



March 2005

BUSHMANLAND CRANE WORKSHOP

"Bushmanland rocks" ... "Cranes are cool" ... "Cranes forever" ... this was some of the feedback on our recent crane workshop at Tsumkwe! Participants at this intensive week-long gathering in February/March came from as far afield as Oshakati, Rundu, West and East Caprivi, Windhoek and Swakopmund, with a strong local delegation including the Nyae Nyae Conservancy. For many, this was a first visit to Bushmanland.

Project report-back/planning

The programme started off our annual crane meeting, kindly facilitated by Dr Chris Brown of NNF. This provided a platform for reporting back and evaluating progress with projects, exchanging ideas and doing strategic planning for the next year.

Since its establishment in May 2004, the Namibia Crane Working Group is making good progress with the implementation of a seven-point action plan (see text box, page 1). An effective communication system has been set up, supported by regular newsletters. Much activity has centred on gathering information and data, and promoting awareness. Crane counts are taking place in some areas (e.g. Etosha and Lake Oponono, Nyae Nyae, Mahango) as part of a long-term monitoring programme, whereas in others (North Central, Kavango, Caprivi), local crane awareness surveys have been initiated. A crane data recording sheet has been implemented, as part of the national "events book" system. Red Data Book and popular species accounts have been compiled for cranes. Two representatives of the crane group participated in the AWAC training workshop in South Africa last year. In partnership with Wilderness Safaris Namibia, field guide training is in progress and we are involved in the exciting "Children in the Wilderness" programme (see page 2).

THE NAMIBIA CRANE ACTION PLAN

Our vision

Cranes and people sharing habitats in harmony in Namibia

Our mission

To conserve cranes and their habitats in partnership with the people who share these habitats

Our objectives

1. Co-ordinate conservation effort and promote networking
2. Obtain information and data
3. Promote conservation awareness/education
4. Conserve crane populations and habitats
5. Promote the economic value of cranes and their habitats
6. Build capacity
7. Develop area-based crane management strategies

Further crane surveys are planned for the coming year. Information on cranes will be distributed more widely, using existing channels where possible, and a website. Public involvement will be promoted, e.g. in the form of "crane custodian" certificates. Further guide training will form part of the development of a crane/wetland-based tourist route. A crane resource book and poster are being developed. Youth nature clubs are being encouraged (e.g. at Tsumkwe). Details of further planning at local level are provided in the text box on p2.

Crane count

Participants then helped with a practical (training) crane count at Nyae Nyae Pans, led by local MET warden Dries Alberts, and enjoyed the rich diversity of animals and plants including large herds of wildebeest and springbok, many kinds of birds and huge baobabs.





March 2005

LOCAL, AREA-BASED CRANE STRATEGIES

NORTH CENTRAL

1. Radio programmes to increase awareness
2. Consult stakeholders and raise awareness and information among community leaders
3. Implement anti-poaching measures
4. Share ideas with neighbouring groups
5. Invite experts to explain relevant government policies and laws
6. Provide training with a manual in local languages
7. Provide feedback after meetings/workshops/training
8. Establish a committee to strengthen the initiative
9. Focus on interested community members

ETOSHA

1. Continue to collect data form entries for cranes
2. Promote crane awareness through the Namutoni Environmental Education Centre
3. Liaise with CBNRM officer in the north to promote crane conservation in the Oponono area
4. Distribute crane newsletters to Etosha staff and neighbouring farmers
5. Build capacity; train local staff to do bird counts

KAVANGO

1. Communication: follow-up visits to new crane groups; contact regional communicators
2. Become directly involved in crane conservation; set up local collaboration group
3. Incentives: recognition for interested participants
4. Awareness and education: provide resources
5. Radio talks on cranes and their habitats
6. Newsletters/articles in local regional languages

CAPRIVI

1. Radio programmes
2. Collect information on cranes
3. Outreach/awareness in communities, schools
4. Zone areas for special crane/habitat protection
5. Implement anti-poaching measures
6. Bird guiding courses

TSUMKWE/NYAE NYAE

1. Improve communication with other crane areas
2. Promote economic value of cranes; tour guides
3. Environmental education programme with Ministry of Education: nature clubs, educational trips to Klein Dobe
4. Promote importance of birds in school syllabus
5. Collect crane data on data sheets

Field guiding course and "Children in the Wilderness"

A comprehensive entry level field guiding course with a special focus on wetland, bird and crane conservation, co-funded by Wilderness Safaris Namibia (WSN) and USAID, was presented by WSN to 17 trainees from our crane areas (including six from Tsumkwe) and a few WSN guides. The aim was to introduce prospective candidates, mostly from the Namibian community areas, to the world of professional field guiding within the broader contexts of eco-tourism and sustainable conservation practices. The emphasis was on practical experience in the bush, and most of the learning was by means of discussion and demonstration. Many candidates were able to teach as well as learn, as a result of their innate knowledge of the Namibian bush.

The course hopes to inspire and encourage candidates to an appreciation of a) the diversity and wonder of the natural world; b) the value of eco-tourism in Namibia; c) the opportunities available to keen people who would like to make field guiding their career; and d) the minimum standards and qualifications which will soon be required officially by the NQA and NTB if a guide wishes to work professionally. Successful candidates can progress to the WSN Intermediate and Advanced Guides Courses.

Led by Sunday Nilenge, the WSN "Children in the Wilderness" team presented an inspiring programme to 70 local school pupils. This event marked the founding of a youth nature club by Robin Lines of the NNF Wild Dog Project, supported by IRDNC and Conservation International in the form of donations of a bird field guide and other resources, and a pair of binoculars from the SA Crane Working Group. Our final encounters with Bushmanland were bush walks led by expert trackers of the Nyae Nyae Conservancy, and a spell-binding traditional dance ceremony under the stars.



Thank you

Our sincere thanks go to Dr Chris Brown for his ongoing support, and to NNF and SIDA for financial assistance; our capable local hosts, Dries Alberts and Jakob Kolbooi (MET, Tsumkwe) and the Nyae Nyae Conservancy; Tsumkwe Lodge; Robin Lines; Tsumkwe Junior Secondary School; Lloyd Camp, Sunday Nilenge, Marleece Jordaan, Gert Tsaobeb and Rosta Janik of WSN for their generous partnership; and all our crane supporters for their enthusiastic participation.