

Namibia Crane Working Group

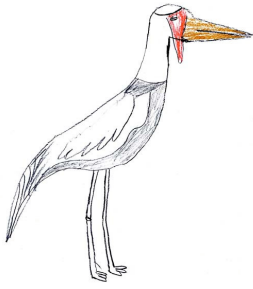
Report on an annual meeting and workshop
at Tsumkwe, Bushmanland
28 February - 5 March 2005

*incorporating an
entry level field guide course
and "Children in the Wilderness" programme
in partnership with Wilderness Safaris Namibia*



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I. INTRODUCTION: THE NAMIBIA CRANE WORKING GROUP

Three of the world's fifteen crane species occur in Namibia. 1) The Blue Crane is *Critically Endangered*, population declining; numbers are 20 000 overall, with 60 (maximum) in Namibia. 2) The Wattled Crane is also *Critically Endangered*, population stable; 8 000 overall, 200 in Namibia. 3) The Grey Crowned Crane is *Near Threatened*, population stable/decreasing; 58 000 - 77 000 overall, < 50 in Namibia.

Due to concerns regarding the status of these cranes, the Namibia Crane Working Group was established at a workshop in Etosha in May 2004, under the joint auspices of the Namibia Nature Foundation (NNF), the Ministry of Wildlife and Tourism (MET) and the African Wattled Crane Programme of the International Crane Foundation (AWAC). A Namibia Crane Action Plan is being implemented, with satellite working groups in the five crane areas of the country, namely North Central, Etosha, Kavango, Caprivi and Tsumkwe. Seed funding has been provided by the NNF/SIDA.

Our vision

Cranes and people sharing habitats in harmony in Namibia.

Our mission

To conserve cranes and their habitats in partnership with the people who share these habitats.

Objectives of our Namibia Crane Action Plan

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.



Participants at the Namibia Crane Working Group workshop at Tsumkwe, Bushmanland in February/March 2005

II. THE TSUMKWE CRANE WORKSHOP

As part of an intensive crane workshop, a follow-up crane meeting was organized at Tsumkwe in February/March 2005 in order to provide a platform for reporting back and evaluating progress with projects, exchanging ideas and doing strategic planning for the next year. The meeting and planning sessions were kindly facilitated by Dr Chris Brown of NNF, and the report-back forms the main part of this document (Section III). Contact details of workshop participants and other interested parties are supplied in Section IV. Meeting participants also took part in a practical (training) crane count at Nyae Nyae Pans led by local MET staff, and were able to observe the rich diversity of animals and plants in the area.

A further important part of the workshop programme was an entry level field guiding course with a special focus on wetland, bird and crane conservation, administered and presented by Wilderness Safaris Namibia (WSN) and co-funded by WSN and USAID. A total of 17 representatives from the above five crane areas (including six people from Tsumkwe) participated in this intensive course, which was also attended by several WSN guides. The aim of the course was to introduce prospective candidates, mostly drawn from the Namibian community areas, to the world of professional field guiding within the broader contexts of eco-tourism and sustainable conservation practices. The emphasis was on a practical experience in the bush as opposed to classroom learning; the candidates were living in the bush (camping) and walking for much of the time. Most of the learning was by means of discussion and demonstration around each subject. As anticipated, many of the candidates were able to teach as well as learn as a result of their innate knowledge of the Namibian bush.

The aim of the course was to inspire and encourage the candidates to an appreciation of:

- a) the diversity and wonder of the natural world (most participants had never visited Bushmanland before);
- b) the value of eco-tourism in Namibia;
- c) the opportunities that are available to keen people who would like to make field guiding their career; and
- d) the minimum standards and qualifications (at a number of levels of guiding) which will soon be officially required by the NQA and NTB if a guide wishes to work professionally in this particular sector of the tourism industry.

Candidates can progress to two further courses if successful in this one: the Intermediate and Advanced Guides Courses, also managed by WSN. Rural communities are beginning to understand the potential benefits to both their people and the environment that ecotourism brings: the idea of these courses is to train some of those amongst them who wish to guide tourists through the wild areas in which they live.

