



August 2006

Have you visited our new crane website?

We are pleased to tell you that the Namibia Crane Working Group website is now "live" as part of the Namibia Nature Foundation site. Please note that the address is now www.nnf.org.na/CRANES/index.htm. We would appreciate your comments and ideas on keeping the website dynamic. Thank you to Alice Jarvis and Tony Robertson for all your hard work in developing the website, and to NNF for hosting it!

Two other new "sister" websites that may interest you are those of our birds of prey working group, *Raptors Namibia* (www.nnf.org.na/RAPTORS/index.htm) and, for coastal birds, the Coastal Environmental Trust of Namibia (CETN; www.nnf.org.na/CETN/index.htm).

Crane news from Etosha East

Immanuel Kapofi: Area Warden, Namutoni East
Email: kapofii@mweb.com.na

7/6/06: I have sighted another chick on 23/5/06 at Twee Palms, apart from those recorded during the survey. It used to be in a group of six adult Blue Cranes and always there. Those two chicks that we have ringed during the survey are now seen at Namutoni – Fisher's Pan, exactly at the first coordinate readings of "two cranes" during the start of the survey. The rings can be seen very clearly without binoculars within a range of 100 m. Those cranes seen near Stinkwater during the survey might change their feeding pasture, but we are still observing them as well as the whole population's movements.

13/7/06: Here at Namutoni all is well and I hope my cranes will cope with this environment. Today I drove on the detour near Andoni Plain and saw 10 Blue Cranes with one juvenile, they were 11 in total. They were among zebras, blue wildebeest and springbok at Andoni waterhole. From there I drove around Fisher's Pan and observed nothing. It seems that Blue Cranes tend to use Andoni Plain during dry seasons and Fisher's Pan during wet seasons. None among those I saw was ringed. Thus we are very curious, seeing that Wilferd and Holger ringed cranes. Cattle at King Nehale Conservancy are coming closer and closer near the park boundary fence every day. And it is surprising that you find springbok feeding together with cattle. We are very keen on seeing Blue Cranes feeding next to cattle at King Nehale Conservancy.

20/7/06: Namutoni is well, but we are facing a problem of water crisis at Andoni waterhole.

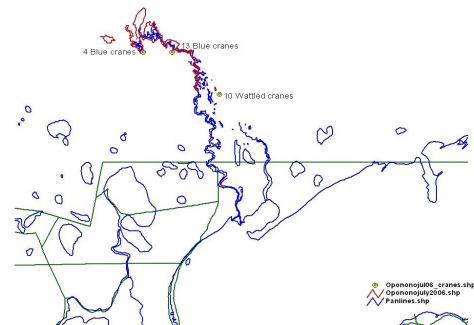
This waterhole is drying up and most of the game and birds do get water here through the year. Yes, this year we have recorded the highest rainfall at Namutoni, with 665 mm. Cranes venture into this area often especially during dry seasons.

31/7/06: I am very glad to tell you that cranes of Etosha are doing well and they are currently concentrated in Andoni Plain since the drying up of rain water. Fisher's Pan dried up completely on 29/7/06 and there is no single pool of water remaining. Twee Palms also dried up on the second week of July. Thus, Andoni Plain might be regarded as the only open area for Blue Cranes to venture. You can see two different groups of cranes there, one group consists of three Blue Cranes – none ringed – and the other group consists of ten Blue Cranes, also none of them have a ring. It also used to be a group of eight with one subadult crane.

Crane count at Oponono

Wilferd Versfeld: Science Warden, Etosha Ecological Institute. Email: versfeld@mweb.com.na

I completed the wetland count for Oponono at the end of July 2006 (see map). Some good news is that I found 10 Wattled Cranes and 2 groups of Blue Cranes: 4 birds and 13 birds; and one single Crowned Crane. (The red line is our flight path.)



Ten Wattled Cranes observed at Oponono in July 2006
(Photo: Wilferd Versfeld)



Local crane strategies: Etosha & environs

Immanuel Kapofi: Area Warden, Namutoni East
Email: kapofii@mweb.com.na

The following is what all of us came up with at the meeting we held at Namutoni Environmental Education Centre (NEEC; see newsletter 18, June 2006). We hope it will work effectively.

ETOSHA CRANE STRATEGY

1. Continue to collect data form entries for cranes.
2. Promote crane awareness through NEEC.
3. Liaise with CBNRM officer in the North regarding crane conservation in the Oponono area.
4. Distribute crane newsletters to all ranger stations in park and to other interested parties, e.g. farmers, conservancies.
5. Build capacity and train local staff to do bird counts.
6. Information sheets for tourists to fill in (like data sheets).
7. Incorporate local school teachers for crane awareness.

NORTH CENTRAL CRANE STRATEGY

1. Radio programmes to increase awareness.
2. Consult stakeholders and raise information and awareness to leaders.
3. Implement anti-poaching measures.
4. Share ideas with neighbouring groups.
5. Invite experienced people to explain relevant government policies and laws.
6. Provide manual for training in local languages.
7. Provide feedback after meetings/ workshops or training.
8. Establish a local committee to strengthen the initiative.
9. Identify community members interested in cranes/ conservancies who are motivated and focus on them.

The following are crane coordinators in the regions:

ETOSHA (MET)

Immanuel Kapofi and Erkie Rehabiam, Game Rangers (Parks & Wildlife Management); Mbongaura Erastus (NEEC); Wilferd Versfeld (Dept of Scientific Services); Elsie Versfeld (Teacher/school); and tourists.

KING NEHALE CONSERVANCY

Johannes Immanuel S.; Mr Paulus (Headman, Teacher); Karin Kalume (FIRM – Forum for Integrated Research Management); Teacher.

