

The Malayan Nature Journal • Vol 67 Part 2 • June 2015

- Vol 67 Part 2
- June 2015
- KDN PP 1933/04/2013 {032226}
- ISSN (032226)



Publication of the
MALAYSIAN NATURE SOCIETY

PROCEEDINGS OF THE 6TH INTERNATIONAL HORNBILL CONFERENCE
MANILA, 24 - 26 APRIL 2013



HORNIBILLS AND CARING COMMUNITIES:
HELPING FORESTS TO THRIVE

WILLEM VAN DE VEN, CHLOE TAN & YEAP CHIN AIK (EDS.)



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FOREWORD
THE 6TH INTERNATIONAL HORNBILL CONFERENCE, MANILA
24 - 26 April, 2013

The 61 currently recognised species of hornbills in the avian order Bucerotiformes occur across Africa and Asia, but it is especially appropriate for two reasons that this International Hornbill Conference should have been held in the Philippines. First, the Philippines support 10 hornbill species, all of them endemic to these islands, and among them are the most threatened of all hornbill species (two Critically Endangered, two Endangered, one Vulnerable and two Near Threatened). Second, the Philippines is now home to the world's leading expert on hornbill systematics and evolution, 'JC' Gonzalez, and his paper that opens these proceedings informs us of at least three newly-recognised species of Philippine hornbill and the heightened levels of endangerment that these bring to this special regional avifauna.

This focus on a particular region of Asian hornbills is also in keeping with the strong representation of Asian delegates at the conference, since most of the other threatened hornbill species also occur in Asia (one Endangered, six Vulnerable, 11 Near Threatened), with the exception of three Vulnerable African species of which only the Southern Ground Hornbill was discussed by an American and the only two African delegates. Understandably, such a continental imbalance in concern about hornbill conservation is also reflected in the venues of conferences past (thrice in Thailand and once each in South Africa, Singapore and Philippines respectively) and future (Malaysia), with the Indian subcontinent an obvious candidate for later.

All species of Asian hornbills are rainforest-dwelling species and, since rainforests generally occur in warm, moist and productive habitats, these areas also support dense human populations. Asian rainforests occur mostly in patches, spread across continental areas and especially across the various chains of islands and peninsulae in the region. This makes the forests and their hornbills especially vulnerable to developmental pressures, most obviously so on the scattered and relatively small islands of the densely populated Philippines. In contrast, African hornbill species all occur on a single landmass, with most species spread across several countries, but even here it is among the rainforest species that most endangerment is emerging.

The 13 full papers included in this conference proceedings cover, between them, national assessments (2), local studies of particular species (5), novel regional conservation approaches (3), in and ex situ management skills (2) and particular threats (1).

Hopefully, all these efforts will stem the strong tides flowing against hornbills, especially in rainforests and mainly in Asia. Hornbills are spectacular and emblematic birds, deserving of our protection, their evolution and classification are now more comprehensively understood than for any other avian group, and innovative conservation approaches are continually being developed to redress their decline. May this conference's proceedings further accelerate their conservation, so that by the next conference in Sarawak we can report even more progress.

ALAN KEMP
Pretoria, South Africa
February 2014

CONTENTS

An assessment on artificial nest construction for hornbills in Budo-Sungai Padi National Park, Thailand	<i>Chakorn Pasuwan, Sura Pattanakiat, Charlie Navanugraha, Vijak Chimchome, Sittichai Madsri, Phuvanart Rattananungsikul, Preeda Thiensongrusamee, Teerasak Boonsriroj and Pilai Poonswad</i>	100
Artificial incubation and hand rearing of Great Pied Hornbill <i>Buceros bicornis</i> following cannibalism of chicks by parents	<i>Elden Venus Gabayoyo, Minerva Bongco-Nuqui and Richielle Tamayo Avila</i>	118
Aspects of breeding biology and conservation of the Palawan Hornbill <i>Anthraceroceros marchei</i> in the Palawan Faunal Region, Philippines	<i>Peter Widmann, Indira L. Widmann, Michael F. Plazos and Rene Antonio</i>	130
Conserving the globally threatened Plain-pouched Hornbills in the Belum-Temengor Forest Complex, Peninsular Malaysia	<i>Yeap Chin Aik, Teresa Ong, Lim Kim Chye, Ravinder Kaur and Diya Rashida</i>	144
Distribution and status of Rufous-necked Hornbill <i>Aceros nipalensis</i> in Myanmar	<i>Thet Zaw Naing</i>	158
Ground-hornbills in American zoos: a case study of the challenges to <i>ex situ</i> population sustainability for conservation	<i>Roger G. Sweeney</i>	173
Observations on the breeding biology of Wrinkled Hornbill <i>Aceros corrugatus</i> Temminck, 1832 in Bala forest, Narathiwat, Thailand	<i>Sunate Karapan, Likhit Waiprom, Songwit Desrirai, Ariya Dejtaradol and Vijak Chimchome</i>	182
Philippine hornbills' conservation status: problems and prospects	<i>Juan Carlos T. Gonzalez and William L.R. Oliver</i>	187
Protecting a hornbill haven: a community-based conservation initiative in Arunachal Pradesh, northeast India	<i>Amruta Rane and Aparajita Datta</i>	203
Sarawak hornbill conservation initiatives – engaging the society	<i>Oswald Braken Tisen, Sim Lee Khengland Francis Gombek</i>	219
Studies on the status, distribution, habitat ecology and strategic planning for conservation of Malabar Pied Hornbill <i>Anthroceros coronatus</i> Central India	<i>Gajanan A. Wagh, Jayant Wadatar and Raju M. Kasambe</i>	228
The breeding biology of the Great Hornbill <i>Buceros bicornis</i> , Rhinoceros Hornbill <i>Buceros rhinoceros</i> and Helmeted Hornbill <i>Rhinoplax vigil</i> in the Temengor Forest Reserve, Perak, Malaysia	<i>Ravinder Kaur, Sanjitpaal Singh and Abdul Hamid Ahmad</i>	240
Trade of 'captive-bred' birds from the Solomon Islands: a closer look at the global trade in hornbills	<i>Vincent Nijman and Chris R. Shepherd</i>	258

Malayan Nature Journal

Volume 67(2) June 2015

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Printed by United Selangor Press, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

KDN PP 1933/04/2013 - ISSN (032226)

MALAYAN NATURE JOURNAL

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Barlow, H.S. 1982. *An Introduction to the Moths of Southeast Asia*. Kuala Lumpur: Malaysian Nature Society.

Ng, P.K.L. 1990. The freshwater crabs and prawns of Singapore. In *Essays in Zoology*, ed. Chou, L.M. and Ng, P. K. L. Singapore: National University of Singapore, pp 189-204.

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