Members of the WSN "Children in the Wilderness" team presented an afternoon programme at the local school, where some 70 children were treated to an exciting environmental education session, led by Sunday Nilenge and his team. This inspiring initiative marked the occasion of the founding of a local youth nature club by the NNF Wild Dog Project, supported by IRDNC and Conservation International in the form of a bird field guide and other resources, and a donation of a pair of binoculars by the South African Crane Working Group. Our final encounters with Bushmanland were bush walks led by the expert trackers of the Nyae Nyae Conservancy, topped by a moving traditional dance ceremony and singing under the stars.

Our sincere thanks go to Dr Chris Brown for his ongoing support for the project, and to NNF and SIDA for financial assistance; Dries Alberts and Jakob Kolbooi (MET, Tsumkwe), especially for organizing large numbers of cranes for us to observe; the Nyae Nyae Conservancy for providing the venue and sharing their dancing with us; Tsumkwe Lodge for making ice-cold liquid refreshments available; Robin Lines of the NNF Wild Dog Project; Mr Nashipili and the pupils of Tsumkwe Junior Secondary School for joining us in crane conservation and providing the lively line drawings of cranes; Lloyd Camp, Sunday Nilenge, Marleece Jordaan, Gert Tsaobeb and Rosta Janik of WSN for their invaluable and generous support with organizing the training course, catering and environmental education activities; and last but not least, to all our regional representatives for their enthusiastic participation and report-back, and for their assistance with logistical and other forms of support.

III. REPORT-BACK ON ACTIONS AND STRATEGIC PLANNING FOR 2005

1. Co-ordinate conservation effort and promote networking

Action	Progress	Planning
1.1 Start-up activities		
1. Establish a founder working group	Done May 2004	-
2. Appoint co-ordinators	Done May 2004	-
3. Obtain start-up funding	Done May 2004	-
4. Circulate questionnaire on activities and needs	Done	-
5. Draft a vision, mission	Done	-
6. Design logo	Done	-
7. Compile a "Who we are" info sheet	Done	-
8. Identify and implement priority activities (see also 7)	Identification done; implementation ongoing	Implementation ongoing
1.2 Ongoing communication and co-ordination		
1. Identify and maintain regular contact with local area co-ordinators	Ongoing	Ongoing
2. Compile and circulate regular newsletters	Ongoing - seven issues to date	Ongoing
3. Build up a network of supporters	Ongoing (within Namibia and elsewhere)	- Ongoing, encourage new recruits. - Explore linkages across boundaries: who are the players, how to link.

2. Obtain information on cranes

Action	Progress	Planning
2.1 Conduct research/ monitoring		
1. Local crane surveys		
1) North Central	Crane survey done (August 2004). In the past, cranes were associated with predicting rainfall. These birds have now left us, due to hunting and disturbance. If we want them back we must do something.	- Need to work more closely with Etosha as part of Cuvelai system.
2) Etosha	Ongoing: regular surveys by MET in Lake Oponono area (January 04, April 04, July 04 - 11 WC, 4 BC, 13 CC).	Ongoing
3) Caprivi	Aldrin Siyama, Mike Sihope and Konstance Muyanda are interacting with local conservancies (including Mayuni, Kasika, Impalila) and obtaining information on cranes.	- Surveys in Kwando and Chobe/ Zambezi areas.
4) Kavango	Regular counts are done in Mahango Game Park (MET & Mark Paxton). Surveys are taking place by Mathias Mpepo, in partnership with ERHIP project (Dorothy Wamunyima). Visited one community in November 2004. Aims: to introduce crane awareness project; present and past distribution; identify threats; collect and write down stories, cultural significance, photographs; promote crane themes in culture and crafts; identify future areas for crane conservation; and identify roleplayers. The first local crane group has been established. Cranes disappeared early 1970s. Treated with respect, special birds. Mainly associated with happiness, luck, God's blessing, good harvest. Local songs feature cranes.	Ongoing - Conduct four more surveys.
5) Nyae Nyae	Sakkie von Plato has been doing bird counts for many years; now collaborating with BirdLife Botswana in joint report. Polytechnic student (Veronica Sivhute) is busy with six-month project, recording numbers, group composition, habitat and food of Wattled Cranes. A (training) crane count at Nyae Nyae pans is part of this workshop.	Ongoing - Write up historical data.
2. Investigate cross-border surveys	Aerial survey of Caprivi in August 2004 by Chris Brown and team. Many hippo and crocodiles; woodland species have increased but not floodplain game species (e.g. lechwe, reedbuck). Only 10 Wattled Cranes observed - too much hunting and disturbance, not controlled. Need more conservation work in this area by conservancies and MET.	(Next aerial survey in 2009) - Link with AWAC satellite tracking programme.

