

# Boom in the Bushveld

NEWSLETTER OF THE MABULA GROUND HORNBILL PROJECT

September 2014

Mabula  
Ground  
Hornbill  
Project

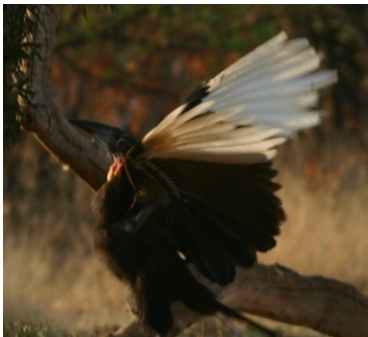


## A female back in the group for the first time since April 2013

Our recent release of a female almost at breeding age and young male has seen this group start to look like a good nuclear family again. The alpha male took an instant like to the new lady – courtship preening her through the release aviary mesh before she had even been let out. Behaviour we have not seen before. That may be attributed to his singledom for so long, the timing of the release at the start of spring or that he just really likes her ☺ The key to growing a population is increasing the number of females in a breeding position and so everyone we get right is a good step in the right direction. The young male we released bonded with Kingfisher's last chick and the two little males spend all day together. Thanks to Lente Roode and her team and Delecia Gunn for making this possible.



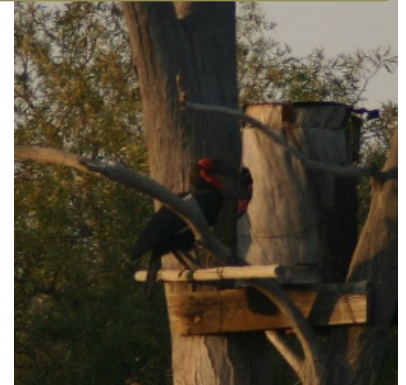
BEFORE: the male extremely attentive to her at the aviary.



So much play at the moment: this young bird spent an hour playing with a loose piece of bark.



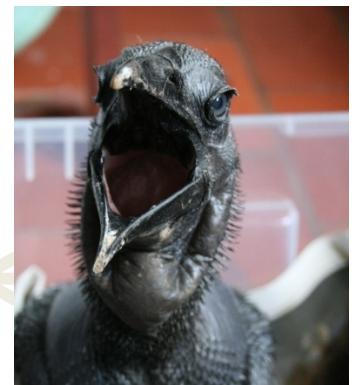
AFTER: the male courtship preening and feeding her at every available opportunity.

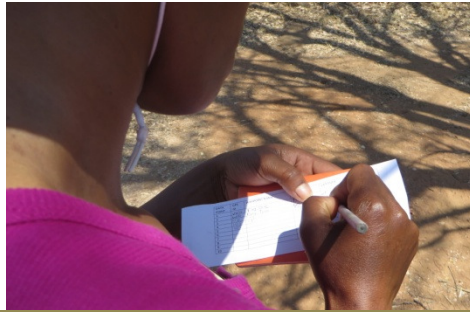


She is spending increasing amounts of time in the nest. OH where are the rains?

## Mpumalanga Tourism and Parks Agency commits support and land

Delecia Gunn has been committed to getting this species back on track for years/decades and now her organisation is fully committed too. We have signed an MOU for support and a piece of land at Loskop Dam Nature Reserve on which to build a specialised hand-rearing and socialising centre. The best chance the hand-reared birds have of survival in the wild is if they experience all the right developmental cues and lessons at the right ages and stages. We are getting it right but there is always room for improvement, learning, streamlining and growth. We hold the workshop later this week with many stakeholders, both locally and abroad, to work out how to design the best centre possible. The goal: 15 high-quality release birds per year.

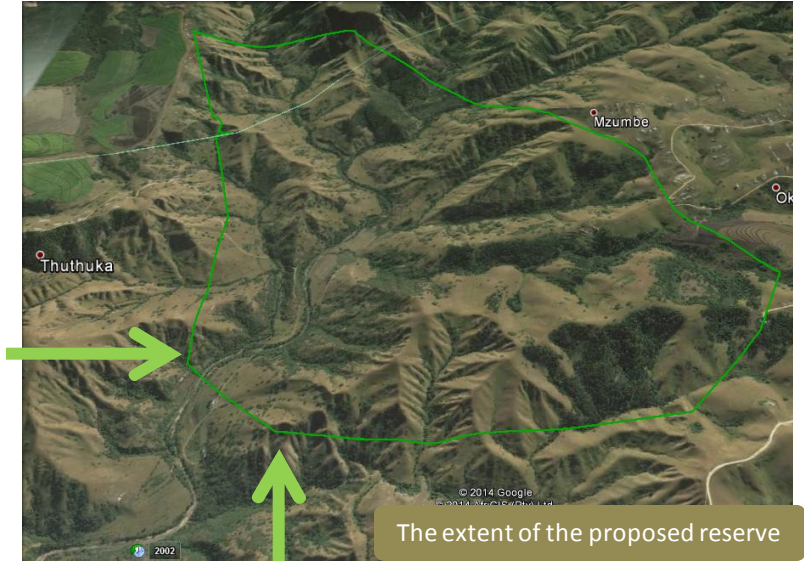




The WLTP team acquiring new skills during their week at Mabula.

