



THE FIRST ANNUAL CHRISSIESMEER CRANE FESTIVAL A SOARING SUCCESS

10th July 2012

Start

The first ever Chrissiesmeer Crane Festival, hosted by the Endangered Wildlife Trust (EWT) on the 6th and 7th of July, attracted over 150 visitors to the tiny town of Chrissiesmeer and exposed the alarming plight of our cranes and their wetland habitats to a concerned public. All three of South Africa's crane species are seen in the area, but the region is of special importance as a Grey Crowned Crane habitat. Almost every landowner has a pair of Grey Crowned Cranes either breeding on or visiting their farm, and in the winter months it is a flocking site for these spectacular birds.

Besides being home to the cranes, the area is known to hold more than 20 000 water birds on a regular basis, and is also a proposed wetland area of international importance. With only around 4000 Grey Crowned Cranes; less than 25 000 Blue Cranes; and only 260 Critically Endangered Wattled Cranes left in South Africa it is apparent that urgent work needs to be done to save these birds and the EWT is spearheading the necessary conservation action through its African Crane Conservation Programme.

Visitors to the Chrissiesmeer Crane Festival took field trips, guided by Ursula Franke, Senior Field Officer for the EWT's African Crane Conservation Programme, to view the Grey Crowned Crane flock from open safari vehicles. They were also treated to stargazing, facilitated by Carol-Anne Gillespie from Tribal Sky; various talks on bird related subjects such as frogs, orchids, owls and bats; a night drive with local farmer, Mientjie Rajchrt, where, to name only a few, Shrub hare, Jackal, and a shy Black-footed Cat were spotted; praise poetry on cranes by six local learners from the Chrissiesmeer and Kwa-Chibikhulu Primary Schools; and a variety of food and information stalls manned by a colourful array of local enthusiast, farmers and conservationists.

"We are thrilled at the interest and support we received for the Crane Festival and our hope is that the spotlight shone on the area will promote sustainable local economic development that enhances the ecological integrity of the area. We're already in planning mode for the event in 2013 and this promises to be an even bigger and better success," concluded Franke.

The Chrissiesmeer Crane Festival was supported by Qualitative Quarter, Painted Wolf Wines, Boland Cellars, Amarula, Izimbali Lodge, D'Vine Restaurant, Ocean Basket, Total, Amber Africa and Tribal Sky, Mugg & Bean, Penny's Recycling. For more information on the Chrissiesmeer Crane Festival or the African Crane Conservation Programme please contact Ursula Franke on ursulaf@ewt.org.za

End

Physical Address: Building K2, Ardeer Road, Pinelands Office Park,
Modderfontein 1609, Gauteng, South Africa

Postal Address: Private Bag X 11, Modderfontein 1645, Gauteng, South Africa

Tel: +27 (0) 11 372 3600 **Fax:** +27 (0) 11 608 4682 **E-mail:** ewt@ewt.org.za **Web:** www.ewt.org.za

The Endangered Wildlife Trust is a non-profit, public benefit organisation dedicated to conserving species and ecosystems in southern Africa to the benefit of all people.

NPO Number: 015-502, **PBO number:** 930 001 777, **Member of IUCN** - The International Union for Conservation of Nature
The Endangered Wildlife Trust is US 501(c)(3) compliant under **US IRS Registration number:** EMP98-0586801.



Contact: Ursula Franke
Senior Field Officer
African Crane Conservation Programme
Endangered Wildlife Trust
Tel: +27 83 332 8859
ursulaf@ewt.org.za

and

Nomonde Mxhalisa
Communications Manager
Endangered Wildlife Trust
Tel: +27 11 372 3600
nomondem@ewt.org.za

Physical Address: Building K2, Ardeer Road, Pinelands Office Park,
Modderfontein 1609, Gauteng, South Africa

Postal Address: Private Bag X 11, Modderfontein 1645, Gauteng, South Africa
Tel: +27 (0) 11 372 3600 **Fax:** +27 (0) 11 608 4682 **E-mail:** ewt@ewt.org.za **Web:** www.ewt.org.za

The Endangered Wildlife Trust is a non-profit, public benefit organisation dedicated to conserving species and ecosystems in southern Africa to the benefit of all people.

NPO Number: 015-502, **PBO number:** 930 001 777, **Member of IUCN** - The International Union for Conservation of Nature
The Endangered Wildlife Trust is US 501(c)(3) compliant under **US IRS Registration number:** EMP98-0586801.