Action	Progress	Planning
3. Set up logbook of crane sightings	Data form designed and circulated as part of Namibian "events book" system. Implementation ongoing. Caprivi - being implemented by conservancies. Implemented at Etosha: 52 observations to date. Nyae Nyae - also by lodge.	Ongoing - Develop and train local teams to do co-ordinated counts in standardized way. - Involve tour guides, tourists (especially conservancy camp-sites). - Involve Wilderness Safaris Namibia staff in crane areas (Etosha). - Obtain feedback reports.
4. Collate crane nesting cards	MET has historical records.	- To be investigated.
5. Investigate local threats	Ongoing North Central: illegal hunting, human disturbance, habitat loss. Caprivi: poaching. Basic data being collected.	Ongoing
6. Compile broad crane habitat classification, extent, status, trends	Data is being collected.	Ongoing
7. Make management recommendations (see also 7)	Ongoing	Ongoing

2.2 Compile crane species accounts

1. Red Data Book	Done: draft information circulated for comment via newsletters; Red Data Book to be published this year (Rob Simmons).	- Distribute final information.
2. Popular accounts	Done	- Distribute more widely. - Investigate translations in local languages.

3. Promote conservation awareness/education

Action	Progress	Planning
3.1 Develop a crane resource package		
1. Powerpoint presentation	Done May 2004 (Chris Brown & Alice Jarvis).	- Ongoing updates as necessary.
2. Crane poster	Initial discussions.	- Continue development (MET).
3. Crane information sheets	Done	- Update as necessary, place on website.
4. Cultural/resource booklet	Initial discussions re funding, artist identified.	- Continue development.
5. Media (printed)	Media releases	- Ongoing; articles in journals (e.g. <i>Travel News Namibia, Flamingo</i>).
6. Radio & television	-	- To be done.
7. Theatre: songs, dance, plays; poems	Songs featuring cranes are being identified; our first crane poem has been written (Dries Alberts, Tsumkwe).	Ongoing
8. Competitions	Part of this workshop.	Ongoing
9. Websites	Initial discussions.	- To be done.
10. Educational talks to land custodians, schools	Started	Ongoing
3.2 Identify target groups	Started	Ongoing
3.3 Conduct awareness activities	See local crane surveys (2). This workshop incorporates a programme for "Children in the Wilderness" at the local school (WSN), also the occasion of the founding of a local youth nature club by the NNF Wild Dog Project.	- Nyae Nyae: link in with Wild Dog nature clubs activities at schools - Crane conservation activities at Namutoni EE Centre. - Investigate further "Children in the Wilderness" courses at Klein Dobe and in other crane areas. - Crane/ wetland conservation programmes for mature people, e.g. councillors, traditional leaders, church and education groups; link with literacy programme, Ministry of Basic Education (existing vehicles). - Involve teachers.

4. Conserve crane populations and habitats

Action	Progress	Planning
4.1 Integrated management of river basins		
1. Provide decision makers and planners with good information on cranes and habitats	Information is being compiled.	- To be circulated: Wetlands Working Group Okakom commissioners Zambezi basin Namwater Parliamentarian working group on natural resources.
2. Provide information to basin/ wetland stakeholders	Information is being compiled.	- To be circulated.
4.2 Develop incentives for conservation		
1. Review policy of cranes and habitats	-	- To be done, e.g. New Water Act. - Ramsar sites: link with MET.
2. Enhance incentives for conservation of cranes and habitats	-	- Crane custodian certificate: land managers, tour operators, schools.
4.3 Local management initiatives		
1. Nyae Nyae	The conservancy has designated Nyae Nyae as its central core area - access controlled, no hunting. Nyae Nyae pans are on the list for potential Ramsar sites in Namibia. A hide has been built at Nyae Nyae for bird/game viewing and indirectly to draw tourists to a specific area, away from the main pan.	- Investigate Ramsar status of Nyae Nyae pans with regard to cranes.
2. General		- Implement all Red Data Book actions for cranes. - Investigate incentives for local volunteers to become involved in crane/ wetland conservation.

