



**THE 1<sup>st</sup> IUCN SSC HORNBILL SPECIALIST GROUP STEERING  
COMMITTEE MEETING  
26-28 AUGUST 2018, KASETSART UNIVERSITY, THAILAND**



**ATTENDANCE (NAME/AFFILIATION):**

1. AD – Dr. Aparajita Datta (Nature Conservation Foundation – NCF)
2. LK – Dr. Lucy Kemp (Mabula Ground Hornbill Project – MGHP)
3. PP – Dr. Pilai Poonswad (Thailand Hornbill Project – THP / Hornbill Research Foundation – HRF), Advisor to the HSG
4. KB – Dr. Koen Brouwer (Attica Park Zoological Park / EAZA Hornbill TAG)
5. NBC – Ng Bee Choo/ Bee Choo Strange (Hornbill Research Foundation)
6. YCA – Yeap Chin Aik (Malaysian Nature Society – MNS)
7. YH – Yokyok Hadiprakarsa (Rangkong Indonesia)
8. VC – Dr. Vijak Chimchome (THP/HRF/Kasetsart University)
9. DM – Dr. Divya Mudappa (Nature Conservation Foundation)

## **ABSENT WITH APOLOGIES**

Paul Schutz (Disney's Animal Kingdom)

The IUCN SSC Hornbill Specialist Group (HSG) was officially formed in October 2017. Steering Committee members (SC members) were invited to the inaugural meeting at Kasetsart University to determine the priorities for the group over the next four years (until after the conference in Bhutan in 2021). Co-chair Lucy Kemp (LK) extended the HSG's deep appreciation to all donors (Disney's Animal Kingdom, Wildlife Reserves Singapore, Hornbill Research Foundation and Kasetsart University) for providing financial and in-kind support for this inaugural meeting.

LK introduced the IUCN Specialist Groups to the HSG which is a science-based network that consists of 140 Specialist Groups, Red List Authorities and Task Forces and 10,000 volunteer experts. The IUCN Specialist Groups work in a quadrennial cycle (i.e. 4 years). The current cycle is from 2017 till 2020.

The IUCN has three Programme Areas with respective Targets and Results and how it contributes to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) and CBD Aichi Targets. The work of the HSG would contribute to the "Valuing and conserving nature" Programme Area.

LK reiterated that the HSG 2017-2021 Action Plan needed to be developed and strongly urged all members to provide inputs and added that the formation of the HSG would lead to more conservation actions for hornbills thus ensuring its future as best possible. The co-chairs will play the role of peacekeepers of the HSG and that an active membership would be the core strength of the HSG. Currently, there are no fixed quota for ordinary Members, but the HSG needs 'active' Members – those who can contribute positively and not join the HSG for any other purpose.

Aparajita Datta (AD) summarized the achievements to date by the current HSG, which are:

- Creation of the HSG logo
- Submitted the 2017 annual report to IUCN SSC
- Drafted the framework for the HSG website (still work in progress)
- Established the HSG Steering Committee
- Established the HSG Advisory Committee
- Publication of the Helmeted Hornbill Action Plan (this work pre-dates the HSG and was co-ordinated by the Helmeted Hornbill Working Group which includes some of the SC members and Co-Chairs)
- Preparing a CITES Proposal (70% complete) for African hornbills with plans to submit by the next May 2019 CITES COP in Sri Lanka.
- Populated the HSG with new Members (136 individuals - 16 Africa, 101 Asia, 14 Europe/USA) from 29 countries.

Pilai Poonswad (PP) said that the HSG needed more participation and Members from the Indochinese countries particularly Myanmar, Laos, Vietnam and Cambodia. Divya Mudappa (DM) suggested that the HSG should data-mine the eBird database to see who are contributing hornbill data.

