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APRIL 2017 CRANE CENSUS

Our last annual wet-season crane census at Etosha National Park took place from 3-8 April 2017, with a final count of 13 adults/subadults. This is slightly lower than the previous year's count of 16. However, this year eight chicks were counted, of which six have fledged – a result that is encouraging, compared to only two chicks last year. This is probably a reflection of the relatively wetter conditions during the preceding summer.

Hanjo Böhme kindly assisted with a supplementary count the week before the main census. Gabriel Shatumbu and Sethi Guim of the Ministry of Environment and Tourism (MET) were able to ring one of the chicks, surviving from a very late second clutch of two at Twee Palms (NEF; first recorded on 2 May 2017), on 14 June 2017; the other earlier chicks were unfortunately all at the fledging stage and could not be captured. This is the second year running that a second clutch has been recorded for Blue Cranes at Etosha, with two second clutches being recorded in 2016. For the first time, breeding was recorded in the north at Andoni waterhole, although the nest became flooded.

As we now know, our wet season counts are usually lower than those during the dry season, once the birds return to the Park (2016's maximum during the dry season remained at 23 birds, the same as for 2015). For this reason, we again did not carry out a dedicated summer aerial survey but continued to count opportunistically throughout the year. (PTO)

Exciting news is that a record number of 32 cranes was counted at Andoni on 25/9/17 by Thomas Kornelius and reported by Gabriel Shatumbu, both of the MET. A further good count of 26 at Andoni was obtained by Toni Hart on 2/10/17. We are very keen to see if these numbers will be sustained.



Family group of Blue Cranes with chick at Charitsaub waterhole in the Etosha NP (photo Ann Scott)



First breeding attempt recorded at Andoni waterhole in the north of Etosha (photo Angus Middleton)



(L to R) Mike Scott, Sethi Guim and Gabriel Shatumbu during the 2017 summer crane census at Etosha National Park (photo Ann Scott)

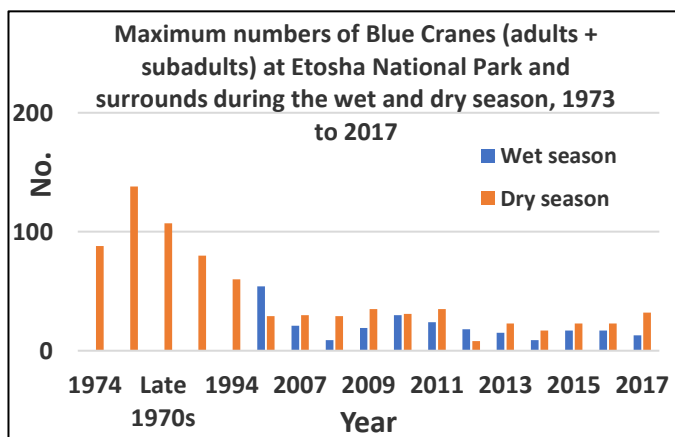
The following (ringed) birds bred or attempted to breed during the summer 2016-2017 season:

- Charitsaub (1 chick that fledged): NHF (2006) & NHH (2007)
- Salvadora (2 chicks that fledged): NHM (2009)
- Halali Seep (1 small chick that did not fledge): NHD (2006) & ringed bird (NBN? 2008)
- Chudop (2 chicks that fledged): NBZ (2008)
- Twee Palms (two clutches; second clutch had two chicks, one of which fledged, ringed NEF on 14/6/17 by Gabriel Shatumbu): unringed adult pair
- Newbrownii (nest only): NCJ (2014)
- Andoni (nest only, flooded): metal ring only
- Another ringed bird that was reported: NCN (2016)

Unfortunately, the satellite transmitter fitted to the Charitsaub chick (NCN) last year on 5/4/16 transmitted only until 19/5/16 (about six weeks). The family group, including the chick with the satellite tag, was observed at Charitsaub by Gabriel Shatumbu on 18 and 19/4/16, who reported that the leg tag was in place as deployed. About a month later the chick made a long maiden flight of around 50 km with its parents to the Ekuma River Mouth in the north-western parts of the Pan; however, it did not survive, for reasons unknown, although we can speculate that with the very dry conditions at the Mouth there was no water for roosting safely – the water had apparently dried up in March. A special thank you to Gabriel and his colleagues for doing a check at this site, and also for all their crane sightings throughout the breeding season.

We are also grateful for the regular reports of crane sightings, including ringed birds, that we continue to receive from birders and other visitors to Etosha National Park, which enable us to piece together the movements of Etosha's elusive Blue Cranes throughout the years.

