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Conservancies gather records of cranes

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David Ward reports that, in co-operation with Carol Murphy and Sandy Slater-Jones, he introduced a crane data sheet into the Event Books of all community game guards in the East Caprivi conservancies in January 2005. This included training in how to fill in the forms. He recently attended a mid-year audit of all community game guards Event Books. Although no game guards have recorded any crane sightings for the Kwando River system since January this year, there have been several sightings of Wattled Cranes along the Chobe River flood plains in Lusesse Conservancy and Salambala Conservancy. The details of these sightings are normally collected at the year-end audit in all conservancies, usually in January. The full list of crane sightings for 2005 will then become available. If you would like to contribute your own sightings of cranes to our standard database, please let us know if you would like a copy of the standard data form.

Funding for website

Good news is that the Namibia Nature Foundation has granted funding to establish our own web page on the NNF website - thank you Dr Chris Brown, Alice Jarvis and Tony Robertson for getting this initiative going!

How can we encourage crane custodians?

At our crane workshop in Bushmanland in March 2005, a proposal was made to introduce a "crane custodian" programme. Who should receive these awards? What form should they take - certificates, or badges on gates? This important incentive programme needs to be initiated at a local level, so please contact us with suggestions or if you would like to become involved!

CRANE FOCUS

Wattled Crane (*Grus carunculata*) study in the Tsumkwe area, Bushmanland during 2005

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The following results – to be published – are as a result of a study conducted by **Veronika Sivhute**, a 2nd Year student from the Department of Nature Conservation at the Polytechnic of Namibia during her practical training conducted at Tsumkwe, from January to July 2005.



Veronica Sivhute (left) and members of the NCWG observe Wattled Cranes in their wetland habitat at Nyae Nyae pans

A total number of 275 Wattled Crane *Grus carunculata* individuals, most of whom were adult birds (94.5%), were observed during the study period with most birds (92.4%) favouring the main Nyae-Nyae pan area. The birds arrived in January and departed towards the end of May with no birds seen during June and July. Most birds (81.0%) were observed during February (32.4%) and March (48.4%) (Figure 1). Crane numbers showed a strong correlation with rainfall during 2004, but not in 2005 although rainfall was higher during the latter period (Figure 1). Half the birds observed were in a group size of 3 individuals (50.0%) with the largest group size being 18 individual birds seen on 1 occasion. *G. carunculata* were observed feeding on the grasses *Panicum repens* (Couch panicum) and *Diplachne fusca* (Swamp grass) during the study period.

Thanks to all MET staff involved (especially Andries Alberts - Warden at Tsumkwe, and Jakob Kolbooi), Nyae Nyae conservancy members and Namibia Crane Working Group members for assistance throughout this project.

Figure 1. A comparison of *Grus carunculata* numbers and rainfall figures between 2004 and 2005 in Bushmanland

