



THE NAMIBIA CRANE ACTION PLAN – FIVE YEARS DOWN THE LINE
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1. Introduction

1.1 Crane species in Namibia, and their conservation status

Blue Crane (*Anthropoides/ Grus paradisea*)

Red Data Book status: *Critically Endangered* in Namibia, population declining
Numbers: Overall: 20 000; Namibia: 60 (maximum)

Wattled Crane (*Grus carunculatus*)

Red Data Book status: *Critically Endangered* in Namibia, population stable
Numbers: Overall: 8 000; Namibia: 200

Grey Crowned Crane (*Balearica regulorum regulorum*)

Red Data Book status: *Near Threatened* in Namibia, population stable/decreasing
Numbers: Overall: 58 000 - 77 000 (8 000 - 12 000 s. Africa; 50 000 - 65 000 E. Africa)
Namibia: < 50

1.2 The Namibia Crane Action Plan and Working Group

The first Namibia Crane Workshop in Etosha in May 2004 was attended by an enthusiastic mix of participants from Namibia and several other countries. This initiative was a partnership among the Namibia Nature Foundation (NNF), SIDA, the Ministry of Environment and Tourism (MET), the African Wattled Crane Programme (AWAC; a joint project of the International Crane Foundation [ICF] and Endangered Wildlife Trust [EWT] in South Africa) and many other supporters including from rural communities where cranes occur. As a result of a concern for the continued survival of Namibia's crane species and their habitats, these workshop participants developed the Namibia Crane Action Plan and established the Namibia Crane Working Group (NCWG) to put this plan into action.

Our vision is, "Cranes and people sharing habitats in harmony in Namibia"; our mission is to conserve cranes and their habitats in partnership with the people who share these habitats.

The Namibia Crane Action Plan has the following objectives:

1. Co-ordinate conservation effort and promote networking
2. Obtain information and data
3. Promote conservation awareness/education
4. Conserve crane populations and habitats
5. Promote the economic value of cranes and their habitats
6. Build capacity
7. Develop area-based crane management strategies

Five years down the line, it is appropriate to review progress with the implementation of the plan, and to decide on the way forward.

2. Summary of progress with implementation of the Namibia Crane Action Plan

The actions listed below are described more fully in 39 issues of *Namibia Crane News*, all available on website www.nnf.org.na/cranes.htm. The dates of the relevant issues are indicated in brackets. Note that actions in italics are linked to the Action Plan, but were implemented by partners of the NCWG.

2.1 Co-ordinate conservation effort and promote networking

- Namibia Crane Working Group established (May 04)
- 39 newsletters produced and distributed to date – contributions received regularly
- Ongoing international liaison with ICF, AWAC (ICF/EWT Partnership), SA Crane Working Group, Overberg Crane Group, BirdLife Botswana
- Ongoing national liaison, e.g. with NNF, MET, Wetland Working Group (WWG) of Namibia, NNF Every River Has Its People Project (ERP) and Namibia Animal Rehabilitation Research and Education Centre (NARREC)
- Joint Bushmanland workshop (Mar 05)
- Poster presentation on Namibia Blue Crane Project produced and presented at Etosha National Park Centennial Symposium (Jun 07)
- Closer working relationship with WWG (Feb 08)