5. Promote the economic value of cranes and their habitats (diversify land-use/income options)

Action	Progress	Planning
5.1 Promote community based resource management		
1. CBNR initiatives	Ongoing	Ongoing
2. Develop park-neighbour partnerships	Ongoing	Ongoing
5.2 Develop sustainable income-earning activities		
1. Work within traditional frameworks to develop activities	Ongoing	Ongoing
2. Enhance the economic value of cranes and their habitats in terms of tourism, crafts	<p>Preliminary discussions on birding route and crafts.</p> <p>Guide training - part of this workshop (see 6.2).</p> <p>Nyae Nyae: a hide has been built for tourists; the local lodge has become involved in crane awareness and conservation.</p> <p>Caprivi: to attract tourists they are now taken out in mokoro to find cranes.</p>	<p>- Birding/wetlands tourist route to be developed further: consult with existing successful bird routes; liaise with other crane areas; train guides (must be available at all times); first develop product and repeatable service; joint marketing; target birding community; develop associated crafts.</p>

6. Build capacity

Action	Progress	Planning
6.1 Conduct a needs assessment (see also 1: questionnaire)		
	Done	-
6.2 Promote training and skills development		
1. Crane workshops (Namibia)	Two workshops (May 2004 & present).	- Plan a workshop in 2006.
2. AWAC training workshop	Lotto Kuushomwa and Jakob Kolbooi attended the AWAC <i>Building on Experience</i> workshop at Wakkerstroom, SA in November 2004.	- Represent NCWG at 2005 AWAC workshop.
3. Guide training	As part of this workshop, 17 trainees (6 local) completed an entry level field guiding course by WSN.	- Further guide training (WSN). - Guide training by BirdLife SA in Caprivi. - Guide accreditation.
6.3 Compile funding proposals		
	LEF 2005 funding proposal submitted.	- Obtain finance for 2006. - Investigate co-funding for resource book, poster, T-shirts (IRDNC, CI, WSN, Wildlife Society, Total, Namdeb).

7. Develop area-based management strategies

Action	Progress	Planning
7.1 Apply the above strategies to the local situation in consultation with local partners		
1. General	General feedback on local initiatives incorporated above.	- Provide feedback at AGM 2006.
2. North Central	See above.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Radio programmes to increase awareness. 2. Consult stakeholders (church leaders, school principals, regional councillors and headmen) and raise awareness and information to leaders. 3. Implement anti-poaching measures. 4. Share ideas with neighbouring groups. 5. Invite experienced people to explain relevant government policies and laws. 6. Provide training with manual in local languages. 7. Provide feedback after meetings/workshops/training. 8. Establish a local committee to strengthen the initiative. 9. Identify community members interested in cranes/conservancies and motivated and focus on them.
3. Etosha	See above.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Continue to collect data form entries for cranes. 2. Promote crane awareness through the Namutoni Environmental Education Centre. 3. Liaise with CBNRM officer in the north regarding crane conservation in the Oponono area. 4. Distribute crane newsletters to all ranger stations in park and to other interested parties e.g. farmers. 5. Build capacity and train local staff to do bird counts.
4. Kavango	See above. Coordinators' visit September 2004.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Share information through communication; follow-up visits to new crane groups; contact regional communicators. 2. Become directly involved in crane conservation activities: monitoring, counting; set up local information-clearing house in region with local collaboration group. 3. Incentives - recognition for interested participants. 4. Awareness and education - provide resources for environmental education programmes. 5. Radio talks on cranes and their habitats. 6. Newsletters/articles in local regional languages.
5. Caprivi	See above. Coordinators' visit September 2004.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Radio programmes. 2. Collect information on cranes. 3. Outreach and awareness in communities, schools. 4. Zone areas for special crane and habitat protection. 5. Implement anti-poaching measures, reduce disturbance. 6. Bird guiding courses.

Action	Progress	Planning
6. Nyae Nyae	See above. Coordinators' visit July 2004.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Promote better communication with all crane areas. 2. Promote economic value of cranes; need guides to go out with tourists. 3. Environmental Education programme with Ministry of Education - nature clubs; trips to Klein Dobe. 4. Importance of birds in school syllabus. 5. Collect data on data sheets (event book) - conservancy game guards and MET.

IV. CONTACT DETAILS OF WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS* AND OTHER INTERESTED PARTIES

Name	Organization	Telephone/ fax	Cellphone	Postal address	Email
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