



An unusual photograph of three (of a group of five) Blue Cranes in the rain (behind springbok) a few km east of Adamax on **10/2/07** (photo Royi Zidon)



On **4/5/09** I came across these two Blue Cranes on the main road across Salvadora in Etosha - the right one had a green ring on the right leg (photo Hartmut Kolb, tour guide; ringed bird is possibly NHD, ringed Apr 06 – W. Versfeld)

MORE BLUE CRANE SIGHTINGS

Linda Millington, email millington@gmail.com
 Jeff and I saw three adult Blue Cranes on Monday, **13/4/09** at 9:50 AM along the main road in Etosha about 2 kilometers east of the turnoff for Salvadora. The cranes were striding alongside a herd of springbok who were giving them some attitude!

Wilferd Versfeld, email versfeld@mweb.com.na
 I was out at Halali on **16/4/09** and at Salvadora there were 8 Cranes. Our radio bird NHD is flying well, cannot see transmitter on back only antennae sticking out with tail feathers. In the group of 5 were two rings, NBN and NHF. Also in this group was a juvenile the same size as radio bird NHD. So they must have bred somewhere. Also the two were back at the Seepage, NHD and his mate. The Salvadora three were much relaxed with the others and I could drive to the gravel pit, see photo (page 1).

Vernon Swanepoel, email frantic.naturalist@gmail.com
19/4/09: I am in Etosha and just wanted to let you know that I saw a total of six Blue Crane today. We saw two adults at Two Palms and two adults and two young on the other side of Fisher's Pan. I saw no tags or anything but we were far from the second group. We also saw one good sighting of a Woolly-necked Stork which I don't remember seeing in the park before.

Peter & Andrew Cunningham
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Saw 5 Blue Cranes at Koinachas area on **3/5/09** @ 14h30 foraging in vegetated wet pan area, but unfortunately 500m or so from the road and thus I could not ID rings/tags, etc. Coordinates: 0701066E, 7920386N (UTM). None in the Andoni area or north of king Nehale Gate area though. On holiday in Namibia for a few weeks and in Etosha with family & brother and his family, therefore the sightings.

CRANE ECOLOGY

Pertinent facts about Blue Cranes (Roberts VII)

- Sexually mature at 3-5 years (our first ringed bird to take up a mate, NHD at Halali seep hatched out in 2006 i.e. 3 years old)
- Age at first breeding (in captivity): males 5-8 years, females 4-7 years
- Incubation 29-30 days
- Fledges at about 12 weeks
- Simultaneous moult of primaries (tertials replaced sequentially), probably biennial not annual; flightless period about one month, February in Western Cape and January in captive birds.
Ed: do we have any evidence of moult at Etosha? Possibly among Andoni groups, or at Oponono?

Why cranes sometimes flee and don't fly Bradley Gibbons, email bradleyg@ewt.org.za

Moulting blue cranes are not often seen in the Karoo, but this year people have been privileged to see some 'runners'. "This term is used for these birds when they moult. Then they cannot fly for almost 30 days, and they behave strangely, running away with their wings held high when they perceive something as a threat – even if it is a long distance away," says blue crane expert, Bradley Gibbons. "The cranes immediately start to run when they spot an unfamiliar thing and this strange behaviour worries many people who fear the birds are injured, or have eaten something might be poisonous. Moulting cranes are often accompanied by other cranes that can fly and this is possibly for safety." Cranes tend to stay in groups of varying in numbers when they moult also mainly as a safety measure. This year there was a group of 16 cranes near New-Bethesda and another of seven near Richmond. Cranes usually moult in February and March, following good rains. This indicates that there is still enough food for them. "Cranes are not able to travel far when they moult and cannot fly so, they settle in veld that is in good condition mostly with a dam for water and a good place to roost at night,"