2.2 Obtain information and data

- Collation of existing/historical records and data on cranes (ongoing)
- *Continuation of existing crane and wetland bird counts (e.g. Etosha and Lake Oponono, Nyae Nyae, Mahango) by MET and others*
- North Central crane survey (Aug 04)
- *North-east Namibia aerial survey – Wattled Cranes NNF/Wildlife Science/MET (Aug 04)*
- Several Kavango crane surveys (Nov 04)
- Crane data sheet incorporated into Events Book monitoring system for conservancies in Caprivi (Jan 05), with regular reports being submitted thereafter
- Training crane count at Nyae Nyae for workshop participants (Mar 05)
- Participation in genetics study of Blue Cranes at Etosha; ongoing collection of blood samples (May 05)
- More intensive Blue Crane monitoring at Etosha by MET staff - ongoing (Jun 05)
- Second crane awareness survey by Kavango Crane Working Group (Jul 05)
- Cranes included in aerial survey of Etosha by MET (Aug-Sep 05)
- Ongoing ringing of Blue Crane chicks at Etosha (Nov 05)
- Crane data from avifaunal database incorporated into Namibian Biodiversity Database (Jan 06)
- Combined aerial/ground census of Blue Cranes at Etosha (Apr 06)
- Combined aerial/ground census of Wattled Cranes at Nyae Nyae (Jun 06)
- Information on other wetland birds (e.g. flamingos) and associated species (e.g. Ground Hornbills) received regularly
- Launch of Namibia Blue Crane Project (Apr 06)
- Combined aerial/ground census of Blue Cranes at Etosha (Aug 06)
- Investigation of satellite telemetry for Wattled Cranes in conjunction with ICF/EWT Partnership, BirdLife Botswana etc. (Nov 06)
- Recce for Blue Crane capture at Etosha, with ICF and ICF/EWT Partnership (Feb 07)
- Blue Crane aerial/ground census and capture at Etosha, and successful first fitting of radio telemetry (Apr 07)
- Feeding study on focal Blue Cranes by UCT volunteer (May-Jun 07)
- Blue Crane census at Etosha and coordinators' visit to Oponono area (Aug 07)

- Blue Cranes: ongoing distribution/feeding/habitat/roosting/breeding observations made at Etosha; increasing numbers of records received from public
- Aerial crane survey over southern Angola and Oponono (Sep 07)
- *Wattled Crane status from aerial surveys over north-east Namibia - NNF/Elephants Without Borders (Sep 07)*
- Combined aerial/ground census of Blue Cranes at Etosha, and first fitting of a Blue Crane with satellite telemetry in Namibia (Apr 08)
- *Observations on feasibility of cranes occurring in southern Angola – RAISON (Sep 08)*
- *Cranes included on poster on reporting ringed birds - Namibia Bird Club, NEWS, NARREC, NamRingers etc. (Sep 08)*
- Interim Blue Crane counts at Etosha (Jul, Nov, Dec 08)
- See also student intern studies, 2.6

2.3 Promote conservation awareness/education

- Power Point presentation on cranes of Namibia (May/Jun 04)
- Red Data Book accounts available for the three crane species (draft: Simmons & Brown)
- Flyer on three crane species produced (Jul 04)
- Ongoing liaison with media – reports and articles
- Participation in Wilderness Safaris Namibia (WSN) “Children in the Wilderness” programme at Tsumkwe (Mar 05)
- Namibia Crane Activity Book/cultural resource book produced (Dec 05)
- Ongoing distribution of crane resource materials
- Crane awareness visit to Tsumkwe Junior Secondary School (Jun 06)
- Website developed for NCWG (Jun 06)
- Poster on Namibia’s three crane species produced (Nov 06)
- Cranes incorporated into activities of Namutoni Environmental Education Centre (Dec 07 and previously)
- Inclusion of two pages on wetland birds in revised “Wetlands of Namibia” booklet (Jul 08)
- Production of poster on Namibia’s Red Listed wetland bird species, including cranes, as part of a series of three posters (Jan 09)

2.4 Conserve crane populations and habitats

- Ongoing liaison with:
 - MET
 - NNF
 - WWG
 - NNF ERP
 - NARREC (e.g. on correct management of poisons)
 - Integrated Resource Development and Nature Conservation (IRDNC)
 - Conservation International (CI)
 - Communal conservancies
 - North Central working group (including regional government)
 - Etc.
- Dissemination of information/networking for World Wetland/Water Day celebrations (Jan 07 & Feb 08)
- See other actions

2.5 Promote the economic value of cranes and their habitats

- WSN entry level field guide training for 17 participants in Bushmanland (March 05)
- *BirdLife SA guiding course in Caprivi - CI & IRDNC (May 05)*
- *WSN guide training course in Caprivi - CI & IRDNC (May/Jun 05)*

