



Left to right: Makena Ecosystem Protection and Environmental Education Club (photo: Linda Baker); Ambrosius Haingura Conservancy; Environmental Club of Romanus Kamunoko Secondary School - Rundu; Mavis Musole, Mike Scott and Julia Nchindo at IRDNC, Katima Mulilo.

## CRANE NEWS FLASHES

- The first combined aerial/ground census of the Blue Cranes at Etosha National Park is planned for 24-28 April 2006. More news of this next time!
- The Wattled Crane census at Bushmanland had to be postponed to the end of May 2006, due to the shortage of aviation fuel in early April.

## CRANE FOCUS: Visits to local crane conservationists in Kavango and Caprivi

This month we were privileged to visit Kavango and Caprivi to catch up on crane conservation activities with local crane working groups. Their enthusiasm and the progress being made were impressive! We discussed activities during the past year, looked at problems and arrived at possible solutions. We introduced our crane resource book, produced in 2005 with the help of our creative illustrator, Kasha Ostbloom, and workshopped its implementation with local educators. All in all we met with 13 groups and about 100 people in two weeks! We would like to thank everyone for these very worthwhile discussions, and look forward to hearing about further progress.

### KAVANGO

Gibson Kamuaruuma and Karel Ndumba of the NNF "Every River Has Its People" Project put together an interesting programme of meetings for us, assisted by Dorothy Wamunyima, and John Simanu and Elizabeth Hamutenya of Joseph Mbambangandu Conservancy.

Mark and Charlie Paxton kindly provided a venue for our first meeting at Shamvura Lodge, east of Rundu on the banks of the Okavango River. The **Makena Ecosystem Protection and Environmental Education Club** is a lively group of young people who are committed to conservation. The purpose of the club is to promote and improve the understanding towards wildlife and natural resources; to control and educate local community members, thereby creating an awareness of our surrounding habitats. The main idea is to attract tourism and encourage other sustainable

business activities beneficial to both communities and habitats. Mark reminded us that here, the focus for tourism should be on the abundant birdlife, rather than on large mammals, as it can be used in a non-consumptive way, for tourism. Up to 15 cranes have been recorded in Mahangu and Shamvura area. It was mentioned that cranes were shot in the past, for food as well as for sport, but that this no longer takes place. Gibson informed the group how to establish a conservancy, a formalized method of obtaining buy-in and sharing the benefits of sustainable utilization of resources. The group decided on the following actions:

1. Work with schools using the crane book.
2. Organize competitions (crane songs, dances, poems) at the annual Trade Fair at Rundu in October 2006.
3. Include records of cranes during river patrols.
4. Organize bird guide training.
5. Investigate the formation of a conservancy, in consultation with community members.

The **Ambrosius Haingura Conservancy**, about 50 km west of Rundu, identified threats to cranes as disturbance, not enough space, shooting for food in the past and lack of awareness. Two of the ladies could remember seeing Crowned Cranes dancing and hearing them call. The cranes were a symbol of good rains and a bumper harvest. They decided on these actions:

1. Introduce law enforcement measures as conservancy rules.
2. Rangers to count cranes on the event book form.
3. Collect information on cranes from older people: cultural values, songs and dances.
4. Education and awareness: radio, schools, videos.
5. Tourism plans include a campsite where wild animals can be viewed, and birding tourism.

At Runda six girls of the **Environmental Club of the Romanus Kamunoko Secondary School**, with their teacher Mr Nshinano, tested out some of the pages in our crane activity book very enthusiastically! Mr Nshinana was excited to recognize the crane song in the activity book as one he had been hearing on the





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local radio, but he had not been aware that it was about cranes. Their action plan was:

1. Send wrong-doers to jail.
2. Place the surviving cranes in a place of safety.
3. Promote awareness: radio, films, plays about cranes – and competitions at the Fair in October.

We then met with Lipange Joseph Kampungu, the manager of the new **Mbamba Community Campsite** in the Joseph Mbambangando Conservancy, 30 km east of Rundu. This attractive establishment with its shady, secluded campsites is well worth a visit (Cell 081 200 8874). We also met the new warden at **Mahangu National Park**, Helmuth Tjikurunda and his staff.

## CAPRIVI

Sandra Slater-Jones (formerly of Conservation International), put together an exciting programme for our visit. Led by Aldrin Siyama, **Mayuni and Kwando conservancies** at Kongola reported that game guards do foot patrols and report crane sightings in the event book; but funding for crane counts by boat is a problem. Binoculars would help for observations. Cranes are seen in BwaBwata NP in the dry season, and have been reported by Mazambala Island Lodge. Future actions:

1. Investigate funding for boat patrols.
2. Nametags or t-shirts with crane conservationist identification would be helpful.
3. Bird tourism is to be developed in West Caprivi (by Carol Murphy, Conservation International).
4. Work with Mazambala Island Lodge, where crane chicks have been reported by guides.

To reach **Kasika Conservancy** on the Chobe River, we had to cross into Botswana then re-cross into Namibia via the Chobe River, and repeat the whole process the next day to visit **Impalila Conservancy!** At **Kasika Primary School**, teachers and conservancy members received our crane activity book with much interest, and decided it would be suitable for pupils of all ages, but especially Grade 7. The **Kasika Conservancy Rangers** told us they report crane sightings in the event book, mostly in the Makoma area where

there are fewer people. These records are mainly in winter, when the waters go down; 16 (Wattled) Cranes were reported in August 2005, and a Crowned Crane in September! There used to be many more cranes in the 1980s, during which time they were hunted. Snares and poison are not used at present. Concern was expressed about the negative effects of too many fires, and awareness should be raised about this problem.

The **East Caprivi Floodplain Bird Club** has recently been established in partnership with surrounding lodges, and has just received funding from the NNF Local Environment Fund. The members plan to:

1. Establish a club that functions well.
2. Develop a management plan for birds.
3. Produce educational tools, e.g. posters.
4. Promote sustainability of the club.
5. Promote awareness, e.g. by radio programmes.

The club is launching the KAI (Kasika and Impalila) Connection Wetland Adventures ("connecting people to wildlife"), in partnership with Janala Tours and Waterlily Lodge, Kasane. Thank you, Alfred Sibongo, for the wonderful sunset trip and your capable guiding on the conservancies' new motorboat!

Staff members of the **Impalila Primary School** were pleased to receive their copies of the crane resource book and will use it to educate the children of this river-island community. We met with the chairperson and a few members of the **Impalila Conservancy**, with the assistance of our guide, Mike Sihope.

At Katima Mulilo we presented copies of the crane activity book to Mavis Musole and Julia Nchindo of **Integrated Resource Development and Nature Conservation (IRDNC)**, who had so ably translated portions of the book into the local Silozi for us. We also met with Katey Sharpe and Strijs Coertzen of Tutwa Travel for an update on the new community-based "Caprivi Wetlands Paradise" tourism route that is being established by Open Africa. Our last call was to meet André Visser of Mazambala Island Lodge at Kongola, where sightings of cranes have been reported.

*Left to right: Kasika Primary School, East Caprivi Floodplain Bird Club, Chobe River at Kasika Conservancy, Impalila Primary School.*



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