



Southern Ground-Hornbill Research and Conservation Program

APNR Quarterly Report

7 October 2013



Dispersals

Sightings of dispersed birds continue to be sent in and we now have 9 dispersal records of birds ringed in the APNR appearing either with new groups within the APNR or with groups in Kruger National Park (Table 1). Four birds dispersed as sub-adults to neighbouring groups in the APNR and five into KNP. One birds, G25649 now in KNP, would have had to pass through at least 7 home ranges to reach the area where it is now frequently seen, near Singita Lebombo, Eastern KNP (Map 1, end of report). Distance dispersed as recorded in the table below was calculated by taking the straight line between the natal nest and where the bird was resighted. Interestingly, G31103 dispersed before it was two years old which suggests that this individual may be female, though sexing tests will be able to confirm this. This individual was resighted in KNP 35 km from the natal nest (Figure 1 below, and Map 2).

Table 1. Dispersal of ringed APNR birds.

Metal ring	Gender	Natal group	Dispersal distance (km)	Area sighted
G25648	M	Pitlochry	8.94	APNR
G25622	M	De Luca	12.05	APNR
G30527	M	Ntsiri	12.82	APNR
G25605	M	Senalala	13.34	APNR
G30522	F	HB	25.92	KNP
G31103	na	Ntsiri	34.74	KNP
G25608	M	Pitlochry	39.15	KNP
G25628	M	Janowski	75.77	KNP
G25649	M	Senalala	78.03	KNP



Figure 1. G31103 (Ntsiri) seen in the Letaba region of the Kruger National Park.



Figure 2. Cassie Carstens and Jani Lourens below the new Rattray cable drum nest box.

Cable drum nest boxes

A second cable-drum has been erected in the APNR (Figure 2). The new nest is situated at the same site as the old Rattray nest, KPNR, which in its old age finally broke apart. This old nest had been used previously by the group making it of importance that the new nest be placed at the same site, or as close to the old site as possible.

An artificial nest box workshop will be held in Gauteng in the middle of October to plan the way forward for a national nest box implementation scheme for use in other areas devoid of natural cavities. We will be present to guide future nest box designs and implementation using what we have learned from our nests.



Southern Ground-Hornbill Research and Conservation Program

APNR Quarterly Report

7 October 2013



Events

The Fitz hosted the Spring 2013 The Southern Ground Hornbill Action Group meeting in KPNR (Figure 3). Twenty-one members attended to discuss matters surrounding SGH conservation and research. Dr Alan Kemp presented his hypothesis of why SGH numbers have declined so rapidly in KZN over the last decade. Change in land-use has been identified as a possibility with the previous cattle farms containing more suitable foraging habitat for SGHs than current protected areas in KZN. When cattle farms were transformed into protected areas it resulted in a noticeable increase in grass height and density which could have made foraging suboptimal and the detection of ambush predators difficult. Subsequently, groups unable to forage in these reserves would have moved elsewhere leading to a decline in SGH numbers in protected areas as has been documented.

The Fitz, North-West University, EWT, Joburg Zoo, and Mabula Project all presented updates and, following a short break, final arrangements for the coming breeding season were arranged. For many it was a much-needed break from the city and thank you Colin for allowing us to use the KPNR library as the venue. Thanks also to Letitia Brits for making her artwork available of Southern Ground-Hornbills for display.



Figure 3. Attendees at the September 2013 Southern Ground Hornbill Action Group meeting.



Pvt. Bag X3, Rondebosch
 South Africa 7701
 Tel. +27 21 650-4026
 Fax +27 21 650-3295
 email: rob.little@uct.ac.za
www.fitzpatrick.uct.ac.za

Updates

- Artificial nest box workshop run by Dr Alan Kemp to take place mid-October in Gauteng.
- Ground-Hornbill nests are active with the first egg discovered this week.



Southern Ground-Hornbill Research and Conservation Program

APNR Quarterly Report

7 October 2013



Captures

Our previous attempt to catch sub-adult males again ended in disappointment as the birds proved difficult to find and harder still to lure toward the capture boma. We believe the influence of repeated call-ups may have dulled their response, or previous catching attempts during the use of harnesses may have made them wary. Nonetheless, our third attempt in September proved unsuccessful in providing a sub-adult male for the wild-release program.

For the time being no further efforts to capture sub-adults from the APNR will take place. To ensure the continuation of the wild-release program, the Mabula Project has decided to capture a sub-adult male from a group on Mabula for this purpose. This sub-adult hatched in the wild nest on Mabula and is now of a suitable age to act as a mentor for a newly established group on the release site near Thabazimbi.

