Southern Ground Hornbill (*Bucorvus leadbeateri*)

**Conservation Status:** Vulnerable

The southern ground hornbill is the largest hornbill in the world. It is a large, black, turkeylike bird with striking red skin around its eyes and down its foreneck, forming a pouch. The female has a violet patch on the throat rather than just the pure red coloration of the male. The bill is long, thick, and downward-curving, with a small protuberance on the top. Their eyes are pale yellow and their legs and plumage are black, except for a few white wing feathers, which can only be seen when in flight. Juveniles are duller in coloration, appearing browner with yellowish facial skin and brown eyes.

**Fun Facts**

1. The southern ground hornbill is the largest hornbill in the world.
2. The southern ground hornbill is long-lived, reaching 50 or even 60 years old.

**Habitat**

Woodland, grassland, and savanna.

**Diet**

Arthropods, snails, frogs, toads, snakes, hares, and tortoises; also sometimes feeds on carrion, fruits, and seeds

**Predators**

Large predators, such as leopards and crocodiles

**Behavior**

The southern ground hornbills can live as single breeding pairs but are often seen in cooperative breeding groups. These groups contain between two and eight individuals, with the dominant pair assisted by adult and immature helpers to defend a territory and rear young.

**Breeding**

Southern ground hornbills generally mate between September and December. Females will lay two eggs in a tree or cliff hollow. The first egg is generally laid three to five days before the second, and the eggs will hatch after an incubation period of about 40 days. The first chick regularly outcompetes its younger sibling, as only one chick usually survives. Chicks fledge at around 85 days old.

**Size**

Length: 1.05 m

**Weight**

2.2-6.2 kg

**Life Span:** Up to 70 years

**Incubation Period:** about 40 days

**Average number of offspring:** 2 eggs are usually laid; only one chick will generally survive.