## **DEFINING SSC HSG'S QUADRENNIUM (2017-2020) PRIORITIES**

LK presented the priorities for several Asian hornbill species – 3 CR and 3 EN, but none for the African hornbills for the time being. She also informed the SC members that the new Red Data List is due to be published in November 2018. AD and LK outlined seven potential SSG HSG activities (with timeline) for the quadrennium for discussion and decision. They are the following:

1. Support the International Hornbill Conference in 2021 in Bhutan (2021)

2. Increase African membership (2020)
3. Two newsletters per year (2020)
4. Website and social media established and maintained (2018)
5. Prioritise species requiring formal conservation plans (2019)
6. Annual regional capacity building workshops (2020)
7. Initiate an action plan workshop for the Critically Endangered Sulu Hornbill (2019)

The seven proposed actions should generate three impacts within the quadrennial workplan:

- Have definitive conservation plans for all CR and EN species, (Asia and Africa), with implementation agencies supported by HSG to meet targets.
- Initiate and develop an African hornbill conservation network.
- Conservation planning + Indigenous Knowledge Systems – the way to ensure cultural data considered and used in designing bespoke conservation actions where the threats are anthropogenic in nature.

The Co-Chairs expect the implementation of the HSG 2017-2020 Workplan to contribute strongly to the CBD Aichi Targets and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) targets.

### **HSG HOST INSTITUTIONS**

The co-chairs and members shared and discussed ideas and concerns about appointing host institution/s. The Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with host organizations will have clauses that address these concerns.

### **IDENTIFYING ACTION PRIORITIES FOR CR, EN, VU AND DD SPECIES**

The SC the discusses priorities for conservation research and action with the focus unanimously decided to be for the Critically Endangered (CR) and Endangered (EN) hornbill species. The plans are as follows:

#### **Sulu Hornbill (CR)**

KB shared that some short-term work has been conducted on this species in the past by different stakeholders, but this work has not been consolidated and has been done by various organizations without a cohesive plan. A primary concern in this area was the safety of conservation workers/researchers as the Sulu Hornbill population is located in a high-risk security area in the Philippines. Nonetheless, conservation actions are urgently needed for this species as the wild population numbers have declined catastrophically to date since this issue surfaced more than a decade ago. KB further advised that future work for this hornbill needs to be consolidated and clear leadership (by the HSG) was required.

The SC members concurred that an Emergency Action Plan (EAP) and funds are needed to address this situation. To develop the EAP, a planning workshop should take place in Manila potentially in Q1/2019 (March). Ng Bee Choo (NBC) was requested by the HSG to help organize this workshop.

#### **Helmeted Hornbill (CR)**

Yok Yok Hadiprakarsa (YH) provided some more recent positive updates related to Helmeted Hornbill conservation in Indonesia. Law enforcement has been strengthened resulting in less poaching by the locals. Legal penalties for killing Helmeted Hornbills were strongly communicated to all segments of Indonesian society. Confiscated casques were put to good use for research instead of being destroyed by the authorities. Surveys in Kalimantan are in the pipeline. More local NGOs such as Planet Indonesia have started doing Helmeted Hornbill work. WCS Indonesia Programme helped push for the National Helmeted Hornbill Action Plan. LIPI (Lembaga Ilmu Pengetahuan Indonesia/ Indonesian Institute of Sciences) and HKUST (Hong Kong University of Science and Technology) are extracting DNA material from confiscated stockpile for research. Rangkong Indonesia is collaborating

with Cornell Lab of Ornithology on a campaign and working with NCF on a project. In West Kalimantan, the Bukit Baka-Bukit Raya National Park authorities are planning to build a research station for Helmeted Hornbill.

Vijak Chimchome (VC) shared some plans for Thailand. They hoped to conduct a repeat census in Hala-Bala Wildlife Sanctuary and Bang Lang National Park on Helmeted Hornbills. Prior to this, they would be re-examining past data and survey methods with intentions to improve them. However, securing funding to operationalize this activity is being considered. PP informed that HRF and DNP (Dept. of National Parks, Wildlife and Plant Conservation, Thailand) have conducted a hornbill training workshop in May 2018 in Khao Yai and Budo Su-ngai Padi National Parks for more than 30 trainees.

