growing Facebook following with many Zulu learners now using this platform to report sightings of birds in their areas.

Newsletter: Boom Newsletter: June & September.

Conferences/Meetings:

We hosted both the 2nd Science Colloquium and Action Group Meeting.

Presentations:

- Weekly Modjadji teas and hornbill drives;
- Filming for NZG showcase;
- Mabula Field Rangers & Timeshare staff.
- Port Natal Bird Club + Himeville Bird Club + Ixopo WLTP Bird Club.
- MGHP hosted the Leeupoort Conservancy at Mabula (48 people) for a talk and dinner.

The Zulu and Setwana brochures are being distributed. Afrikaans and Xhosa next.



Land Owner Engagement: We went to Loskop Dam Nature Reserve (LDNR) to do a community outreach for MTPA. More than 130 people who work at LDNR (many from the Expanded Public Works Programme) and thus extracted from neighbouring communities and their children attended the outreach programme.

Schools:

•We went to Melmoth, Southern Zululand, to initiate a pilot project aimed at awareness in rural schools in the area. Eighteen schools visited over nine school days. Each school received a short presentation followed by an activity, and the learners shared their knowledge and stories about the birds. It was an intense two weeks with near 8000 children being educated. A full report was compiled and circulated to Ezamvelo KZN, farmers, schools and forestry. Report available on request.

•Outreach to eight schools in the Thaba Tholo area.

•Representatives from eight schools in the Ixopo and Highflats areas.

•We have trained the trainers and prepared all the material used for Childrens' Eco Training in Klaserie for a four-day hornbill holiday workshop. This reaches children from communities surrounding the Greater Kruger National Park where there are still scattered hornbill groups.

Other: SASOL Birdlife Bird Fair, Walter Sisulu Botanical Gardens.



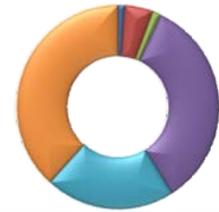
Scenes from the northern Zululand awareness programme

FINANCIAL STATE OF THE PROJECT: SUSTAINABLE

We are extremely grateful for all the sponsorship and support that we received in the last six months as this Project continues to grow (see Table 2 for details). It has meant that we are able to take on new interns to grow our team. We actively campaign for new donors to raise funds for ongoing projects and ensure that current donor requirements are met to ensure their continued support.

MGHP is registered as a Non Profit Organisation (NPO) under Section 1 of the NPO Act and a Public Benefit Organisation (PBO), under Section 18 of the Act. Income is generated through donations, conservation grants, sale of goods developed through the conservation craft initiative and interest on cash

SA Corporate balances. In meeting all the requirements for a Section 18a NPO, a percentage of any monetary donations to the project are tax deductible in South Africa. Please contact us for more information.



- Individual donors
- Self generated
- BirdLife & Bird Clubs
- Conservation Grants Europe
- Conservation Grants: U.S.A.

Table 2: Details of sponsorship over last six months and staff developments.

SPONSORSHIP	STAFF
<p>Primary: Disney Conservation Fund SASOL Ltd. Mabula & Mokaikai Private Game Reserves Seaworld & Busch Gardens Natural Encounters Virginia Zoo Montecasino Bird Gardens Rufford Small Grant</p> <p>Contributing: Dallas Zoo NC Zoo Society Honolulu Zoo Birdlife Sisonke Birdlife SA Pavilion BLPN Montecasino Bird Gardens Zoo Augsberg</p> <p>In-Kind: SAPPI: Poster & brochure printing Chocolate Horse: Design Natural Encounters: equipment</p>	<p>Conservation Interns: Sophie Neller (UK) has brought her experience of captive hornbill management to the Project and will be with us for two years. She joined the team in April.</p>  <p>Sophie Lenoir (France) has just joined the project, bringing her Wildlife Management experience and we hope she will be with us for a year at least.</p> <p>Hein Nel has passed his FGASA 1 qualifications.</p>

SUMMARY OF SOME OF THE ACTIVITIES OF OUR COLLABORATORS AND PARTNERS:

