



January 2006



Blue Crane at its nest (with one egg) at Twee Palms, east of Namutoni in Etosha National Park in December 2005 (Photo: Wilferd Versfeld).

Blue Crane news from Etosha

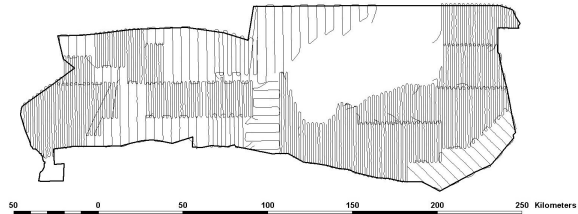
Sheila Waywell and Martin Wood, birdwatchers from South Africa, reported seeing two Blue Cranes at Fisher's Pan on 28/11/2005 and one Blue Crane at Salvadora waterhole on 30/11/05.

Immanuel Kapofi (email kapofii@mweb.com.na)
 1/12/05: I am happy to tell you that, we have received very good rain in Namutoni area, and also thank you very much for the crane newsletters. Till now Blue Cranes can only be sighted at Andoni Plain. Here is the rainfall as recorded up to date: Namutoni 80.9mm, Van Lindequest gate 87mm and King Nehale gate 81mm. This is only to show you that Namutoni is turning green and crane might change their habitat.
 9/12/05: In Namutoni area we have received very good rain and I even sighted Blue Crane at Fischer's Pan standing in water. It is a good indication that Blue Cranes might venture on Fischer's Pan again this year during and after the rain season.
 22/12/05: I am happy to tell you that Blue Cranes are now venturing on Fischer's Pan area, but up to now I have only sighted two, always walking together. Fischer's Pan has water now and I counted about 1800 Lesser and Greater Flamingos on 20/12/2005. Also many aquatic birds can be seen here.

Wilferd Versfeld (email versfeld@mweb.com.na)
 20/12/05: I was in Namutoni area last week and found the cranes already actively breeding. See photo (above) of one of the two birds at Twee Palms at the nest, which had one egg. On the causeway over Fisher's Pan at Namutoni another pair was also nesting to the north of the water.

Holger Kolberg (holgerk@mweb.com.na)

During an aerial survey at Etosha National Park on 23 August - 11 September 2005, no cranes were recorded although observers were keeping a look-out for them. The survey covered an area of 18 551 km², excluding Etosha Pan (see figure below).



Flight paths of an aerial survey at Etosha NP, August/September 2005 (Holger Kolberg).

Wattled Crane news from Nyae Nyae Pans, Bushmanland

Dries Alberts (email mettskwe@iway.na)

14/12/05: We did receive a few good showers - season total at 148.3 mm. The big pans however do not yet have any water in them. The smaller pans are all full - things are looking good so far.
 16/12/05: Just a short note to inform you that we have received our first visitors. Yesterday we saw 8 Wattled Crane, and today 23. They are just sitting in the pans - no water yet. So hopefully it will rain soon so that the pans can fill up. Maybe they know something we don't.
 27/12/05: Our smaller pans are full, it is just the big Nyae Nyae pans that do not have water yet. I went down there over the weekend, and noticed that the cranes have gone again! Maybe it was just a short visit? Anyway, the clouds are looking fabulous today, so hopefully we will have a downpour soon.
 23/1/06: The rain here has not been as good as in the rest of the country - for January we are only at 94 mm although it has definitely rained more in the bush than at our rain gauges. 30/1/06: This Friday we counted 51 Wattled Cranes and 2 Saddle-billed Storks in the Nyae Nyae / Khebi pan areas. So at least their numbers are increasing. The pans are still only one tenth full, but the "strip" between the two pans (rocky, marshy type areas) is full and this is where the cranes are. Even as I am writing this e-mail, it is raining softly. So hopefully the pans will fill up soon.



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The Pinks and the Blues: 2 February is World Wetlands Day!