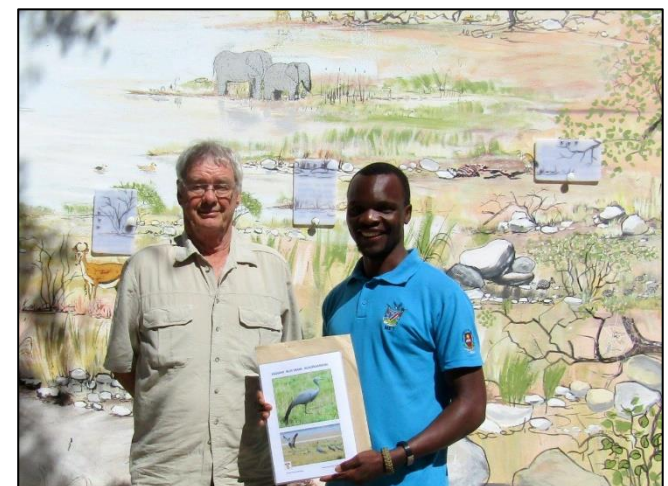
Blue Crane numbers at Etosha and environs have declined from 80 in 1988 and 60 in 1994 to 35 (2006-2011) and 23 (2013 to the present), with an increase again to 32 in 2017. The key question remains: to which areas do the cranes go when they leave the safety of the Park during the dry winter months (in 2017, this was between June and August); and how can crane conservation be promoted in such areas?



Blue Crane NHM with two tiny chicks near Salvadora on 17 January 2017 (photo Mathias Ebert)



A late chick NEF, the product of a second clutch, was ringed at Twee Palms on 14 June 2017 by Gabriel Shatumbu (photo MET)



(L to R) Mike Scott and Absalom Vilho discuss crane awareness materials at the Namutoni Environmental Education Centre, Etosha (photo Ann Scott)

In order to help us address this need, Absalom Vilho at the MET's Namutoni Environmental Education Centre at Etosha (see photos on previous page and below) is presently doing a sterling job with promoting awareness about the conservation of cranes and their habitats amongst the local communities.



PHOTOGRAPHS ABOVE (Absalom Vilho)

Above: Pupils from the JF Cam Primary School in the south (Hardap Region) investigate our Crane Activity Book under the guidance of Absalom Vilho at the Namutoni Environmental Education Centre (NEEC) at Etosha.

Below: A teacher and pupils from the Ondjora Combined School in the north, at the NEEC.



The Namibia Crane Action Plan is supported by the Namibia Nature Foundation. We would like to thank the *Hessische Gesellschaft für Ornithologie und Naturschutz e.V.* (HGON) and their associates in

Germany, Mathias Stein and Barbara Hudoc, for their continued interest and invaluable financial support over the years.

The results of the above 2016-2017 wet season count at Etosha have also been published as follows:

"Results of the Annual Wet Season Crane Count at Etosha National Park, Namibia." African Cranes, Wetlands and Communities newsletter, Vol 17 Sept. 2017 pp 6-7 (available on request from Osiman

Mabhachi (email osimanm@ewt.org.za), Community Projects Specialist: African Crane Conservation Programme of the International Crane Foundation/Endangered Wildlife Trust Partnership)

ARE NAMIBIAN BLUE CRANES GENETICALLY DIFFERENT TO SOUTH AFRICAN BLUE CRANES?

At last we have some answers to this very pertinent question! The results of recent Blue Crane genetic studies by the University of Pretoria have been published recently (2017). The latest study builds on earlier work and is entitled, *Landscape Genetics of the Blue Crane (Anthropoides paradiseus)*, and was carried out by Claire M. Lenahan, Arrie W. Klopper, and Paulette Bloomer as part of the Molecular Ecology and Evolution Programme of the Department of Genetics, Faculty of Natural and Agricultural Sciences, University of Pretoria, South Africa (report and poster downloadable from www.the-eis.com). The conclusions reached in the latest study are as follows: "... this study determined a lack of genetic differentiation and sex-biased gene flow between the two geographically separate populations in South Africa and Namibia, as well as within the large South African population. No significant spatial clustering of related individuals was found within the South African population. The represented Namibian population was also shown to have a significantly lower level of molecular genetic variation than the South African population and possesses only one private allele. These results suggest that the two populations can currently be managed together for conservation purposes, and that the Namibian and South African individuals are genetically similar enough that, should it be necessary (as potentially indicated by the significant loss of genetic diversity in Namibia), the Namibian population could be supplemented with South African individuals from either of the two represented strongholds." (Ed: Note that the studies are based on five Namibian samples; hopefully, additional samples can be sourced in due course.)

So, in summary, the conclusions are:

- There is a lack of genetic differentiation and sex-biased gene flow between the two populations (i.e. South Africa and Namibia), as well as within the South African population;
- Indications of subtle population structure were revealed;
- The Namibian population has a significantly lower level of molecular genetic variation; and
- Relevance of the study: the two populations can currently be managed together for conservation purposes.



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA
Faculty of Natural & Agricultural Sciences
Department of Genetics

MORE CRANE NEWS AND VIEWS



Visit by the International Crane Foundation

We were pleased to catch up (briefly) with our good crane friend Dr Rich Beilfuss (left), the President and CEO of the International Crane Foundation (www.savingcranes.org) in Swakopmund on 27 October 2017. Rich was part of the founder group that put together the Namibia Crane Action Plan, on which the activities of the Namibia Crane Working Group are based, at a workshop at Etosha in May 2004 (see our first newsletter in June 2004 and also No. 47). We are grateful to the ICF for providing long-standing encouragement and support to our crane conservation activities in Namibia.

