

Blue Crane

Anthropoides paradiseus



The Blue Crane is South Africa's National Bird, it occurs mainly in South Africa with a small population of less than 40 birds occurring in Namibia. It is an unmistakable large blue-grey crane with a bulbous shape, pale head and long flowing underwing feathers extending like a tail almost to the ground. Their legs are dark-grey to black, and the bill is relatively short compared to most other cranes as it is adapted for dry land foraging.



HABITAT

The Blue Crane prefers short grasslands and is the least dependant on wetland habitats for breeding and foraging. Blue Cranes have highest population numbers in the Western Cape and the wheat and barley agricultural lands of the Karoo.

FOOD

Blue Cranes mostly forage in grasslands and wetlands, with their natural diet consisting of small bulbs, seeds and sedges, roots, insects, worms, crabs, fish, frogs, and reptiles. They also feed on crops such as wheat, oats, sorghum, sunflower and lucerne pastures.



BREEDING

Blue Cranes nest from October to February utilising a scrape on bare or rocky ground on grassy ridges, grasslands and sometimes wet areas. The nest may be lined or ringed with plant material and small stones. A clutch of 2-4 eggs is laid, generally 2 to 3 days apart. Incubation period is approximately 30 days, with both sexes sharing the incubation.

STATUS

At present there are around 25 000 Blue Cranes in South Africa. THEY ARE CLASSIFIED AS VULNERABLE.

THREATS

Habitat destruction and alteration – grassland and wetland habitat loss is due to mining, forestry, crop farming, overgrazing, drainage/damming of wetlands and industrial developments.

Poisoning – This can occur through intentional poisoning of cranes that cause crop damage. This can also occur unintentionally when farm workers bait grain for gamebirds.

Illegal Trade – Crane chicks are stolen from the wild to be kept as pets, for food or for sale to the captive trade.

Power lines – Cranes are injured or killed when colliding with power lines or are electrocuted on pylons.

HOW WE HELP:

The African Crane Conservation Programme of the Endangered Wildlife Trust focuses on crane habitat conservation, conservation-based scientific research, environmental education and awareness, risk assessments and threat mitigation and reducing unnatural crane mortalities.

For queries, donations or to report a sighting in your area, phone 011-3723600 or email: crane@ewt.org.za.

To learn more about the Endangered Wildlife Trust please visit our website: www.ewt.org.za