Wilferd Versfeld (email versfeld@mweb.com.na)

20/12/05: With cranes attached to wetlands, how about putting in some news on other important species like flamingos? Can we not use our "Crane friends" to also keep a look out for flamingos? They also rely on rains and water to breed. This year we heard the first flock of flamingos flying over Okaukuejo on the night of 26/11/05. The first week of December 2005 when I was in the Namutoni area there was a fair number (a few thousand?) of flamingos at the causeway at Namutoni. From 4/1/06 onwards we have been hearing them regularly from 22h00 to midnight, flying over Okaukuejo. With the recent good rains we hear that the flamingos have left the causeway area. Maybe they have gone east but I expect they have gone to their breeding site on the pan north of the Okerfontein area. Shall we ask Dries in Tsumkwe when he saw/heard the first flamingos arriving in Bushmanland?

Dries Alberts (email mettskwe@iway.na)

27/12/05: Our flamingos do the same. We hear them flying over at night - just after or just before big rains, but normally when the pans have water in them.

Mark Anderson (email manderson@half.ncape.gov.za)

15/11/05: There is still no evidence for movements of Lesser Flamingos between East Africa and Southern Africa, and only one record of a movement between East Africa and West Africa (one individual moving 6197 km from Lake Magadi in Kenya to Western Sahara). Recent satellite-tracking studies in s. Africa (Graham McCulloch) and East Africa (Brooks Childress) have provided evidence for extensive local movements. Current information therefore suggests that there is little contact/interaction between the different Lesser Flamingo populations. Brooks Childress, Rauri Bowie and I have just initiated a study to determine whether there is any contact between the different African populations, as well as the population in Pakistan/India.

New proceedings on ICF website!

Betsy Didrickson (email library@savingcranes.org)

Visit the ICF website (www.savingcranes.org) for the full-text pdf format proceedings of the workshop held in Bharatpur, India, February 1983 (Archibald G, & Pasquier RF. 1987. International Crane Workshop: Proceedings of the 1983 International Crane Workshop. Baraboo, Wis, USA: International Crane Foundation.)

Putting Namibia's bird data on the web

Tony Robertson & Alice Jarvis

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Namibia has a long history of collecting data on birds. Many more data have been collected on birds here than any other group of species. These data represent an extremely valuable source of information on a variety of aspects such as recent and historical distributions, density, breeding characteristics and habitat use and can potentially be used for numerous purposes such as conservation and management planning, ecological or behavioural studies. The avifaunal database project ran between 1997 and 1999 during which time a fully customised MSAccess database was developed incorporating 5 main data sets (plus some additional endemics data). These include SABAP (Southern African Bird Atlas Project) data, raptor road count data, wetland count data, museum specimen data, nest record data and detailed distribution data on 10 inland endemic bird species. It has a user-friendly interface to facilitate the easy entering and extraction of data and the option to map results. Some preliminary data analysis was also undertaken at this time.

By using data from many sources, it is often possible to derive an "overall picture" which is not provided by using just one data set alone. Moreover, when used in conjunction with comparable data on other taxa e.g. plants, mammals and reptiles, these data can provide a unique and invaluable management and planning tool. The compiled data have been used extensively for a variety of purposes such as identification of Important Bird Areas, environmental impact assessments, management plans and scientific research. However, accessibility of the database is a major limitation and it can be difficult for potential users to gain access to, or even obtain information about, the database. In a short project which will take place early this year, Alice Jarvis and Tony Robertson will work with Dr. John Irish, the coordinator of the Namibian Biosystematics Project, to incorporate data from the avifaunal database into the Namibian Biodiversity Database, a powerful database which is already available online (<http://www.biodiversity.org.na/index.php>). Bird data will be read-only, and the user will be able to run customised queries to extract the information they require. In addition to significantly improving the availability and usability of Namibia's bird data this project will also contribute to meeting Namibia's obligations under the International Convention on Biological Diversity.



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