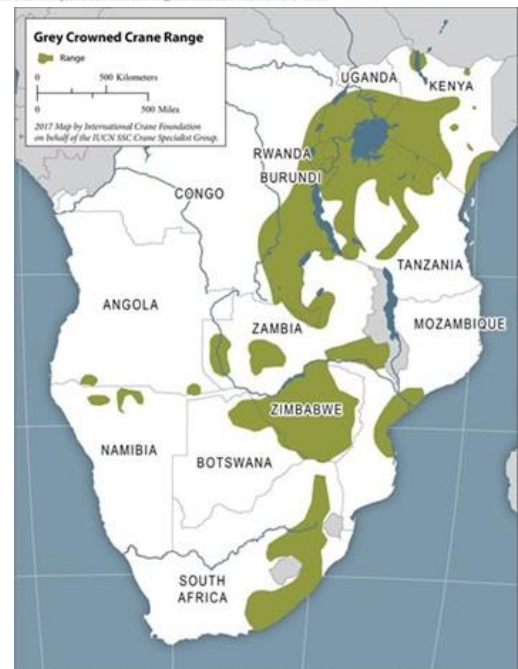
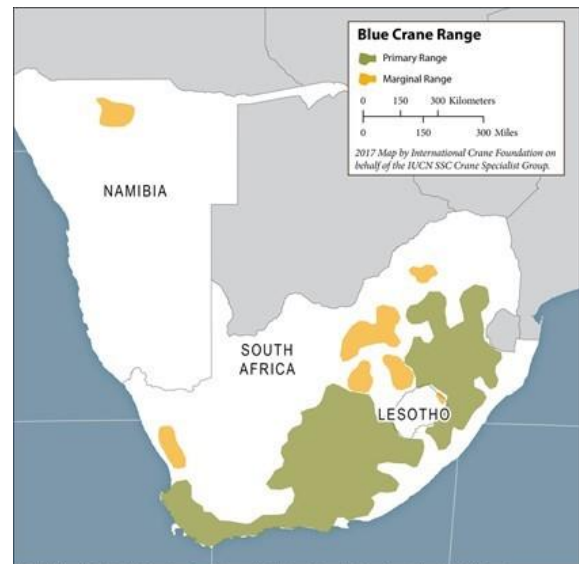
New range maps for the world's 15 crane species



IUCN Species Survival Commission
Crane Specialist Group (email
mirande@savingcranes.org)

The IUCN SSC Crane Specialist Group is pleased to announce that the range maps for the 15 species of crane produced on behalf of the Crane Specialist Group have been completed. An announcement has been placed on the Crane Specialist Group's webpage on the International Crane Foundation website (<https://www.savingcranes.org/announcing-new-range-maps-for-all-15-crane-species/>).

These maps will be an integral part of the updated global *Crane Conservation Strategy* (CCS) which the Group aims to publish in 2018. It is making significant progress on completing this landmark publication. In the meantime, these maps have great value and are available as low resolution images (see examples on right) on the ICF website (<https://www.savingcranes.org/where-do-cranes-live/>).



KAZA (Kavango-Zambezi) Bird Counts

7/2/17 Jason Gilbertson (jgilbertson@ppf.org.za)

I am the new KAZA (Kavango-Zambezi) Monitoring & Evaluation Technical Officer and we are busy developing a database to help promote wildlife conservation in the KAZA region. We are using different indicators and two of these indicators are the Wattled Crane and the Ground Hornbill, of my understanding you might be able to help us with. We are trying to collect information on sightings of these birds in the KAZA region (I am contacting you for the Namibian KAZA sightings) to create population counts per year.

If you have any data on the number of sightings please let me know or let me know who you think would, any information would be really appreciated. We don't have anyone working in the field but if we found and useful information regarding these birds we would be happy to share with you and we would acknowledge you on our website and the maps we produce.

Thank you for your time and help.

Jason Kane Gilbertson | KAZA Monitoring & Evaluation Technical Officer

KAZA | PEACE PARKS FOUNDATION

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Blue Cranes in Botswana?

24/6/16 Rob Simmons (Rob.Simmons@uct.ac.za)

I just read a review of the Birds of Botswana (by Pete Hancock) in which it states that Blue Cranes are known to have bred on the Makgdikgadi Pans up to 2000. Did you know that and have you been in touch with Pete about Namibia's Blue Cranes being there?

Ed: Yes, see below (and also Newsletter No. 47):

25/10/10 Pete Hancock (birdlifemaun@gmail.com)

I've always been on the lookout for Blue Cranes in Botswana, although they are never seen these days. None were seen during the waterbird counts, and there are none at Lake Ngami nor at Lake Xau which is currently filling.