Yeap Chin Aik (YCA) shared priorities for Peninsular Malaysia. The Belum-Temengor Forest Complex and other Important Hornbill Landscapes (IHL) would be given primary attention. For Sarawak, the Sarawak Forestry Corp (SFC) is now working with HRF/THP on hornbill conservation in Lanjak-Entimau Wildlife Sanctuary. For Sabah, most work is being done in the Kinabatangan wetlands region.

### **Rufous-headed Hornbill (CR) (including the Visayan/EN and Mindoro/EN Hornbills)**

The SC members recognized that they were unable to provide any new updates on work for this species. AD suggested that the HSG could check with Dr. JC Gonzalez for possible updates. KB suggested HSG to meet with DENR, Filipino NGOs, relevant Universities and/or key persons who are currently working on this species to obtain current information and overview on the population's status and what work has currently been done on these species.

### **Wrinkled Hornbill (Possible uplisting to CR)**

KB shared that based on current assessment in the BirdLife Red List process, this species is likely to be 'upgraded' to EN (and perhaps even CR) from Near-Threatened (NT). However, much is still unknown about their ecological and conservation needs. AD and LK suggested that a desktop review be conducted for this species involving published and grey literature on this species in respective range countries (Malaysia, Brunei, Thailand, Indonesia) as much as possible. A six-month deadline (April 2019) was identified for this action. The results of this desktop assessment would be used to help conservation planning for this species.

### **Narcondam Hornbill (EN)**

DM briefed the SC members on past conservation/research efforts on the species in the early nineties which pointed to a stable population. However, it was later threatened by plans to install a military outpost on the island but the plans did not materialize as the then Indian government was advised otherwise. There has been no diversion of the habitat for this proposed project. A recent study by Dr. Manchi and visits by some bird watchers have indicated that the habitat seems fine and regenerating well after successful and complete removal of goats. Poaching of hornbills by the local police has stopped due to several measures. The earlier proposal to establish a large radio station, although not sanctioned yet, remains a cause for concern in the future. The recent study and reports from visitors also indicates that there are rats and two cats on the island. Since we are aware of the damage that can be caused by these mammals on islands, it would be good to advise removal at the earliest possible time. AD pointed out the need to work with the government and/or local administrator in addressing conservation issues for this species. The most recent study indicates that the population is growing. In the light of this, the administration is apparently keen to establish a small population on one of the main islands, in an aviary kind of set up as an insurance or back-up population and for tourism purpose.

### **Possible Uplisting of Conservation Status of Hornbill Species**

The global conservation status of several Sundaic hornbill species (Rhinoceros, Black, Wreathed, Bushy-crested, White-crowned and Great hornbill) are expected to be uplisted from the current status in November 2018 in the recent round of IUCN Red List assessment.

For the proposed uplisted hornbills i.e. Rhinoceros (NT > VU), Black (NT > VU), Wreathed (LC > VU), White-crowned (NT > EN), Great (NT > VU) and Bushy-crested (LC > NT) and other “Vulnerable” status hornbills would be given the same treatment as for Wrinkled Hornbill (see above).

AD informed the SC members that the official assessment by BirdLife International is done every four years. However, if the species has experienced critical declines in a short period, its status can be reviewed and uplisted (if needed) quickly and need not wait for four years. The next comprehensive review will be conducted in 2020.

In doing the species status summaries, LK remarked that post-graduate students could help as part of their literature review. KB suggested assessors to go back 50 to 55 years where possible.

Questions arose on the need to create a new or use existing app for the HSG to promote citizen science. YH indicated support for the latter. For example, perhaps the HSG could work with the eBird administrators on how eBird could also help harness hornbill distribution data. LK supported the exploration of this idea as it also fits into HSG’s mandate to build relationship with potential stakeholders that could help advance hornbill conservation.

