

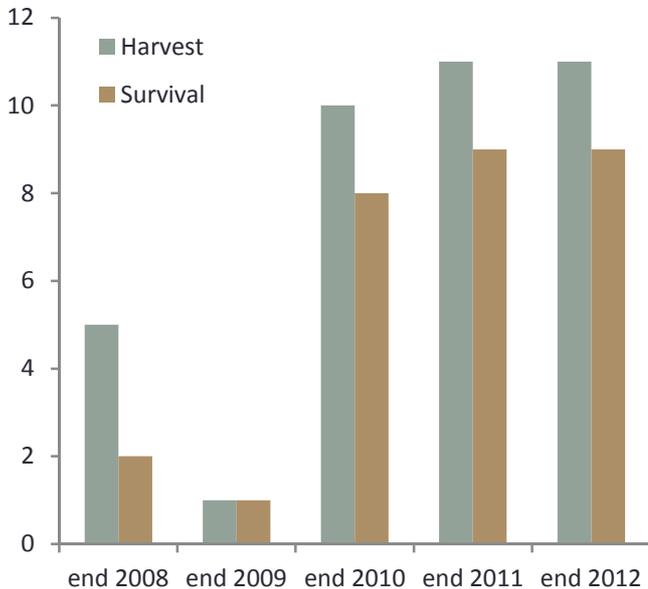
Boom in the Bushveld

Mabula Ground-Hornbill Project

CHECK OUT OUR NEW WEBSITE: www.ground-hornbill.org.za



March 2013



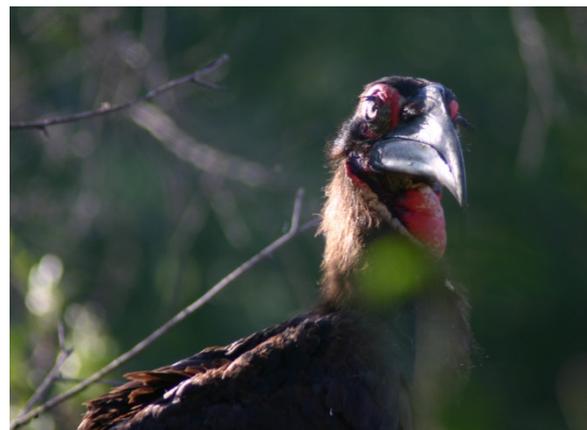
Harvest now yields sustainably high survival rates



With another successful harvest season behind us we are now confident that the hand-rearing protocol put together by the shared experiences of hand-rearers past and present is a good working document that can be used by zoos around the world. Careful harvest (with our partners Endangered Wildlife Trust and the Percy FitzPatrick Institute of African Ornithology), transport and rearing is yielding wilder, stronger chicks that will have a better chance of survival when released and a better chance of breeding in the captive breeding programme.

Release update:

The young male (right) released onto Mabula is rapidly gaining his adult colouration. The new female is foraging well and still in negotiations with the rest of the group as to where she will fit in. We are watching this with interest as never before has a female been introduced to an existing group. The group at Madikwe lost a young male to predation but the remaining birds are foraging well and even making forays into Botswana. The birds for two new releases have been moved to their release aviaries and have settled in.



Tribute to Phil Hockey:

Ground-hornbills, bird-watchers and ornithologists lost a stalwart with the passing of Phil Hockey in January. As Director of the Percy FitzPatrick Institute at the University of Cape Town, he inherited and led the project in the APNR that pioneered capture and satellite tracking of wild groups to better understand their habitat use and requirements.



Meet the growing team of dedicated hand-rearers.

This year we have welcomed six new hand-rearers to the programme for hand-rearing the wild redundant chicks. This allows us to grow the project to levels that will start to make a significant difference to slowing the decline of the species. Without their dedication and commitment to the conservation of these big black birds we would be unable to expand the reintroduction programme.



Delecia Gunn

THANK YOU.

Delecia has been rearing these chicks since 1996 and is a source of inspiration and advice to all hand-rearers ever since – the queen bee.



Joanne Fisher (left) & Moya von Solms

Both Jo and Moya have experience in rearing the chicks from the captive pairs at Montecasino but are now also rearing harvested chicks and contribute to the excellent education and awareness programme that Montecasino is running to increase awareness of the plight of the species.



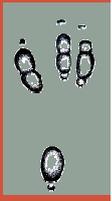
Elaine Reeve (left) & Minah Moloto

Although not the first year of rearing for Elaine this was the first as lead-rearer and she and Minah make an excellent team. This was Minah's first experience of the trials and tribulations of these chicks and she will be taking on more in the coming season. Christine Giononne, who has flown out from the States to assist for many years, was there to assist again (and who won us an IAATE grant – thank you).



Nollie Cilliers & Tinus Oberholzer

Taking a break from the peace of growing orchids this team were thrown in the deep-end having never reared a ground-hornbill before (though they have experience with other known 'tricky' species). They have really taken to the species and it is now their logo!



... and a huge thank you to Lara Jordan, the Curator of birds at Johannesburg Zoo, for her years of commitment to the birds, and we wish her well with the cranes, vultures and others that now demand her time.

BirdLife Species Guardian



We are proud to be one of the BirdLife Species Guardians and acknowledge that it carries an even greater responsibility to the species. Already this partnership has been extremely beneficial to us and having been welcomed into the BirdLife network will greatly assist the work we do.

This also opens opportunities for sponsors to become BirdLife Species Champions, which enables sponsors to market their involvement and support through an international network.

New publication:

Theron, N., Dalton, D., Grobler, J.P., Jansen, R & A. Kotze. 2013. Molecular insights on the re-colonization of the Limpopo Valley, South Africa, by Southern Ground-Hornbills. Journal of Ornithology. DOI10.1007/s10336-013-0937-4

NEW CORPORATE PARTNERS JOIN THE TEAM



Airlink has joined the team by supplying flights for all the harvested chicks from the Lowveld. This allows us to get the chicks from the nests to the hand-rearers much quicker (our quickest this season was a mere four hours from nest to caring hands) and reduces stress and increase their chances of survival.

The staff were hugely helpful – from bookings to security to on-board assistance with hot water bottles. This also reduced wear-and-tear on our vehicle and staff and cut our fuel costs – allowing our conservation grant funding to go that much further.

Natasha about to board a flight with a chick in its warm, snug cooler box.

Cell C has come on board as a major sponsor. Cell C is increasingly committed to bird conservation in South Africa – see the latest African Birdlife magazine for details: <http://www.birdlife.org.za/african-birdlife>

CELL[®]

THE POWER IS IN YOUR HANDS

Without all of our sponsors we could do nothing.

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

sasol
reaching new frontiers



The Ground Hornbill Team