



June 2005

## CRANE NEWS FLASHES

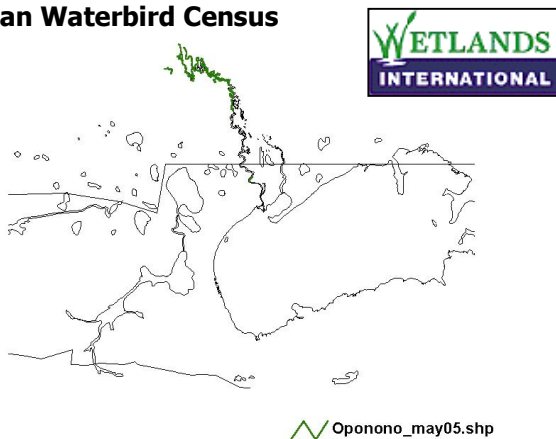
- Dorothy Waymunyima and Mathias Mpepo have completed another fact-finding crane survey in eastern Kavango and will be providing a report-back in our next newsletter. Dorothy is also starting to investigate crane matters in Angola.
- From Bushmanland, Dries Alberts reports that they are busy with elephant management during their dry season; and that they hope to provide feedback on Veronica Sivhute's student project soon.

## CRANE FOCUS 1)

### Updates from Etosha

by Wilferd Versfeld, Etosha Ecological Institute  
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and Immanuel Kapofi, Area warden, Namutoni East (MET) Tel: +264 67 229-708

### African Waterbird Census



✓ Oponono\_may05.shp

Wilferd reports that from 10-13 May the African Waterbird Census (AWC) or wetland bird counts were conducted in Etosha at Fischer's Pan and the Ekuma River and also to the north of Etosha at Lake Oponono. The Fischer's Pan count produced three Blue Cranes, consisting of two adults with their chick.

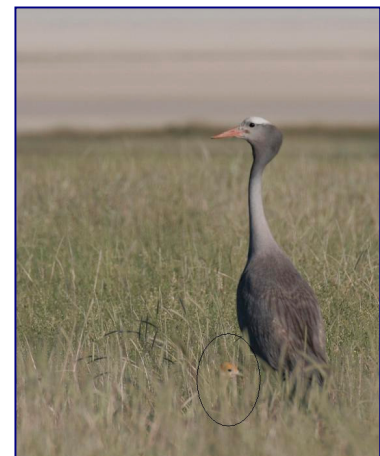
On the Lake Oponono count (see photo [right top] and area indicated in green on the map), three Wattled Cranes and two Crowned Cranes were seen. They were found to the south of Oponono, away from the water and feeding amongst the cattle in the grassland. There is lots of water in the Oponono system as well as many fish, which are being harvested by the communities. The bird numbers were low compared to other counts: 1 845 birds of 32 species, compared to 15 000 birds and 28 species during the 2002 count. The most cranes counted during these counts were 15 Crowned Cranes in April 1994 and 30 Wattled Cranes in March 1999.



### Blue Crane news from Namutoni

Immanuel Kapofi reports: My Blue Cranes and myself are doing fine in Etosha National Park - Namutoni. We record observations of Blue Cranes regularly, at least five times per month. The cranes are usually paired in December, January and February; but by April, May and June larger groups of up to nine birds are recorded, mainly in the Andoni grassland area. On 2-3/5/05 I was really happy to see nine Blue Cranes feeding on the ground. Two of them had a short "tail" (really the wing feathers), thus might be sub-adult.

This year one juvenile was recorded in the causeway area at Fischer's Pan, on 10/1/05. More detailed breeding activity was recorded for the pair at Twee Palms, east of Namutoni, as follows: an adult was sitting on the nest on 3/12/04; the egg had disappeared but the birds were nearby on 13/12/04; an adult was on the nest again on 21/2/05 and 22/2/05; but no breeding activity was recorded subsequently. The cranes are usually seen walking and/or feeding amongst the grass, often on the edge of a waterhole. (PTO)



Right:  
See if you can spot the head of the tiny chick, next to the adult's left leg - photographed in Etosha by Tim Gaunt



## June 2005

On 19/5/05 I participated in the Oshikoto Livestock Committee Meeting at Omutele, about 40 kilometers away from Etosha National Park. After the meeting I asked and spoke to some residents, whereby they verified me that they know Blue Cranes very well and they also used to be in their areas during rainy seasons. Mr Thomas explained to me that, if someone happens to see a crane, then he/she is lucky that day. He also further explained that they used to hunt the cranes about twenty years ago. Now cranes are only seen in a few groups and most during rain seasons.

I will try to have enough time to see and meet many villagers around Etosha National Park, because it seems that they have more information about crane birds.

[Ed. What are these cranes eating? We have seen the pair at Twee Palms pecking among elephant droppings, possibly feeding on insects or other small animals. Does anyone have any other observations?]

### CRANE FOCUS 2)

#### Wilderness Safaris Namibia Guide Training Course in Caprivi

by Sandra Slater-Jones, Conservation International-Chobe Project - Field Facilitator

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Short on the heels of the BirdLife South Africa Bird Guiding Course (5 to 14 May 2005) in Caprivi, 16 guide trainees from Impalila and Kasika conservancies participated in a Wilderness Safaris Namibia (WSN) Guide Training course on 20 May to 2 June 2005. The course was run by WSN trainers Lloyd Camp, Marleece Jordan and John Mittan, in collaboration with the Conservation International (CI) and Integrated Rural Development and Nature Conservation (IRDNC) conservancy support programme (see photos on right).

Part of the guiding course covered crane conservation and awareness, including the following main points:

- The different types of cranes found in Caprivi
- Cranes as indicators of wetland health
- Why cranes are endangered
- Reasons for the decline of crane species e.g. habitat reduction and people taking the eggs
- Information about the Crane Working Group, its purpose and work in Namibia
- Potential of cranes attracting tourists to the conservancies

It was stressed that a live crane is of far more value than a dead one. The guides participating in the course were encouraged to take the responsibility of teaching other conservancy members about the value of cranes. It was discussed how guides are ambassadors of their conservancies and can take upon the role of teachers, not only to visiting tourists but also to fellow family members and conservancy members.

#### Crane sightings in the Conservancies

Kasika reported that three Wattled Cranes were seen in the Makhoma region in January 2005. During the 1980s there were at least 50 to 100 Wattled Cranes on the floodplain. They said that the cranes were poached (for eating), which contributed to their decline. Three Wattled Cranes were seen in Impalila Conservancy in 2003 but none have been reported since.

#### The Way Forward

A funding proposal for a Kasika and Impalila Conservancy Bird Club has been written. It was discussed that if the funding application is successful and a bird club is formed, the bird club could work to educate conservancy members, school learners and tourists about cranes and their importance.