The place where they used to occur (and apparently there were even chicks recorded) was from the eastern Makgadikgadi, just east of the eastern boundary of the national park. To the best of my knowledge, they've not been seen there for quite a while. They also have been recorded from the Good Hope area in southern Botswana in the past, near the border with South Africa, but I've not heard of any recent reports.

My conclusion is that your missing birds are not in Botswana. When large numbers of Wattled Cranes from Botswana went 'missing' some years ago, we wishfully thought that they were in Angola (it was the most likely place and one for which we had no information) – well, this was really wishful thinking, because speaking to John Mendelsohn and Mike Chase and others who have done

quite a bit of work in Angola, there are definitely very few Wattled Cranes there. So we are forced to conclude that the birds are dead, and I'm afraid the same is probably true of your Blue Cranes, regrettably.

Let me know if your cranes do turn up – I'm always happy to be proved wrong in cases like these.

Blue Crane report from Zambia

30/3/17 Kerry Morrison, International Crane Foundation / Endangered Wildlife Trust Partnership (kerrynm@ewt.org.za)

A quick note that I am currently in Zambia and learnt recently that someone spotted 3 Blue Cranes in Sioma Ngwezi on the south-western side of Zambia. They were there around 2 years ago.... They are doing aerial surveys in the next 2 months over the area, and I have asked them to keep an eye open for Blue Cranes....

Blue Cranes feeding on elephant dung

4/5/16 Carl Mitchell, Wildlife Biologist (Retired); Wayan ID 83285 USA (mitch@silverstar.com)

Thank you for sending the latest Namibian Crane News. Great photos of blue cranes. Always an interesting read. Regarding your observation of a blue crane feeding on elephant dung. We never collected any quantitative data on the phenomenon, but Greater Sandhill Cranes (*Grus canadensis tabida*) summering at Grays Lake National Wildlife refuge, Idaho, USA, often fed on or near cattle dung. Causal observations by a number of people indicated that such dung either attracts or shelters a variety of invertebrates, including beetles, various larvae, and earthworms. If you flip over the dung, you'll see lots of such invertebrates. We suspect that this cattle dung is an attractive source for cranes to feed on these particular items.

This is in a wet meadow system, so I imagine in an arid system like Etosha, it might be even more attractive for some invertebrates. Indeed, under some conditions these "hotspots" (if such they be) might be critically important in



Adult NBZ picking up prey items from fresh elephant dung in the Chudop area on 8 April 2016: is this an adaptation for successful feeding during dry times? (see newsletter No. 55; photo Ann Scott)

blue crane foraging. I've also seen Ground Hornbills foraging in fresh elephant dung in Kruger. Just a thought.

Ed: Thank you for these interesting inputs. Yes, as mentioned in newsletter No. 55, elephant dung and its associated fauna must be a wonderful source of food for cranes and other creatures. We have had reports of the cranes feeding amongst elephant dung at Etosha, and observed it ourselves in April 2016 during a dry spell (see photo on p5 and newsletter No. 55, p3 – information that we repeat, for the sake of interest). Mostly, when the birds are present during the rainy season, food is more plentiful from a variety of sources (invertebrates on plants or in the ground; grass seeds). We were particularly struck by the fact that the above bird was feeding on fresh elephant dung at this time, which could be an indicator of the relative dryness of the current rainy season. During the dry season the cranes move off to the communal grazing areas to the north of Etosha, where the cattle dung may provide a similar source of food.

Crane chicks and predation

5/5/2017 Mick D'Alton, Overberg Crane Group, SA
(mandjdalton@omail.co.za)

Thanks for the interesting newsletter that we received. The developments with and dynamics of your birds are fascinating.

Funnily enough after I had started reading about the chicks I had this thought as to how the chicks survive in this hostile area where I would not like to spend a few weeks walking around a waterhole on my own. You then raise the question later on with the picture of the lioness. Here with us (in the Overberg, Western Cape) we lose a few birds to predators and raptors and I have quite often found where adult birds have been caught while sitting on a nest, probably by caracal. I have noted that this very often coincides with bad weather, rain and wind and I suppose that is because the conditions affect the birds' senses and render them more vulnerable to surprise. Although not so easy to record, raptors must also take their toll. We found a Martial Eagle on a freshly caught juvenile Denham Bustard the other day and the Jackal Buzzards may also target the small chicks. The adults though are formidable protectors when chicks are threatened and we had a bird really threaten the vehicle recently.

CRANE SIGHTINGS THROUGHOUT THE 2016-2017 BREEDING SEASON AND START OF THE 2017-2018 SEASON

The second section of this newsletter (below) consists of detailed records of sightings and photographs of cranes made over the past months.

Thank you one and all for your interest and enthusiasm in sharing this information, which makes an invaluable contribution towards piecing together a picture of the cranes' movements and activities. Unfortunately, space does not permit the use of all the photographs you have sent us, but they are much appreciated. (*Note that the specific queries raised by some of the observers have already been answered by email.)