NORTH CENTRAL

Hon. Lotto Kuushomwa (Councilor); Erastus Kapolo (Sec. CDC); Gabriel Uunone (Preacher); Samuel Nanguit (EE Facilitator); Saisai (EE Facilitator); Josef Bonifatius (Community Motivator/Preacher); Frederika (CACO); Phillipus Gabriel.

Crane news from Nyae Nyae Pans

Dries Alberts & Jakes Kolbooi (MET Parks & Wildlife, Tsumkwe), Email: mettskwe@iway.na

7/8/06: It seems the Wattled Cranes disappeared for a while after the aerial survey, although we visited the pan area regularly. Only on 3/8/06 did we see the first two groups of 11 and 14 again. Don't know what happened, or what is happening. The flamingos are still around (4000 to 5000) and 4 Saddle-billed Storks (of which 2 are young). Also, a young Fish Eagle!!! Very strange how this year is unfolding.

The crane resource books are doing really well. The teachers have already fitted it in with their teachings for grades 1 through 3. At the library, the books have been read a few times already - so all doing very well.

Crane sightings from East Caprivi

Collected from community game guards' event books (January to June 2006)

David Ward: Email dward@iway.na

Kwando Conservancy

No sightings

Mayuni Conservancy

29/01/06: 2 adult Crowned Cranes (Block no. 23 101, feeding on the floodplain)

09/02/06: 2 adult Wattled Cranes (25 101, flying over floodplain)

Mashi Conservancy

No sightings

Wuparo Conservancy

No sightings

Balyerwa Conservancy

No sightings

Malengalenga Conservancy

No sightings

Mbara Conservancy

10/02/06: 2 adult Wattled Cranes (Block no. 47 73, feeding on floodplain)

Bamunu Conservancy

No sightings

Lusese Conservancy

21/05/06: 2 adult Wattled Cranes (Block no. 17 31,



feeding in open grassland)
08/06/06: 1 adult Wattled Crane (Block no. 17 32,
feeding on the ground in open grassland)

Nakabolelwa Conservancy

No sightings

Salambala Conservancy

No sightings

Kasika Conservancy

26/06/06: 1 juvenile Wattled Crane (Block no. 9 18,
flying over floodplain)

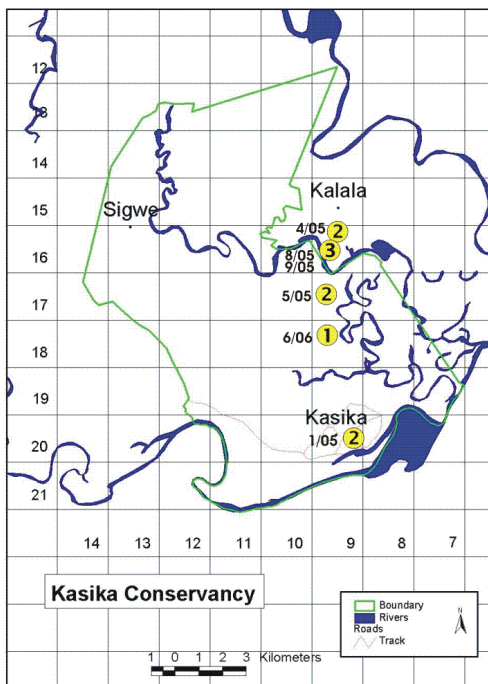
Impalila Conservancy

No sightings

Sighting by David Ward:

Nyae Nyae Conservancy – Bushmanland

14/07/06: 2 adult Wattled Cranes, Nyae Nyae Pan
(S19 46.041 E20 28.609, feeding in grassland on edge
of pan)



Crane sightings in Kasika Conservancy, 2005-2006 (see also Newsletter No. 16, March 2006). Thank you to Hertha Nakathingo of Namibia Nature Foundation Mapping & Natural Resource Information Unit for this map of the observation grids at Kasika and to David Ward for the records – and well done, Kasika Conservancy, for leading the way!

Ground Hornbills – not quite cranes but sharing the same areas ...

Dries Alberts (MET Parks & Wildlife, Tsumkwe)
Email: mettskwe@iway.na

31/7/06: I recently read your article about Ground Hornbill in the Game Hunt magazine (July 2006). In my capacity as Park Warden for the Ministry of Environment and Tourism (Directorate Parks and Wildlife Management), I would like to inform you about our population which we yearly see in the Khaudum National Park (North East Namibia, bordering Botswana). Although your article is specific to South Africa, I just wanted to inform you that we yearly see about 7 to 10 Ground Hornbill in Khaudum, sometimes even different groups with roughly the same totals. Do you have contacts in Namibia, or offices? Whom must I work through? Hope it helps and please realize that from our side we want to help and make a difference.

L.D. van Essen (Ground Hornbill Working Group, Endangered Wildlife Trust)
Cell: +27 (0) 82 320 6620, Email: ldv@ewt.org.za

7/8/06: Thank you very much for your e-mail and the sighting info you sent. It would be great if we can continue to communicate directly about the Ground Hornbills in your area and any/all info you have will be welcome. If you know of other areas where the birds are seen it would be great to know about, as well and who to chat to about those birds. Any private landowners/ communities reporting sightings of Ground Hornbills in Namibia that you know of? Do you have any indication as to the age structure and sex ratio of the birds you see and if they have nest/s in the park or surrounding area? What is the local population's attitude towards the birds and do you know of any cultural use of the birds by the local peoples? It would be good if we could look at setting up a collaborative research and/or monitoring project between yourself/ the Directorate of Parks and Wildlife Management, private landowners/communities and the EWT's Ground Hornbill Working Group. Any ideas with regard to this?

Carol Murphy (Conservation International, Katima Mulilo), Email: cmurphy@africaonline.com.na

We all see many Ground Hornbills often here. I personally see them when I am driving.