



## MEDIA RELEASE

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### BIRD OF THE YEAR 2020

BirdLife South Africa is pleased to announce that the Bird of the Year in 2020 will be the Southern Ground-Hornbill *Bucorvus leadbeateri*.

The Southern Ground-Hornbill, the largest hornbill species, is well known to many South Africans, especially those who visit the Kruger National Park. It is found in the Savanna Biome, but is now mainly restricted to protected areas and a few rural grazing lands in KwaZulu-Natal and the Eastern Cape. This hornbill is listed as Endangered in South Africa with fewer than 1 500 adults remaining in our country. Half of these occur in the Kruger National Park. It is threatened by habitat alteration, especially the loss of large trees, afforestation of grasslands, poisoning and electrocution.

Sometimes known as the “Thunderbird” or the “Rain Bird” it is believed by many indigenous cultures to be an important symbol of the start of the seasonal rains.

The birds live in social, cooperatively breeding groups that consist of between 2-9 birds (the average group size is 3.6), but with only one alpha pair (male and female) per group and the rest of the group consisting of helper males.

The Mabula Ground Hornbill Project, a BirdLife Species Guardian, does important work to conserve the Southern Ground-Hornbill.

During 2020, BirdLife South Africa, in collaboration with the Mabula Ground Hornbill Project, will create awareness about the Southern Ground-Hornbill through the production of an informative poster, the development of learning resources for schools that are free to download from the BirdLife South Africa website ([www.birdlife.org.za](http://www.birdlife.org.za)), articles in *African Birdlife* magazine, social media posts, presentations to interested groups, and the sale of merchandise.

The Hans Hoheisen Charitable Trust is the sponsor of Bird of the Year 2020.

**End**

**For further information and for photographs, please contact:** Dr Melissa Howes-Whitecross, 011-789-1122, [melissa.whitecross@birdlife.org.za](mailto:melissa.whitecross@birdlife.org.za)

**Notes for the editor:**

1. BirdLife South Africa strives to conserve birds, their habitats and biodiversity through scientifically-based programmes, through supporting the sustainable and equitable use of natural resources and by encouraging people to enjoy and value nature.
2. BirdLife South Africa contact details: Isdell House, 17 Hume Road, Dunkeld West 2196, Gauteng; Private Bag X16, Pinegowrie 2123, Johannesburg, Gauteng, South Africa, Tel. +27-11-7891122, Fax. +27-11-7895188, e-mail address: [info@birdlife.org.za](mailto:info@birdlife.org.za), website: [www.birdlife.org.za](http://www.birdlife.org.za)
3. Information about Bird of the Year can be obtained at <https://www.birdlife.org.za/what-we-do/environmental-education/bird-of-the-year-2019/>
4. Information about the Mabula Ground Hornbill Project's work can be obtained at <http://ground-hornbill.org.za>