

Southern Ground-Hornbill (*Bucorvus leadbeateri*)

The Southern Ground-Hornbill (SGH) is an apex predator and is one of nine African savanna hornbill species. The bird has immense cultural value, known as the *rain bird* or *thunder bird* locally. Growing anthropogenic threats along with several of the SGH's life history traits, such as a long life span, cooperative breeding, and large spatial requirements make it vulnerable to extinction. Though it has national protection in South Africa, SGH populations continue to decline.

The species is listed as Vulnerable on the [IUCN Red List](#).



Photo: Mike Jordan



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Key Actions

In 2017, the Southern Ground-Hornbill Population and Habitat Viability Assessment (PHVA) Workshop was held in South Africa. Participants divided into three working groups: Conservation Status Working Group, Range-wide Working Group, and Risk Assessment Working Group. The working groups established the following priorities.

Immediate conservation priorities for South Africa

1. Elevate the conservation profile for the SGH at the national level by ensuring that a Biodiversity Management Plan (BMP) for the species is compiled in conjunction with the Department of Environment Affairs.
2. Establish Project Thunderbird as a more formal grouping of SGH stakeholders than the current Action Group to ensure swift action on PHVA recommendations.
3. Roll-out the monitoring plan already established for Ezemvelo KwaZulu-Natal Wildlife across the country to all relevant provincial authorities.
4. Establish a national poison forum with other stakeholders to address wildlife poisoning beyond those focused on ground-hornbills.
5. Establish a national anti-lead ammunition forum with other stakeholders to address lead toxicosis beyond those focused on ground-hornbills.
6. Characterize and expand cultural protection as it is currently manifested in South Africa.

Priorities for other range-states

1. Range-state champions/partners should be identified for each range-state.
2. The participants of this PHVA should collate a Conservation Tool Kit for other range-states to use as a basis for ensuring the species can be monitored and protected by summarizing all the currently available knowledge, including both positive and negative results.
3. A meta-analysis should assess where cultural protection holds and where it is not applicable across the range-wide population.

Full workshop report available at: <http://www.cpsg.org/content/southern-ground-hornbill-phva>

Workshop organizers: Mabula Ground Hornbill Project, IUCN SSC Conservation Planning Specialist Group, IUCN SSC Conservation Genetics Specialist Group

Workshop sponsors: Disney Conservation Fund and Mabula Private Game Reserve