A summary of recently observed ringed cranes is provided below, for easy reference to the sightings mentioned in this newsletter:

Recently observed ringed cranes		
Ring	Summer	Nest site occupied/breeding
NHD	2006	Halali Seepage
NHF	2006	Charitsaub
NHH	2007	Charitsaub
NBN	2008	Halali Seepage
NBW	2008	
NBZ	2008	Chudop
NHM	2009	Salvadora
NCJ	2014	Nebrownii
NCK	2014	(Nebrownii)
NCN	2016	
NEF	2017	

HISTORICAL RECORDS OF ALL THREE OF NAMIBIA'S CRANE SPECIES

1950s/1960s Trudi Stols

(library@scientificsocietyswakopmund.com)
Sam Cohen Library / Scientific Society Swakopmund
www.scientificsocietyswakopmund.com

Some old photographs from the Sam Cohen Library that may be of interest to the Crane Group. The one above was supplied by Dr Markus Zschokke (1893 - 1971), a veterinarian who was active in the then "Ovamboland" (the areas north of Etosha). The time period for the photos would be 1950s/1960s.

The second group photo below shows a large group of cranes, apparently at Andoni, but unfortunately there is no date.

Ed: It seems that the birds in your first photo (the large group of flying birds, top photo) could be mainly Grey Crowned Cranes, possibly with 2-3 Blue Cranes on the bottom left. If so, this must be amongst the highest counts for Grey Crowned Crane in Namibia and an important record.

The large group at Andoni (bottom) consists mainly of Blue Cranes – but there are at least three Wattled Cranes, which is also exciting. We have only a few records of the species within Etosha National Park (e.g. 2-3 birds in Feb-Mar 2013 – and also more recent sightings below), but the ones in the photo appear to be earlier than these.



BLUE CRANES

Apr 2015 Konni Lilli (kornelialilli@aol.com)

Just heard of your great blue crane project. I'm not sure if you're interested in old sightings. In April 2015 we saw 2 animals at the waterhole Charitsaub (were ringed) and 2 other animals at the waterhole Nebrownii (photos by Konni Lilli and Silke Turban).



27/3/16 Guido (guido.coza@gmail.com) & **Hilda-Maria Botha**, NEWS (Information@NEWS-Namibia.org)

The photo was taken on 27/3/16 in Etosha between Halali and Okaukuejo. All I could see on the ring is NHD.

(Ed: NHD bred at Halali Seepage in 2016 and the pair had one chick [on left of photo], later ringed NCN)



27/4/16 Karin Nelson, Nelsons Safaris
(nelsonsafaris@tiscali.co.za)

On our recent visit to Etosha we came across 3 blue cranes at Charitsaub (1902 582S 1615 913E). On closer inspection I noticed that all three had engraved colour rings and one had a GPS/satellite tracker on its leg. On Google I read some of your newsletters and saw that the one ring NHH was used on a chick on 12/3/07! I've attached pictures of the cranes and their tags: NHF, NHH, NCM + tracker.
(Ed: Satellite tracker fitted 5 Apr 2016)



1 & 18/5/16 Domingo Tjambiru (dtjambiru@gmail.com)
At 09h00 I saw 4 cranes, 1 tagged NCK, at Rietfontein/Halali turnoff (gravel pit).
On 18/5/16 I saw 3 cranes in the same area.

13/8/2016 Francois & Julie Laubser and Mick & June D'Alton (mandjdalton@omail.co.za)

The Laubser's spotted 22 Blue Cranes at Andoni.



6/9/16 Vilho Absalome (absalomevilho@yahoo.com)
I would like to inform all of you that yesterday (06-09-16) at 12h30, I was graced by the presence of 14 Blue Cranes at Andoni Waterhole. The birds are back, I hope they are predicting early rainfall. I could only see about 3 birds with rings on their feet as the waterhole was packed with so many zebras, wildebeest and springboks.

6/10/16 Joyce Meyer (MEYER2J@aol.com)
via Keir (support@bluecrane.org.za) & **Kevin Shaw** (shawka@capenature.co.za)

On 6/10/16 in Etosha National Park, Namibia, several of us saw at least 10 Blue Cranes at a waterhole. We were on a Rockjumper birding tour. Once we got home (Seattle, WA) we looked at our photos and saw two of the birds we photographed were ringed. Here is the best information we can provide. We were not particularly close so our information is minimal.

- 1 crane: Turquoise band on right leg.
- 1 crane: a light blue (?) ring on left leg. Appears to be some kind of writing on the ring. However, we cannot be sure of the colour other than it is "light" or "faded" ring
(Ed: This appears to be NHD and NBW)
(PTO for photos)



23/11/2016 Christiane Maluche

(cmaluche@mtcmobile.com.na) & Hanjo Böhme
We spend a week in Etosha National Park and saw on 23/11/16 at Charitsaub the pair NHF and HHN (NHH) with what we think was a chick, it was not ringed.

The same day a bit later between Rietfontein and Halali near the turn off to Halali: NCK Blue Crane with one not ringed.