Acknowledgements

We thank the landowners of the APNR, and wardens Colin Rowles, Jaques Brits, Willem Nortier, Paul White, Craig Ferguson and Mario Cesario, for their continued support and permission to work with the Ground-Hornbill groups on their properties. Special thanks to Timbavati PNR, Klaserie PNR, Tanda Tula Lodge, and Ndlopfu PNR for helping with fuel. Dow Chemicals continues its generous support of the research. Save The Elephant researchers, thank you for your sightings of SGHs in the APNR, they are always appreciated. Many APNR members and staff have been of great help, both logistically and by reporting ground-hornbill sightings. We thank one and all.

Contact the Project:

Assoc. Prof. Peter G. Ryan, Acting Director at the PFIAO. Email: pryan31@gmail.com

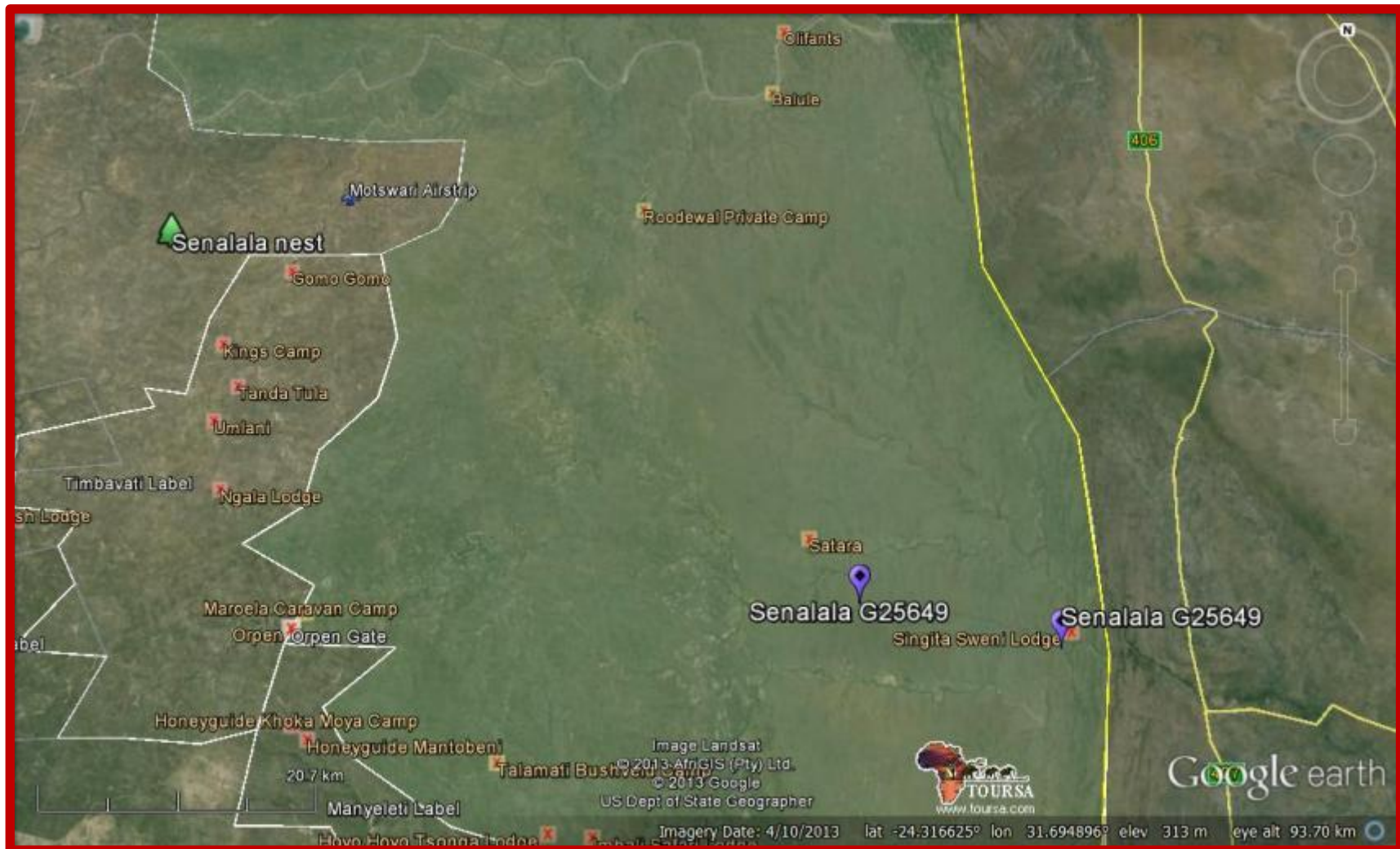
Kate Carstens, APNR Ground-Hornbill Project. Email: nghututu@gmail.com. Cell: 083 381 7555