- *Kasika and Impalila Conservancies in East Caprivi open tourism activities including birding - C.I. & IRDNC (Jul 05)*
- *Caprivi Wetlands Paradise Route established – Open Africa, CI, IRDNC (Jul 05)*
- *Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) bird ID and guiding course in Kavango (Nov 06)*
- *Namibian Academy for Tourism & Hospitality (NATH) Level III guide training course at Kavango for 19 participants (Nov 08)*

2.6 Build capacity

- *Participation by two Namibian representatives in the AWAC Building on Experience training workshop in SA (Nov 04)*
- *Wattled Crane study in Bushmanland – Polytechnic of Namibia (PN) (Jan-Jul 05)*
- *Study on threats to rare and endangered birds along Lower Okavango River – PN & WWG (Nov 07)*
- *Study on wetland birds at four dams near Windhoek – PN & WWG (Jul-Dec 08)*
- *Wetland bird student intern appointed – PN & WWG (Jan 09)*
- See 2.5

2.7 Develop and implement area-based crane management strategies

- *Coordinators' visit to Nyae Nyae (Jul 04)*
- *Coordinators' visit to Caprivi conservancies and Kavango (Sep 04)*
- *Liaison with communities north of Etosha/North Central (Nov 05)*
- *Coordinators' visit to Kavango and Caprivi, distribution of crane awareness books to local communities (Apr 06)*
- *East Caprivi Floodplain Bird Club established – CI & IRDNC (Apr 06)*
- *Workshop for North Central and MET representatives at Etosha (Apr 06)*
- *Second workshop for North Central representatives at Etosha (Apr 07)*
- *Kavango Bird Club established (Jul 07)*
- *Rundu workshop, "Cranes and other wetland birds – communities and conservation" (Jul 08) and launch of three sub-clubs of Kavango Bird Club*
- *Two Caprivi bird conservation workshops (Nov 08)*

3. Discussion and the way forward

Much has been achieved with the implementation of the Namibia Crane Action Plan; however, there is no room for complacency. Namibia's cranes and wetland birds are increasingly vulnerable to the effects of humans on their habitats and populations, including through climate change, and close monitoring is required in order to detect changes that require intervention.

The further implementation of the plan rests largely in the hands of the local working groups in the five main crane areas: Caprivi, Kavango, Bushmanland, North Central and Etosha. What is needed is to continue to promote communication and co-operation; the collection of information and data (monitoring); education/awareness; capacity building; and the development of the economic value of these birds and their habitats.

The Namibia Crane Working Group will continue to support the implementation of the Namibia Crane Action Plan in the following ways, i.e.:

- Promote communication and networking through the newsletter and website
- Provide ongoing support in the form of advice/mentorship to the local working groups
- Assist with the analysis and dissemination of information, and the distribution of resources on cranes and wetland birds and their habitats

- Continue with the implementation of the Namibia Blue Crane Project
- Promote the conservation of Namibia's cranes and other wetland birds and their habitats in any other way possible, through collaboration with individuals and organizations

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Appendix 1: List of acronyms

AWAC	African Wattled Crane Programme
CI	Conservation International
ERP	Every River Has Its People Project (NNF)
EWT	Endangered Wildlife Trust
GEF	Global Environment Fund
ICF	International Crane Foundation
IRDNC	Integrated Resource Development and Nature Conservation
MET	Ministry of Environment and Tourism
NARREC	Namibia Animal Rehabilitation Research and Education Centre
NATH	Namibian Academy for Tourism & Hospitality
NCWG	Namibia Crane Working Group
NEWS	Namibian Environment and Wildlife Society
NNF	Namibia Nature Foundation
PN	Polytechnic of Namibia
RSPB	Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
SA	South Africa
UCT	University of Cape Town
WSN	Wilderness Safaris Namibia
WWG	Wetland Working Group of Namibia