### **FORMATION OF WORKING GROUPS**

The need and plan for formation of new Working Groups apart from the existing HHWG was discussed. The group supported “holistic *ex-situ* management” which will cover trade, rehabilitation, confiscation and reintroduction. KB was appointed as Co-ordinator for the *Ex Situ* Conservation Management WG.

LK asked if the SSC HSG needed to create a WG for all CR species. NBC suggested that for some hornbills instead of species-specific WG, one could lump all into a geographical-specific WG instead to avoid over-draining limited HSG resources. For example, the ‘Sundaic group’ could consist of RH, WR, WK, WCH, BCH and BH. This approach could be applied on Philippine hornbills as well, with the exception of the Sulu Hornbill due to its dire situation. The Co-Chairs requested NBC to lead the effort with respect to the Sulu hornbill and the Co-Chairs will seek funding to operationalize it. The HSG would like to appoint a Filipino SC member who would then be ‘responsible’ for Philippine hornbills. A “Philippine Hornbills WG” would be created and the Sulu Hornbill working group would be subsumed herein.

LK asked the group on the need for additional WGs. Four more WGs were identified and their respective Co-ordinators (and some WG members) appointed. They are:

- Red Listing WG (AD as Coordinator, DM as member),
- *Ex-situ* Conservation Management (KB as Co-ordinator)
- *In-situ* Conservation Management WG (LK as Co-ordinator)
- Research & Training WG (VC as Co-ordinator),
- Sundaic Hornbills WG (YH as Co-ordinator).

Apart from this, there is already an existing Working Group which pre-dates the establishment of the IUCN Hornbill Specialist Group.

- The Helmeted Hornbill WG (Drs. Anuj Jain and Jessica Lee/Co-Coordinators).

The Co-Chairs remarked that all WGs would report to the SC. The respective WG Co-ordinators/Co-Coordinator can decide on its own membership. Total WGs identified currently was six – Philippines hornbills, Sundaic hornbills, *Ex-situ* conservation management, *In-situ* conservation management, Research & Training and Red-Listing WG.

### **FRIENDS OF HSG**

Currently HSG has a “Friends of the Hornbill” category, the “Friends” are not Members of the HSG but individuals who would like to support in different capacities. HSG would benefit from having such group which could comprise of donors, communication experts, etc. as the HSG needed diverse skills to succeed. Discussions also touched on how to populate the “Friends” subcategory (Citizen Science, Communication, Funding, Awareness, Communications) under Members.

### **HSG WEBSITE**

For developing the new HSG website NCF used Wordpress to build the site using the model of the websites of the Heron Specialist Group/Stork, Ibis and Spoonbill Specialist Groups. Many themes are available free but have limited functionality. A paid theme/template was chosen with help from NCF’s communications manager.

SC members reviewed the website and suggested adding **DONATE** tab, change **NEWS** tab into ‘**CONSERVATION**’. **ABOUT** tab - For “Partners”, we needed to define who they are before listing or putting their logo on website.

### **HSG’s MISSION STATEMENT AND VISION**

The following Mission Statement was drafted during the meeting.

*“The Hornbill Specialist Group aims to use our combined knowledge and skills for evidence-based conservation action of hornbills and their habitats.”*

The following Vision was drafted *“A world where all hornbill species thrive in viable, wild populations in secure habitat because people cherish them.”*

### **INTERNATIONAL HORNBILL CONFERENCE**

LK briefed the SC members on the IHC (every 4 years) and its history. She asked the SC members if IHC ought to be once every 3 years. The merits of the proposal were discussed recognizing the challenges in resources needed in organizing such event. The Co-Chairs also suggested that the proposal could benefit students in presenting their (hornbill) work given that four years is too long. According to NBC, the host usually secures the conference venue and sponsorship of key speakers. The current conference duration is three full days. Additional activities i.e. workshops would be additional days.

