



IN THIS ISSUE

- The Namibia Crane Action Plan – five years down the line ... p1
 Blue Crane news from Etosha ... p4
 World Wetlands Day ... p5
 Student intern project on wetland birds on dams ... p5

THE NAMIBIA CRANE ACTION PLAN – FIVE YEARS DOWN THE LINE

1. Introduction

Both the Blue Crane and the Wattled Crane are *Critically Endangered* in Namibia, while the Grey Crowned Crane is *Near Threatened*. As a result of a concern for the continued survival of our crane species and their habitats, the Namibia Crane Action Plan was developed and implemented in May 2004. Five years down the line (and on the occasion of the 40th issue of *Namibia Crane News*), 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 the previous 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)
- 40 newsletters produced and distributed to date – contributions received regularly
- 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)

- Ongoing international liaison with ICF, AWAC (ICF/EWT Partnership), SA Crane Working Group, Overberg Crane Group, BirdLife Botswana
- National crane workshop in Bushmanland (Mar 05)
- Poster presentation on Namibia Blue Crane Project 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/June 04)
- Red Data Book accounts available for the three crane species (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, also prior to this)
- 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 crane 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/June 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 (Dec 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. Where to from here?

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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BLUE CRANE NEWS FROM ETOSHA

General trends

- It seems the cranes are scattering all over after the early rains in December. We have not had rain now for 4 weeks. Was up at Oponono last week, lots of water still from last year. Found no cranes, tried telemetry in the areas we used to find them but no signal. Had some reports of crane sightings at Newbrownii near Okaukuejo and Okondeka end of December, I went out and could not find them (13/1/09 Wilferd Versfeld, email versfeld@mweb.com.na).
- We did a full road count from Okaukuejo to Andoni and back on 30/12/08 – 5/1/09: total 8 adults + 1 juvenile (Ann & Mike Scott)

Halali Plains

- Pair 4.4 km west of Halali turnoff (31/12/08 & 4/1/09 Ann & Mike Scott)
- We saw a very small chick to the east of Salvadora (21/1/09 Wilferd Versfeld)

Springbokfontein

- I saw a Blue Crane in Etosha on an 'island' of a dried up pond near Springbokfontein. It looked as if it was breeding (29/12/08; Dr Thomas Falk, email falkt@staff.uni-marburg.de)
- 1 crane at Springbokfontein (30/12/08 Eckart Demasius, email edemasius@swkmun.com.na)
- Pair breeding on island south of causeway (31/12/08 Ann & Mike Scott)

Chudop Triangle/Fischer's Pan causeway

- I saw this fellow was just alone next to the road in Namutoni's plain (9/12/08 Sunday Nelenge, email SNelenge@nwr.com.na <http://www.nwr.com.na>)
- I read your article in Conservation magazine. You may be interested to know that on a recent trip to Etosha, I observed three Blue Cranes including a bird with a green tag "NBY" on its left leg, close to Namutoni Lodge (25/12/08 Elsitá Kiekebusch, email elsita.k@gmail.com)
- Group of 3 at Fischer's Pan Causeway (30/12/08 Eckart Demasius)
- Juvenile with ring NBY at Chudop Triangle; this bird was ringed nearby at Doringdraai in April 2008 – it was the larger of two siblings with differing masses of 900 g and 2525 g (31/12/08 Ann & Mike Scott; see also newsletter no.36, May 2008 p2)

Twee Palms

- Pair breeding on rocky island (30/12/08 Eckart Demasius)
- Pair breeding on rocky island (1/1/09 Ann & Mike Scott)

Andoni

- No cranes seen along the roads (1/1/09 Ann & Mike Scott)



Top to bottom: Breeding pair at Springbokfontein; breeding pair at Twee Palms; nesting site on island at Twee Palms (photos Ann Scott); and adult at Chudop Triangle on Namutoni plain (photo Sunday Nelenge)

WORLD WETLANDS DAY

Cynthia Ortmann, Ministry of Agriculture, Water & Forestry, email ortmannc@mawf.gov.na

In Namibia, World Wetland Day (2 February) and World Water Day (23 March) are jointly celebrated, providing ample opportunity to supply the Namibian population with wealth of information on both important dates. Guided by the international themes, the Local Organizing Committee (LOC), spearheaded by the Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Forestry and consisting of representatives from Ministry of Environment and Tourism, Namibia Water Corporation, Namibia Nature Foundation and Desert Research Foundation of Namibia decided to focus the World Wetland / Water Day 2009 celebrations in Windhoek.

