

# **2019 Helmeted Hornbill Working Group (HHWG) Updates for IUCN**

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## **A. Research Subgroup Updates**

Several rapid assessments and detailed surveys were undertaken in the range countries.

### **POPULATION & DISTRIBUTION**

Hornbill population and occupancy survey were conducted at –

1. Kapuas Hulu in West Kalimantan, Indonesia conducted by Rangkong Indonesia.
2. A protected area in West Kalimantan, Indonesia by Planet Indonesia.
3. Harapan forest, Sumatera by Burung Indonesia & BirdLife International
4. Gunung Leuser National Park and Bukit Barisan Selatan National Park, Sumatera, Indonesia by Wildlife Conservation Society.
5. Several locations in Peninsular Malaysia and Sarawak by Malaysian Nature Society & BirdLife International
6. Kinabatangan Wildlife Sanctuary in Sabah, Malaysia by HUTAN & GAIA.
7. Several locations in south Myanmar by Biodiversity & Nature Conservation Foundation & BirdLife International
8. Several locations in south Thailand by Hornbill Research Foundation, Bird Conservation Society of Thailand and BirdLife International

A new field project was initiated in Brunei by Universiti Brunei Darussalam in collaboration with BirdLife International and Wildlife Reserves Singapore.

### **GENETICS & MORPHOMETRICS**

1. A project on the morphometric characteristics and genetics of hornbills was completed in East Kalimantan, Indonesia from 2016 - 2019. Led by Jarulis of the University of Bengkulu, Sumatera – Indonesia.
2. Ongoing project on the genetics of the Helmeted Hornbill led by Hong Kong University. Faecal/feather/casque samples were collected across the range (Peninsular Malaysia, Sabah and Thailand but possibly also other locations) and locally analysed.

### **ECOLOGY**

Hornbill breeding monitoring and phenology surveys were conducted at several locations listed under the population & distribution section.

### **ENGAGING COMMUNITIES**

1. Projects on the community's perceptions of hornbill conservation were completed at several locations - Kapuas Hulu District, West Kalimantan by Rangkong Indonesia; south Myanmar by Biodiversity & Nature Conservation Foundation & BirdLife International; south Thailand by Bird Conservation Society of Thailand and BirdLife International; Sarawak by Malaysian Nature Society and BirdLife International.
2. Hornbill guardian programs were implanted by the Malaysian Nature Society in Belum-Temengor forest complex, Malaysia and by the Hornbill Research Foundation in Budo Sungai Padi forest, Thailand.

## **B. Trade Subgroup**

TRAFFIC launched a report on the online trade in Thailand in August 2019 (<https://www.traffic.org/publications/reports/hornbills-losing-their-heads-to-online-trade-in-thailand/>). The six-month online survey found a minimum of 236 online posts offering a minimum of 546 hornbill parts and products in 32 of the 40 groups surveyed on Facebook. These were posted over a period of 64 months, spanning June 2014 to April 2019. Helmeted Hornbill parts and products constituted 452 (83%) of all hornbill commodities recorded. 94 whole heads of eight other hornbill species—all native to and protected in Thailand—made up the rest of the hornbill commodities recorded in the survey.

TRAFFIC also conducted several online & market surveys in China and Southeast Asia. A team led by the Hong Kong University conducted surveys online & at antique shops in Hong Kong.

## **C. Pre-CITES meeting in Miri, Sarawak, Malaysia (February 2019):**

In February 2019, the Sarawak Forestry Corporation hosted a meeting in Miri (Sarawak, Malaysia) in which experts including several HHWG members (BirdLife, Malaysian Nature Society, Rangkong Indonesia, TRAFFIC, Wildlife Reserves Singapore, Wildlife Conservation Society etc.), met and revised the CITES Resolution Conference 17.11 to expand its focus of Helmeted hornbill conservation from range countries to include transit and demand countries.