## Training programme in monitoring, GPS, mapping, tracking and more

The Woman's Leadership and Training Programme (WLTP) team spent a week with us learning how best to monitor their ground-hornbill population, find nests so we can assist with a custodianship programme and use their newly acquired mapping skills for use in some of their other programmes. This partnership is so full of potential: already there is a new 18 000 ha reserve at Hlokozi, Southern KwaZulu-Natal, on the cards – large enough for two hornbill groups and a suite of other species also in need of refuge. The Southern Ground-Hornbill – a flagship species at its best! The WLTP biodiversity portfolio is making a difference!



The extent of the proposed reserve

The Hlokozi community meets to discuss the conservation needs in their area: starting with the ground-hornbills



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The community deciding where would be best given their land requirements

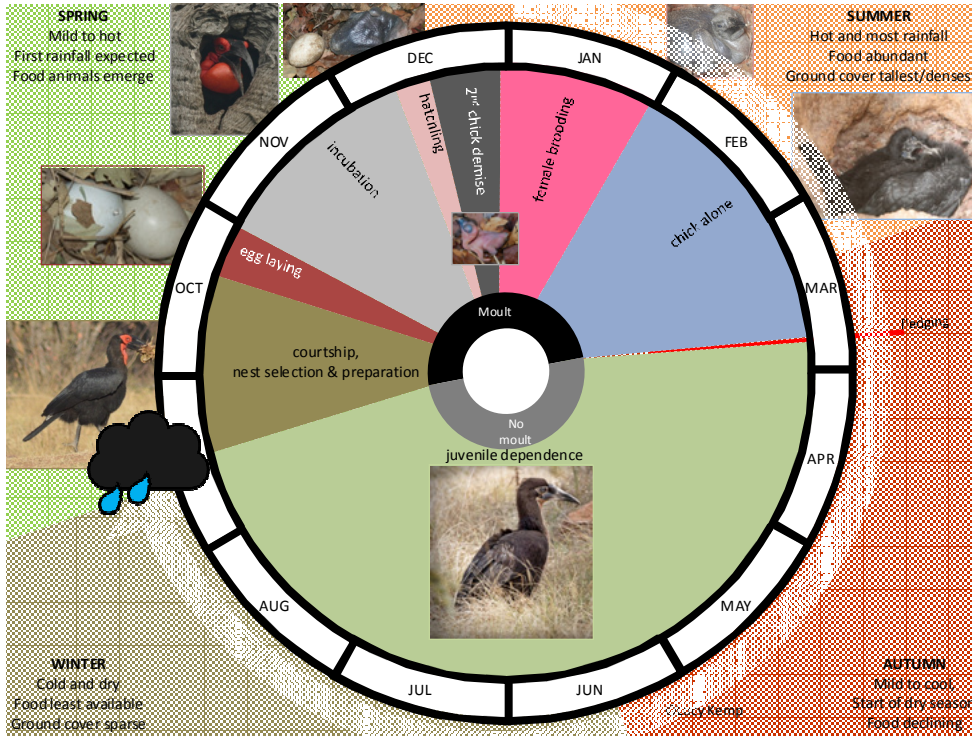
## The Living Museum: ground-hornbills added to the exhibit



Clive and Anton Walker's Living Museum is a museum with a difference. It holds traditional museum exhibits covering all aspects of life in the Waterberg Biosphere, right down to the base geology, but also features living exhibits of savanna species that are in danger of only being remembered as museum exhibits if we don't get the conservation of them right: wild-dog, rhino, roan and more. We are thrilled that they have agreed to hold one of the captive groups for us as part of their exhibit: for the ground-hornbills a beautiful aviary full of natural trees and a chance to tell their story to the many visitors in that area who may never get another chance to see them . Coming soon!



**Ann Knutson**, San Diego Zoo, has taken on the SSP and Studbook programme for the Southern Ground-Hornbill species for the States. We are very excited to have her on board for the species and can't wait for her to be able to come and see everything first hand.



**Our latest education aid:** a year-in-the-life wheel that shows how the start of the year is really with the start of the rains and everything else shifts accordingly. It is great for showing farmers how much time the birds are centered on the nest and also for school learners to add to their 'seasons' and 'life-cycle' curricula. They can spin the inner circles to see the role the seasons play.

For a full report of all of our activities for the last six-months feel free to email us: [project@ground-hornbill.org.za](mailto:project@ground-hornbill.org.za)

*Without out the support of all of our sponsors we can achieve nothing. Thank you.*