Locations of dispersed birds relative to their natal nests

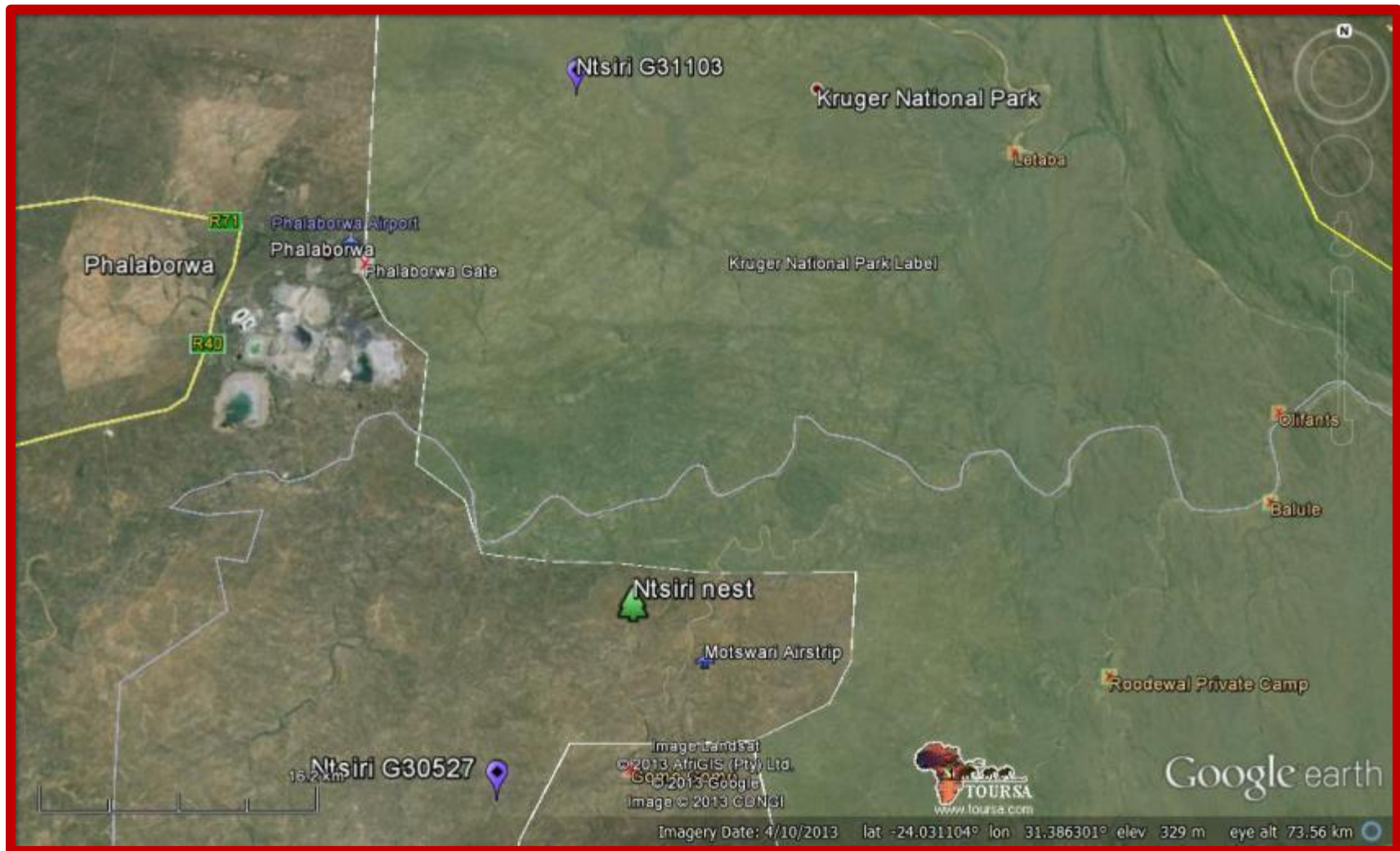
Key:

Purple pins – sighting of birds ringed in the APNR

Green tree – natal nest



Map 1. Dispersal of bird G25649 ringed as nestling in Senalala nest now frequently seen in the Singita-Lebombo region east of Satara.



Map 2. Dispersal of birds G31103 and G30527 ringed as nestlings in Ntsiri nest.