National Zoological Gardens	Maintains the stud book and captive propagation programme, post-mortems, nutritional & behavioural advice and undertakes all genetics analyses at their state-of-the-art laboratory.
Percy FitzPatrick Institute	Undertakes APNR harvest, wild capture, research into spatial use of habitats and dispersal.
Mpumalanga Tourism and Parks Agency	Delecia Gunn rears harvested chicks, continues education and awareness and acts as the main advisor on hand-rearing and captive socialisation.
Johannesburg Zoo	Hosts captive birds; hand-rearing harvested chicks; growing hand-rearing capacity; continued education and awareness; veterinary support; vaccine development.
North West University	Research into tools for selecting reintroduction sites and social/human aspects of the conservation of the species.
Endangered Wildlife Trust	Undertakes nest monitoring, harvest and ringing of fledglings in Kruger National Park, research into habitat use & dispersal.
Montecasino Bird Gardens	Hosts two breeding pairs; awareness campaign; fund-raising, rearing both harvested and captive-bred chicks.
Bester Birds	Hosts birds for the captive breeding programme.
Umgeni River Bird Park	Hosts a pair for captive breeding and is increasing awareness in KwaZulu-Natal.
Boscia Birds	Host captive pair and young birds and hand-rear harvested chicks.
Zaagkuilsdrift Bird Sanctuary	Hosts birds for the captive breeding programme.
Lory Park Zoo	Hosts birds for the captive breeding programme.
Hoedspruit Endangered Species Centre	Hosts birds for the captive breeding programme.



THANK YOU TO ALL OUR CURRENT SPONSORS

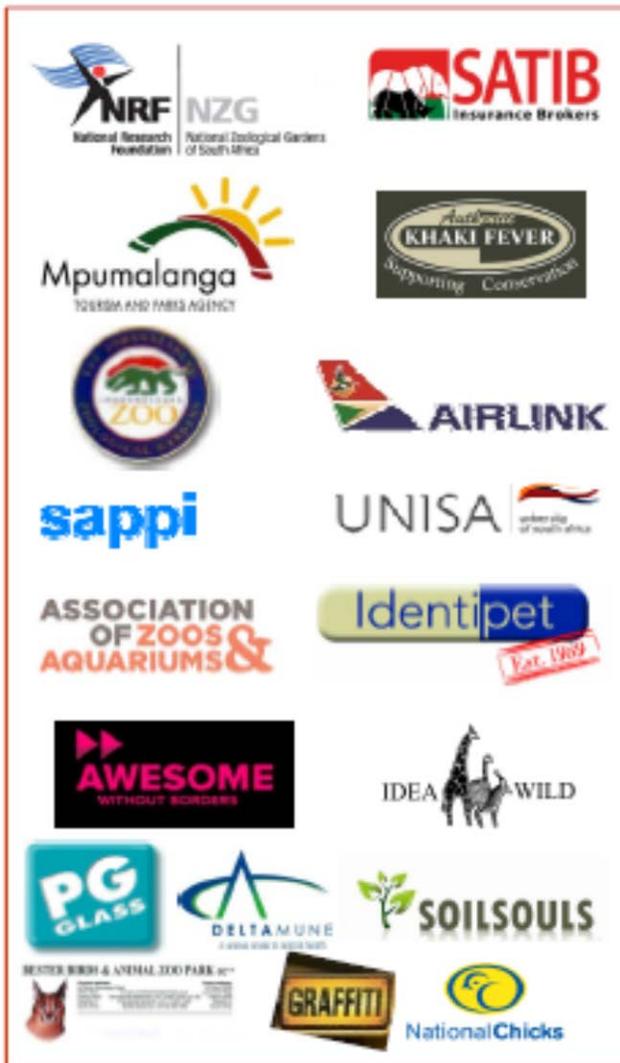
PRIMARY CORPORATE SPONSORS:



CONSERVATION GRANTS:



IN-KIND SPONSORSHIP:



Thank you