

# CONSERVATION CLOSE-UP

A GLIMPSE INTO  
SELECT NAMIBIAN  
CONSERVATION  
EFFORTS



## ETOSHA'S ELUSIVE BLUE CRANES

Text **Ann & Mike Scott**

**C**ranes are universally regarded as symbols of peace and good luck. There are 15 species worldwide, with the bulk of the Blue Crane population found in South Africa. A small outlying population in Namibia is described as being among the most mysterious of all cranes.

This elegant, charismatic species breeds in Etosha National Park during the austral summer and rainy season, and this is the best time to see them: from around November to April. They spend the winter months north of the park, including in the Omadhiya Lakes area. On their return (from August onwards) the cranes first gather at Andoni, then move gradually down to the pan's edge once it has rained, to take up their nesting sites again. These cranes are an enigma in that they are able to survive despite the presence of many predators and under arid conditions.

The Namibia Crane Working Group, an initiative of the Namibia Nature Foundation, has been monitoring this crane population since 2004, mainly by means of regular counts in the wet and the dry season. More than 30 chicks have been fitted with large green plastic rings, each of which bears a unique alphabetical code. Resightings of these ringed birds contribute to the recording of crane distribution, movements and breeding activity. Birdwatchers and other visitors to Etosha make an invaluable contribution by reporting ringed cranes, nests, chicks and numbers, and by submitting some wonderful photographs.

Blue Crane numbers in Namibia have declined from 80 in 1988 and 60 in 1994 to 35 in 2011 and then to only 23, with an encouraging increase again to 32 in 2017. The key questions and challenges that remain are: what are the causes for the decline in numbers, where is this happening and how can it be addressed?

Reports of crane sightings to [ecoserve@iway.na](mailto:ecoserve@iway.na) are much appreciated. **TNN**

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Namibia Crane Working Group: [www.nnf.org.na/CRANES/index.htm](http://www.nnf.org.na/CRANES/index.htm)

