



Crane species of Namibia

BLUE CRANE (*Anthropoides / Grus paradisea*)

Red Data Book status

Globally Threatened; Critically Endangered in Namibia, population apparently in decline

Numbers

Overall: 20 000

Namibia: 35 - 60 (maximum)



Distribution and abundance - overall

- Smallest range of all the world's cranes - endemic to southern Africa, with most of its range in South Africa
- Total population of approximately 20 000
- Three separate sub-populations, with no movement between them
- Utilises grasslands and pans, croplands, pastures
- Feeds on seeds and flowers from grasses, frogs, reptiles, fish, insects
- Egg-laying between August and April, mainly September – January
- Often forages alongside Grey Crowned Crane and Wattled Crane
- Threats include poisoning, collisions with power lines, habitat loss to urbanisation, afforestation and crop farming

In Namibia

- Found in the grasslands in Etosha NP, where it breeds in wetter areas around the Pan in summer; during the dry months the cranes move to the grasslands of the Omadhiya Lakes area, north of Etosha; associated with perennial springs and isolated waterholes in these grasslands
- Found only in the above areas in Namibia; no evidence of population movement to South Africa or *vice versa*
- Not more than 80 birds estimated in late 1980s; maximum of 60 in 1996,

suggesting a possible 25% decline in 6-8 years; since 2006 no more than 35 birds have been counted – a further decline

- Distributed in groups of two to four, but in larger groups during the dry season
- The single most important site where the birds gather to roost is Andoni water hole
- Egg-laying between December and March, peak in February, 1 – 3 eggs.

Threats - why are Blue Cranes declining in Etosha?

- Low rainfall / climate changes
- Expanding human populations in northern Namibia and increasing presence of cattle in grasslands north of Etosha
- Hunting outside the Park, and collisions with fences and overhead lines
- Borehole drilling in the north may reduce permanence of Etosha's springs
- Genetic inbreeding?

Actions

- Annual total population assessments
- Colour-ringing and satellite tracking studies to determine survival, movements
- Education of local communities on the importance of Omadhiya Lakes for cranes and the negative impacts of hunting
- Maintain water levels at critical waterholes (e.g. Andoni and Twee Palms)
- Investigate genetic status

The Namibia Crane Action Plan is supported by Namibia Nature Foundation and the Environmental Investment Fund of Namibia

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Crane species of Namibia

WATTLED CRANE (*Grus carunculatus*)

Red Data Book status

Globally Threatened; Endangered in Namibia, population stable

Numbers

Overall: 8 000

Namibia: 300



Distribution and abundance - overall

- Largest and rarest crane in Africa, with an estimated total population of only 8 000
- Largely restricted to southern and central Africa - wetland areas of Zambia, DRC and the Okavango Delta - with an isolated population in Ethiopia of a few hundred birds
- Major stronghold lies in Zambia which supports c. 4 500 birds
- In southern Africa, centered on Okavango Delta in Botswana, with 1 300 birds
- Feeds on small amphibians, reptiles and mammals; insects, grain, tubers and rhizomes
- Egg-laying March – September (Okavango and Caprivi), year-round with a peak in April – September (Zimbabwe and South Africa)
- Threats include wetland degradation by drainage, damming and afforestation, direct disturbance and poisoning

In Namibia

- The Namibian population, estimated at around 300 birds, is an "overflow" of the Okavango population
- Feeds on small amphibians and tubers
- Recorded regularly in 13 wetlands

- Utilises large low-lying wetlands and swamps in northern Namibia, and ephemerally flooded pans
- Small numbers found on floodplains of Okavango, Kwando and Chobe rivers and in ephemeral pans near Tsumkwe; also Oponono, Oshituntu, Mahango, Sishika channel, Linyanti swamps
- Little is known about breeding in Namibia – only a few records

Threats

- Degradation of wetlands, though most are protected in conservancies or are remote and rarely visited by humans
- Flow regulation (e.g. proposed weirs) on major rivers
- Increased, uncontrolled tourism
- Ability to recover from natural disasters or disturbance is limited because:
 - rear only one young
 - reach sexual maturity as late as 8 or 9 years old

Actions

- Regular population assessments
- Research on movements of individuals through radio/satellite tracking
- Enhanced protection of Nyae Nyae pans in Bushmanland – a potential nursery area for subadults

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Crane species of Namibia

GREY CROWNED CRANE (*Balearica regulorum regulorum*)

Red Data Book status

Globally Endangered; Near Threatened in Namibia, population stable/decreasing

Numbers

Overall: 58 000 - 77 000

Namibia: < 50



Distribution and abundance - overall

- Occurs from southern Uganda and Kenya southwards to the Eastern Cape, S. Africa
- Found only in southern Africa and southern Angola, population estimated at 58 000 – 77 000 birds (the related Black Crowned Crane is found further to the north of Africa)
- Largely associated with wetlands but also forages in nearby dryland habitats
- Utilises the grass fringes of wetlands, feeding on frogs, reptiles, insects and also seed heads and grass tops
- Three discrete and fragmented populations, largest of about 2 800 birds found in E and NE South Africa
- Overall decline of 20% in last three generations
- Begins egg-laying in spring with a peak in December – January (South Africa); December – February (Zimbabwe)
- Threats include poisoning, wetland degradation and disturbance

In Namibia

- Utilises the grass fringes of wetlands, feeding on frogs, reptiles, insects and also seed heads and grass tops

- In Namibia found only in grasslands N of Etosha, Zambezi and Okavango rivers, rarely seen in Etosha:
 - this population was estimated at < 50 birds in late 1980s
 - recorded mainly at Omadhiya Lakes (6 records between 1994 and 1999)
- No breeding records in Namibia

Threats

- Generally, degradation of feeding and breeding habitat, poisoning, collisions with power lines.
- In Namibia, human use of Omadhiya Lakes area by opportunistic hunters and trappers; competition with cattle

Actions

- Education of local communities on importance of Omadhiya Lakes area for cranes, and the negative impacts of hunting
- Research on populations elsewhere in Namibia
- Assessment of breeding after good rains
- Direct protection

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