On 26/11/16 the same area at the turn off to Halali: NHM Blue Crane with one not ringed.

We hope the information is helping for your records.



24/11/2016 Kees de Jager, Netherlands
(cb.de.jager@hccnet.nl) & Maarten Hotting
(maartenhotting@upcmail.nl)

Last two weeks we were travelling through Namibia. We visited also Etosha and were able to spot (and photograph) two ringed Blue Cranes there.

Date: 24-11-2016 Code: G(NCJ)

Location: Etosha (near Okaukuejo), Namibia

GPS: 19 9 46.63 S, 16 0 58.88 E

Info: 2 birds, probably a pair; other bird not ringed

Date: 25-11-2016 Code: G(NCN)

Location: Andoni Plain, Etosha, Namibia

GPS: 18 31 15.66 S, 16 46 21.11 E

Info: 3 birds: We hope to receive a life history of these birds.



30/11/16 Xavier Birot-Colomb (xavierbirot@hotmail.fr)
I'm a French naturalist. I spent some days at the Etosha NP with three other birders: M. Birot, F. Birot, P. Pinon. We had two observations of Blue Crane to share.

30/11/16: 2 birds at Kapupuhedi, one unringed and one NCJ, green on left leg

2/12/16: 2 birds at Twee Palm, no ring, still there the

3/12/16

Hope it could be useful to the NCWG.



Dec 2016 Fred Hodgson (fhodgson@manx.net)

I saw a group of maybe seven birds amongst which was NCJ, near Newbrownii in Etosha last December.

In 2015 two more were observed with rings NHH & NUF (NHF?) in the same photograph.

I hope this is of assistance to your research.

Thank you very much for the information on the Blue Cranes which proved interesting. NCJ was with maybe six other Cranes just at the turn off to Gemboksvlakte from the main road east of Nebrownii (19D 09' 45.04"S 16D 01' 00.43"E). We saw them several times as we passed around 16/12/16.

Best wishes and I hope all goes well with the projects to protect these wonderful birds.

UK is only now getting regular sightings of *Grus grus* after many years.



22/12/2016 (and 28/12/16) Toni Hart & Elise Ferreira (mlarch@mweb.co.za)

Toni Hart from Birds of Namibia asked me to send you information about these two cranes at Charitsaub waterhole (above) in Etosha. We saw them the previous years as well. I am sure you have information of the pair, but may be pleased to know that they sit on two eggs now. Below: NCK & NCJ at Newbrownii.



24/12/16 André Meyer (andre@swakop.com) & **Mark Boorman**

Here are two photos of the (ringed) bird. We saw it near Okaukuejo, co-ordinates (about) S19 09.792 E15 57.801 on 24/12/2016 11:22

We also saw another one (not ringed), a bit further towards Halali at 14:34 S19 02.562 E16 15.910.

Ed: NCJ



(PTO)



3/1/17 Koos Zietsman (koos.ziets@gmail.com)
via **Maria Lopez** (safring@adu.org.za) & **Holger Kolberg** (holgerk@afol.com.na)

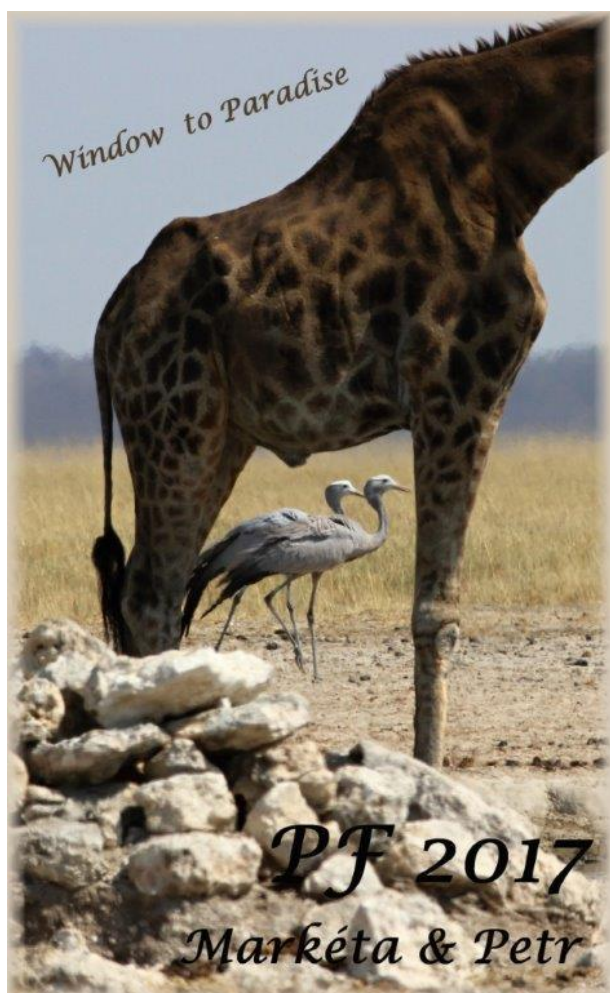
Ringed crane NHF was photographed near Charitsaub. Koos adds: Incidentally, we spotted a crane coming in to land at Salvadora fountain two days previously while we were photographing a pair of mating lions just the other side of the hill, the attached picture in near perfect light was the reason why we stuck to the lions and did not go after the Blue Crane, just this once!