Windhoek is using water resources from the Omatako River and the Swakop River basin and is situated about 80km upstream of the Swakoppoort Dam. The sustainable use and management of the environment and water resources in and around the Windhoek municipal area is therefore very crucial, as any harmful natural resource utilization could have detrimental downstream impacts. At the same time, the City of Windhoek is faced with challenges in terms of water supply as they have to satisfy the increasing water demand from limited water resources. It is against this background that the LOC would like to focus on awareness raising pertaining to water demand management, artificial aquifer recharge and trans-basin water transfer within the Khomas Region.

During initial preparation meetings, the LOC proposed the Avis Dam as a potential site for this event with the following activities in mind:

- Exhibition of Water Demand Management devices, strategies and activities by various businesses, water users and environmental organizations;
- School competition for composing a theme song to be used for World Wetland / Water Day commemorations;
- Poster session for Basin Management Committees to share experiences and challenges within their respective River Basins: - eg. the Kuiseb Basin is the first basin in Namibia for which a Basin Management Committee was established and they are commemorating their 5th year of existence in 2009.
- Water sport (depending on what activities will be allowed at the venue)

World Wetland Water Day school competition

Write a poem that reflects that *Water and Wetlands connect us all*. Make it catchy and original and be a winner!

The National World Wetlands and Water Day Organizing Committee invites all Grade 8 to 12 learners in all

13 regions of Namibia to compose a poem that can be turned into a water song. The winning poem will be set to music and performed by a school choir at the *National celebrations at Avis Dam in Windhoek on 28 March 2009*. The composer of the winning poem/song will also be invited to attend the National Celebrations and in future years the song will be used as an anthem for National World Wetland Water Day celebrations.

The poem must be on wetlands and water resources, their use, their value to us and the environment, their beauty, how we can protect them and how they connect us all. It can be in any language you feel comfortable with. Deadline for entries is *Monday 16 February 2009*.

Entries can be submitted either:

By hand to: Ms Shishani Nakanwe, Ms Cynthia Ortmann or Ms Ndina Nashipili at the Water Environment Division in the Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Forestry. Government Office Park – Blue Building, First floor, Room no. 149, 161 or 145.

By fax to the ladies above, at fax number 061 208 7160.

By post to: Water Environment Division, Department of Water Affairs and Forestry, P/Bag 13193 Windhoek. Attention: Ms Cynthia Ortmann or Ms Shishani Nakanwe.

For any queries contact: Mr Tommi-Riva Numbala at NamWater 061 712279, Ms Ortmann 061 208 7169, Ms Nakanwe 061 208 7158 or Ms Nashipili 061 208 7156 at DWAF.

Student intern project on wetland birds on dams

An investigation of wetland bird diversity, numbers, habitat use and feeding in four dams in and near Windhoek to compare impacts of different degrees of disturbance on wetland birds

Timoteus Kadhila, email tkcibi85@yahoo.com

I have now finished my Diploma in Natural Resources Management. Let me use this

opportunity to thank you for making my bird project possible. I learnt a lot in terms of wetland birds and environmental management. The main objectives of this research project were:

- To compile a checklist of the wetland bird species at each of the four different dams near Windhoek for future monitoring of wetland bird diversity and numbers.
- To compare the biodiversity and numbers of wetland birds using these dams during the dry season.
- To map the wetland bird habitats at each dam and record the use of each by wetland birds for feeding, roosting, nesting and resting.
- To record disturbance, mainly at Avis Dam, and to make recommendations to the Windhoek Municipality and Green Space Organisation "Friends of Avis" to better protect the wetland birds.
- To compare the proportion of vertebrate feeders (fish and frog eating birds) and invertebrate feeders (insect, oligochaetes and crustacean feeding wetland birds found at each of the four dams.

***Ramsar has some excellent support material for World Wetlands Day on website: www.ramsar.org**