- SC members agreed to organise the IHC every 3 years.
- The IHC can be linked to training programmes
- Low cost to encourage local student participation

### **TRAINING & CAPACITY BUILDING, FIELD PROTOCOLS**

The Co-Chairs tackled the question of training. They asked VC to provide their experiences in organizing training workshops in Khao Yai NP in May 2018 so that the HSG could draw some lessons and form a new training framework. VC continued that the training can be scheduled (once a year) or by-demand. Each training workshop could accommodate about 30 participants at the estimated cost of USD500/person for 10 days. Khao Yai National Park would be the venue for hands-on hornbill conservation field training. The training period would coincide with the hornbills’ peak nesting period as well which is between April and May. However, it could also be used for non-field training as well but related to hornbills.

AD shared that India could also pitch in with some training in data analysis/science skills /writing workshop. There are Indian ecologists that can be part of this initiative. There could also be field training workshops at a suitable site in India, if needed for some Asian participants. This can be another ‘field option’ to Khao Yai. In this discussion, priority countries identified for training in Khao Yai were Myanmar, Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam, Sri Lanka, Bhutan, China and countries in Africa.

AD expressed concern that in several sites where there is long-term hornbill research/conservation, there is many years of data but much remains unpublished. The idea of some way of assisting groups in writing up and publishing, either own or in a collaborative manner was discussed. LK suggested that discussions had been species-focused and on research, she also wanted to see more ‘conservation action’ focused (can also include chapter in training manual). An existing training manual developed by the Thailand Hornbill Project/Hornbill Research Foundation needs to be updated and modified for current needs. Dr. Vijak Chimchome/NBC were asked to share a soft copy format.

## **HSG COMMUNICATIONS**

The Co-Chairs listed some suggested communication platforms for HSG discussion.

### **HSG Website**

The SC members concurred that a weekly news feed can be shared on the website. NBC would be the person in charge. The HSG recognized the need to seek more input into making the HSG website more effective communication-wise.

### **“Newsletter/Bulletin”**

AD broached the subject of the HSG publishing a ‘journal-like’ publication. This publication was also following the footsteps of other SSC species groups in providing a platform for quality publication (newsletters/bulletins) that does not qualify for full journal requirements for its members. This was also hoped to capture hornbill-related information. The HSG aimed for one publication a year.

### **Social media**

SC members had a lively discussion on the best approach to harness the power of social media. The SC members concurred that HSG would use Facebook for ‘soft communication’ purposes. Facebook can be used to share existing articles, member organisation news and news articles. The HSG Facebook group would be a closed group. HSG would add all Members into this group or send a ‘Please Join’ request.

The use of Instagram and Twitter were also raised but no decision was made of its use. YH suggested to HSG that we could run a survey among the Members to decide what social media platform is useful to them.

## **AFRICAN HORNBILL CONSERVATION WORK**

LK presented a quick scenario for African hornbill conservation work. She indicated strong interest to research Northern Ground Hornbill but continue to face tremendous challenges in Africa. Situation for some species are bad but lack of resources (humans/finance) and capacity (skilled locals) are preventing advances in hornbill conservation in Africa in general. Hornbill conservation in this continent is very behind Asia.

### **29<sup>th</sup> August 2018 (DAY 4)**

The HSG Steering Committee attended the official launch for “Hornbill Management and Conservation Programme” event in Bangkok, hosted by the Department of National Parks, Wildlife & Plant Conservation. AD as the HSG Co-Chair introduced very briefly the HSG and its planned work to

the audiences. Dr. Anuj Jain (Co-Coordinator, Helmeted Hornbill Working Group) summarized the HH Action Plan and officially launched the document. The officials of the Department indicated their interest and plans for a National Action Plan for 13 species of hornbills in Thailand. Several other representatives/scientists from various organizations spoke about aspects of hornbill research and conservation.

## SUPPORTED BY:



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