31/1/17 Markéta Ticháčková (Marketa.Tich@seznam.cz)

I was very grateful for your recommendation for our travel to Namibia. With that we were lucky to see Blue Cranes and Wattled Cranes during our trip. If you would like I can send you some of our pictures of cranes and we also try to read bands on Blue Cranes.

Now I am sending just our greetings to this year ...



12/1/17 Matthias Ebert & Ernst Hönig
(ebertmat@web.de)

I got the information from a pair of Blue Cranes with two chicks in the vicinity of Etosha Lookout, as you can see on the photo. The left adult is a ringed bird; the second adult is not ringed. Between the two adults is one chick, the second one is hardly visible under the tail feathers of the left bird (photo by Ernst Hönig).

Ed: NHD – Salvadora



13/1/17 Angus Middleton (AGM@NNF.ORG.NA)

One bird was sitting at Andoni when we arrived, this bird had a silver coloured ring on the right foot. A second bird came in to incubate the egg. This bird was not ringed. A third bird was sighted near Namutoni (Lat -18.831; Long 16.918); it had no ring and was feeding.



17/1/17 Matthias Ebert (ebertmat@web.de)

As I learned in that small Eco-Museum in Okaukuejo, you are interested in sighting reports on cranes. So, I would like to let you know, that on 17/1/17, I saw one adult blue crane at the Andoni- waterhole. Along the south- eastern edge of Fisher pan, there was a pair of blue cranes, very far away. On 20/1/17, I saw a pair of blue cranes south-east of Salvadora with two chicks. They came right next to the road (25 to 30 meters), and I watched them for nearly 30 minutes. One adult crane was a ringed bird (Ed: NHM). Both were feeding the chicks with insects.



27/1/2017 Paul Gascoigne (pauldunelark@aol.com) & **Helen Pooley**

We just passed through Etosha. We were informed that Cranes were nesting at Salvadoria. Sadly, no sign of any Cranes here or the other two local places Sueda and Charitsaub. Delighted to say we did find a single Crane at Nebrownii on 27/1/17.



29/1/17 Michael Vivian (mgv6025@gmail.com) via Keir (support@bluecrane.org.za) & Kevin Shaw (shawka@capenature.co.za)

I was on holiday in Namibia recently and saw Blue Cranes in Etosha. The details I got were rings with letters HUF HNN and a green ring NCJ. Don't know if this is any help to you. All I can say is that they were a beautiful sight. If you have any information I would appreciate knowing.
Ed: First two could be NHF and NHH? – Charitsaub

6/2/2017 Christiane & Richard Maluche (cmaluche@mtcmobile.com.na) and **Hanjo Böhme**
We visited Etosha and saw the following cranes:

One pair at Namutoni

One more pair at Chudop, one ringed (NBZ) and a tiny chick

One pair on a nest at Twee Palms; it had rained heavily and the water level had risen

One more crane on a nest at Andoni waterhole, no colour ring



15/2/17 Steve Lister (stevelist@surfbirder.com)

During a very enjoyable bird tour of northern Namibia I saw just three pairs of Blue Cranes, all in the eastern part of Etosha. Two pairs both had two chicks, the other none, though they may have still been nesting.

One of a pair with two chicks near Namutoni camp on 15/2/17 had a green ring code NBZ on the right tibia. I have searched for info on this bird and it looks like it was ringed in 2009. Unfortunately I am not at all sure of the name for the location where I saw this bird but it was west of Namutoni.

Any info on your project and this bird would be welcome. I make a point of searching out and reporting colour-ringed birds in the UK.

19/2/17 Gabriel Shatumbu (gshatumbu@gmail.com)

Andoni 0 nest flooded

Twee Palm 2 adults, nest flooded (see picture of egg in the water)

Chudop 2 adults and 2 chicks

Halali Seepage NHD +1 on nest

Salvadora pair not seen

Nebrownii NCJ +1 on two eggs (see picture of position of nest)

(PTO)



28/2/17 Matteo Cuna (matteocuna@gmail.com)
via Keir (support@bluecrane.org.za) & Kevin Shaw
(shawka@capenature.co.za)]

On 28/02/2017 we were near Halali in the Etosha. We
spot this crane with green ring NHD.
Can you tell us something about this bird?



6/3/17 Absalom Vilho (Absalom.Vilho@met.gov.na)
The nesting crane at Twee Palm two days after you visited
me at the center, and a week after that, the whole nest
was nowhere to be seen, it was flooded.



9/3/17 Andreas Gayde (andreas@die-gaydes.de)

When writing my tour report on namibia-forum.ch
Matthias told us about your research. I have only bad
pictures, since there was not enough light and the birds
where too far away.

