

IUCN HSG Update and Activities

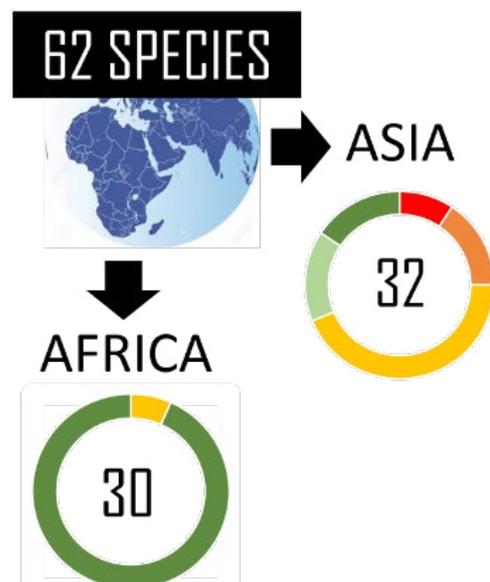
The IUCN Hornbill Specialist Group, which existed in the eighties, was revived because the plight of hornbills continues to deteriorate, with various additional species becoming threatened and a growing number, nationally and globally becoming Endangered, several of them Critically.

The proposal to re-establish the IUCN Hornbill Specialist Group was accepted in late 2017 and the Group was formed in November 2017. The objectives of the IUCN Hornbill Specialist Group (HSG) is to provide leadership for the conservation of all 62 hornbill species (32 in Asia, 30 in Africa), determine and review on a continuing basis the status and needs of hornbills, and promote the implementation of necessary research, conservation and management programmes by appropriate organizations and governments, make known the status and conservation needs of hornbills, and promote the wise management of hornbill species. The Hornbill Specialist Group can also facilitate better networking and training to encourage further research to understand the status, distribution and biology of hornbills across range countries.

Currently, three species are listed as Critically Endangered, five as Endangered, 16 as Vulnerable, five as Near Threatened and 33 as Least Concern. Most of the 24 hornbill species under the three threatened categories occur in the Asian region and by calling on the expertise and experience of local and regional experts, the group will be able to access the political, social and economic support that will enable activation of priority and positive interventions in support of threatened species. Many of the African species currently listed as Least Concern need more updated data and studies to ascertain their current status. The Hornbill Special-

ist Group can also facilitate better networking and training to encourage further research to understand the status, distribution and biology of hornbills across range countries.

We identified seven SSC HSG targets/activities for the 2017-2020 quadrennium.



These were:

1. Website and social media established and maintained (2018-19);
2. Initiate an action plan workshop for the Critically Endangered Sulu Hornbill (2019);
3. Prioritise species requiring formal conservation plans (2019). We will ensure we have achieved this for the CR and EN species within this quadrennium;
4. Annual regional capacity building workshops (2020);
5. Support the International Hornbill Conference in 2021 in Bhutan (2021);
6. Increase African membership (2020);

Our vision and mission



A world where all hornbill species thrive in viable, wild populations in secure habitat because people cherish them.



The HSG aims to **use our combined knowledge and skills for evidence-based conservation action of hornbills and their habitats.**

Activities undertaken/milestones

7. One or two newsletters per year (2020).

This will allow for sharing of projects and data that may not reach formal peer-reviewed journals.

Membership

Since the Hornbill SG was formed, we have established a membership of 142 members from 29 countries (18 from Africa, 106 from Asia and 18 from Europe/USA).

Secretariat and governance

We appointed an Advisory group (4 members) and a Steering Committee (9 members) for the IUCN HSG based on the needs of the group. Apart from the two co-Chairs of the IUCN SSC Hornbill Specialist Group, there are seven Steering Committee members. These include Dr. Koen Brouwer, Dr. Divya Mudappa, Mr. Yok-yok Hadiprakarsa, Dr. Vijak Chimchome, Mr. Yeap Chin Aik, Mr. Paul Schutz and Dr. JC Gonzalez. The Advisory Board members are Dr. Alan Kemp, Dr. Pilai Poonswad, Dr. Margaret Kinnaird and Dr. Tim O'Brien based on their long-standing experience/expertise and interest in hornbills. Ms. Bee Choo Strange has helped facilitate the work of the HSG and worked in a volun-

tary capacity as the Program officer for the group. Sophie Neller is now supporting this role.

- 1st Steering Committee meeting of the IUCN SSC Hornbill Specialist Group: (Bangkok, 26th to 28th August 2018).
- Supported by Wildlife Reserves Singapore & Disney 2nd Steering Committee meeting of the IUCN SSC Hornbill Specialist Group (Bangalore, 16th – 18th May 2019). Supported fully by Wildlife Reserves Singapore.



Communications

Website:

Our website was established in 2018: <http://www.iucnhornbills.org/> and is a work-in-progress. Please submit ideas or materials to enable us to build a central go-to place for all things hornbill.