## **D. CITES COP18 in Geneva, Switzerland (August 2019):**

The revised document 84 was tabled at COP 18 in Geneva on 20 August 2019 by Indonesia. Malaysia made an intervention, requesting all parties to adopt it. Several others supported the document including governments of China, USA, and the EU, besides NGOs. However, a revision was requested to be made. A working group to review the proposed amendments was made (comprising of Parties, NGOs, CITES Secretariat). We understand that they have already revised the proposed document. The new document ensures that the CITES Secretariat shall request Parties—especially the range, transit and consumer states—for the implementation of Resolution Conference 17.11 for the conservation of the Helmeted hornbill.

## **E. Recent seizures & poaching incidents (September & October 2019)**

**Thailand** - There has been recent news about the first confirmed Helmeted hornbill poaching incident in Thailand in September 2019 (<https://www.bangkokpost.com/thailand/general/1759979/urgent-action-called-for-over-hornbill-hunting>). The news generated quite a turmoil in Thai social media, even a petition was created and circulated. There has also been news about Helmeted hornbill products being sold in Thailand but fortunately, monks and celebrities have spoken against their superstitious use. We have since learned from Dr Vijak Chimchome (of the Thailand Hornbill Project) that the poacher was not specialised in Helmeted hornbill hunting and is being kept an eye on. In a positive development, Department of National Parks of Thailand has given a go-ahead for the development of national Helmeted hornbill action plan.

**Sarawak** - Some seizures in Kapit, Sarawak have also been recently made including a massive seizure in October 2019 in which 800 animal parts were confiscated

(<https://www.freemalaysiatoday.com/category/nation/2019/10/10/sarawak-forestry-discovers-hornbill-ivory-in-massive-wildlife-seizure/>). Of these, 148 were helmet like blocks believed to be from the Helmeted hornbill. We have since learned that the Sarawak Forestry Corporation has sent the samples for genetics analysis to Perhilitan, Peninsular Malaysia. We await results of the analysis to confirm whether these helmeted like blocks were Helmeted Hornbill parts.

**Indonesia** – 72 Helmeted Hornbill casques were seized in Jakarta on 17 July. Wildlife Conservation Society Indonesia team supported the government of Indonesia in this initiative. Rangkong Indonesia supported the government with the identification of casques.

#### **F. Change in trade subgroup leadership and state facilitators**

Dr. Chris Shepherd of Monitor stepped down as lead of the trade subgroup though he is still a member and contributor to HHWG. Ms. Serene Chng of TRAFFIC took over the leadership of trade subgroup with Mr. Dwi Adhiasto of WCS as the co-lead. Other leadership positions (coordinators, subgroup leads/co-leads) in the HHWG remain unchanged.

HHWG state facilitators include Mr. Lay Win for Myanmar, Mr. Somkiat Soontompitakkool (DNP) for Thailand (replaces Dr. Jiraporn Teampanpong), Md. Khusaini (Perhilitan) for Peninsular Malaysia, Mr. Oswald Braken (SFC) for Sarawak and Mr. Yok Hadiprakarsa (Rangkong Indonesia) for Indonesia.

#### **G. Stand against sensational reporting**

The media article in August on helmeted hornbills on the front cover of the *Star News* in Malaysia was an example of irresponsibly sensational reporting. While the reporters may have good intentions (raise awareness about an emerging wildlife issue), the sensational title ('WANTED! There's a price on this bird's head') and related emphasis may actually do more harm than good and lead to driving demand. The HHWG coordinators and leads felt concerned and put together a response letter which Dr Aparajita Datta, as IUCN SSC Hornbill Specialist Group Chair, sent to the Chief Editor of *Star News* highlighting our concerns. We didn't hear back. HHWG leadership urges its members to not indulge in any form of sensational reporting on Helmeted hornbill. Also, DON'T use the term 'red ivory' for Helmeted Hornbill or quote the price of the casque as much as possible.

**H. Organizations implementing the IUCN Resolution** – Refer to list of organizations in the Helmeted Hornbill action plan (2018 – 2027).

#### **I. Actions been undertaken**

- Scientific/technical activities
- Field surveys
- Market surveys
- Habitat protection
- Policy influencing & advocacy
- Fundraising
- Capacity building
- Convene stakeholders/networking
- Education/Communication/Raising awareness