

# MABULA

## GAME LODGE

**Mabula Game Reserve: conservation at its finest**



We're exposed to information daily about the staggering number of species that are becoming extinct and vanishing from our world forever. Thankfully, there are many responsibly and ethically operated establishments that make it their mission to nurture and support species growth. One of those establishments is the 12 000 hectare Mabula Private Game Reserve in the Waterberg, 200 kilometres from Johannesburg.

The delicate balance of the 60 species of mammals, 300 species of birds and countless plants, reptiles and insects on the reserve is carefully monitored by a team of ecologists and conservationists under the expert guidance of conservation ecologist and reserve manager Kobus Havemann.

Apart from providing guests with a five-star game viewing experience – including regular sightings of the Big 5 – the reserve participates in a number of conservation initiatives. One of these is participation in the South African Cheetah Meta-population Management Programme, which is managed by WWF to secure the growth of the cheetah population on privately owned land. Mabula has enjoyed considerable success in the programme, with their cheetah population having produced 12 cubs since their introduction in 2011. Four of those cubs – the most recent litter – are seven months old and will be relocated once they have been weaned.

“We actively seek to re-locate cubs born on the reserve to avoid the possibility of inbreeding. The Endangered Wildlife Trust keeps records of where individual cheetahs originated as well as where they are re-located to avoid the possibility of closely related individuals breeding,” explains Havemann.



Another success is the Ground Hornbill Project, which aims to slow the decline of the endangered species – of which there are only about 1 500 left in South Africa. The specialised hand-rearing facility, built in collaboration with Mpumalanga Tourism and Parks Agency, saw the successful rearing of four chicks in 2018. In addition to hand-rearing second-hatched chicks, the project rewilds hand-reared chicks; provides artificial nests where there are no means to build nests in the wild; and undertakes research into genetics and behaviour.

Havemann adds that Mabula management is considering the introduction of a larger number of sable and roan antelope – both rare in South Africa – onto the reserve, which will grant the public easier access to view these magnificent animals in their natural habitat.

A thatch rehabilitation project is also underway, which seeks to convert the current dominance that thatch grass has on the open plain areas to grazing species of a higher herbaceous biodiversity.



The reserve undertakes regular and in-depth research including game counts; vegetation surveys; monthly monitoring and testing of available water; predator prey preference studies in order to plan future game introductions; and ongoing monitoring of focus species such as elephant, rhino, cheetah and lion. The aim of this research is to maximise the condition, production and survival of all game on the reserve, and provide a secure environment for mega-herbivores and other species.

Mabula provides opportunities to get involved in the conservation aspect of the reserve. For example, guests can visit the Ground Hornbill Project or contact the reserve manager if they would like to observe or get involved in other ways.

For more information on Mabula Game Reserve or to make a booking at Mabula Game Lodge, please visit [www.mabula.com](http://www.mabula.com) or call 011 516 4367.

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