Social media:

Facebook page – ‘IUCN Hornbill Specialist Group’ was established in 2018, which was initially open only to HSG members, but has subsequently been made a public group. Currently it has 697 members which continues to grow daily. Eric Kowalczyk, formerly of the Woodland Park Zoo and Friend of the HSG acts as Admin for the group along with the Co-Chairs. This is a Facebook group for Hornbills created and moderated by the IUCN Hornbill Specialist Group. It will be used for sharing updates, announcements, news, information related to both in-situ and ex-situ hornbill research and conservation in Asia and Africa. It is aimed at increasing public awareness, knowledge, interest and love for hornbills.

Newsletter - A newsletter called ‘**Hornbill Natural History and Conservation**’ established. Articles were solicited from HSG members in August 2019. The Editorial Committee consists of Dr. Tim O’Brien, Dr. Divya Mudappa, Dr. Shankar Raman, and Dr. Jarryd Alexander reviewed the submitted articles.

Listserve: We also established a ‘Hornbill SG Network’ Googlegroups listserv in February 2019 for internal member communications/discussions and sharing of information. 119 members have joined this listserv. Any member can post, share and initiate discussions.

We are in the process of developing a com-

munications plan/strategy for the HSG both for internal member engagement and communications, and for external communications and conservation messaging. Other social media accounts on Twitter and Instagram would be opened after a strategy is in place.

Working groups

- There are two active Working groups – the Helmeted Hornbill Working Group and the Southern Ground Hornbill Working Group – both of which pre-date the formation of the HSG. The Helmeted Hornbill Working Group works closely with the HSG and is coordinated by Anuj Jain (Birdlife) and Jessica Lee (WRS). We have planned five other Working Groups (Philippines Hornbill WG, In-situ Conservation Management WG, Ex-situ Conservation Management WG, Research & Training WG, Red-Listing WG) that are yet to be established. However, review and work for updating IUCN Redlist assessments for species has been underway by reaching out to HSG members without the formal establishment of the proposed Red-Listing Working Group.

Conservation action plans

- Launched IUCN SSC CPSG-led 10-year **Helmeted Hornbill Action Plan** (Bangkok, 29th August 2018)
- The IUCN SSC Hornbill Specialist Group took the lead in initiating the planning for the **Sulu Hornbill Conservation Action Workshop** (Manila, 4th – 6th March 2019). The workshop was carried out in partnership with IUCN SSC Conservation Planning Specialist Group (CPSG), and partner organizations (Philippines Biodiversity Conservation Foundation, Inc., Birding Adventure Philippines, Hornbill Research Foundation). The workshop was supported by Wildlife Reserves Singapore, USAID and CPSG.

Red-list assessments

- Updated Red List assessments underway with two interns, supported by Chester Zoo, Dr Kathryn Gamble and Milwaukee Zoo, in both Africa and Asia working to reassess a number of lesser-known species to ensure all species have the most accurate conservation status possible, to enable swift and prioritized conservation action for the most threatened. The species factsheets are also being reviewed and updated by reaching out to our network of members.

Upcoming

- A proposal for listing the African *Ceratogymna* spp. hornbills as Appendix II is underway.
- There will be both a dedicated Symposium on African hornbills, and a conservation status round-table discussion, at the Pan-African Ornithological Conference in November 2020, Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe.
- We are currently fund-raising for preliminary research on the Northern Ground Hornbill in three study-sites: Chad, Benin and Ethiopia to enable a conservation planning workshop to take place.

Financial

- To date, the HSG has raised \$ 32,000. This includes the support for the meetings and workshops mentioned above. This includes an internal IUCN grant of \$3500 announced in August 2019 for supporting communications/outreach and some support for program officer.

- Wildlife Reserves Singapore has provided a major part of the support for the HSG activities till date and from April 2020 onwards has committed to providing annual support for the HSG activities for 3 years. We are very happy to state that Wildlife Reserves Singapore will be the host institution for the HSG.

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Acknowledgments

All of us are working in a voluntary capacity for the HSG and so we thank all of you, the members, our Advisory board, the Steering Committee, the Editorial Board of the newsletter and those in the IUCN SSC Chair and their office for their support as we find our feet and gather momentum. The key partner organizations who have supported the activities/work undertaken thus far are the Mabula Ground Hornbill Project, Nature Conservation Foundation, Wildlife Reserves Singapore, Hornbill Research Foundation, Rangkong Indonesia, Attica Zoological Park, Malaysian Nature Society, Disney Animal Kingdom, Kaset-

sart University, EAZA Hornbill Tag, Maguari One-Zoo & Wildlife Consultants, and the Wildlife Conservation Society. Individuals from several other institutions such as TRAFFIC, Chester Zoo, North Carolina Zoo, Philippines Biodiversity Conservation Foundation Inc. (PBCFI), Birdlife International, Talarak Foundation, Milwaukee Zoo, Dr Kathryn Gamble, and especially the IUCN SSC Conservation Planning Specialist Group have also helped tremendously during the conservation action planning workshops and/or participated/worked in collaboration with the HSG in the last 2 years.