First sighting where two adults and two chicks at 8:00 hrs
9/3/17 between Namutoni Airstrip and the Bridge over
the pan (Ed: probably the Chudop family group)

Second sighting where two adults and one Chick at 15:00
hrs 10/3/17 approx. 2km east of Namutoni at the Fisher's
Pan road (Ed: Could this be the Charitsaub family group?)



16/3/2017 Paul Gascoigne (pauldunelark@aol.com] & **Helen Pooley**

Just went through Etosha found a Crane plus minus 3 Km along the main road through the Park between turn for Halali and Rietfontein waterhole. Fairly close to the road. See attached picture showing ring numbers (NCN).



20/3/17 Candice Zimny & Neil Thomson

(batqs@afol.com.na)

A picture of a ringed Blue Crane taken at Newbrowni waterhole in Etosha on 20/03/2017 was posted on Facebook (Birds of Namibia) by Candice Zimny. The ring is NCJ.

20 & 21/3/17 Ute Von Ludwiger (utevl@gmx.net)

On 20/3/17 I had 2 adult cranes, one with a ring, but could not see the number, at Nebrowni next to the road. I could not get better pics. Too far away.

I saw the 2 adult cranes with their 2 young ones on the Chudop Triangle on 21/3/17 at around 12:00.

No more cranes at all. Where are they all?



4-14/5/17 Ute Von Ludwiger [utevl@gmx.net] & **Hanjo Böhme**

4/5/17

6 blue cranes east of Salvadora at 11h on 3/05/2017

4 more blue cranes halfway between Rietfontein and Halali turn off at 11h30 on 3/05/2017

6/5/17

3 blue crane.....between Etosha lookout and Halali turn off

14/5/17

4 x Blue Cranes Fischerpan crossing at Namutoni.

10/5/17 Andrea & Hartmut Träger

(andrea.traeger9@gmail.com)

During a visit from 29/4/17-16/5/17, two Blue Cranes were observed in the water at Fischer's Pan (translated message in German)

30/4/17 Kathrin Herbst (kathrin_herbst@yahoo.de)

On three of our four days in Etosha we were lucky to see blue cranes. We heard that sightings might be important, so we would like to report them:

- 30/4/17: 2 adults at Nebrowni waterhole in the afternoon, probably without rings, but not 100% sure (high grass)

- 1/5/17: 5 adults at the main road between Etosha lookout and junction at around 5 pm, three with rings (NCN, NBN, NHD) and two without

- 2/5/17: 2 adults without rings and 2 chicks ♥ at Twee Palms waterhole around 11 am.

Ed: NHD hatched in 2006 (Halali east).

NBN hatched in 2008 in the same area.

In 2016, NHD and NBN produced the chick NCN below in the same area; NCN is one of the two chicks that hatched in 2016), and the only one to survive.

NHD was one of a pair that produced two chicks in 2017; its mate was ringed but the ring ID needs to be confirmed (This same pair had produced two tiny chicks by 3/1/18)



17/5/2017 Ute Von Ludwiger (utevl@gmx.net) & Hanjo Böhme

I saw 7 cranes at the turnoff on Salvadoria road/mainroad to Halali. SEVEN of them, could not figure out the rings. (One I could not get on the photo with the others.)
The one with the chicks I saw at Twee Palms. One chick looks quite big already.
Both were good sightings for me.



4/6/2017 Ingo Behrens & Berenike Behrens (berenike@batisbirdingsafaris.net)

My dad, Ingo Behrens, recently photographed two separate Blue Crane families in Etosha. He asked me to send these to you should it be helpful in any way. The one photograph clearly shows a ring (NBZ).

*Ed: These appear to be the Salvadoria family and Chudop family (the latter at Andoni)



5/6/2017 Hanjo Böhme (gmbhanjo@iway.na)

I just returned from Etosha and was lucky to see the pair of Blue Cranes at Twee Palms together with their chicks. Both adults are not ringed and the chicks look very healthy; the one a little bit smaller than the other one. Very interesting that they still have chicks so late in the season. The pair at Nebrownii are settled there and they walk around in the surrounding plains. Otherwise I didn't see any more cranes, even though they are definitely around.

3-4/9/17 Klaus Speedmann and Joris & Liz Komen (liz@narrec.net)

Klaus Speedmann - tour operator - counted 23 Blue Cranes at Andoni waterhole on the weekend of 3-4/9/17. I think that 23 is the known population in Namibia?

8/9/17 Quintin Hartung, Gondwana Environmental Officer (enviro@gondwana-collection.com)

I was up in Etosha two weeks ago (8 Sept) and spotted four blue cranes near the Andoni waterhole (near King Nehale Gate). See attached pics.

(Ed: Possibly a family group from either Salvadora, or Chudop)



8 & 25/9/17 Gabriel Shatumbu (gshatumbu@gmail.com) & **Thomas Kornelius**

On 08.09.2017 Mr Thomas Kornelius (MET ranger at Namutoni) observed 19 blue cranes at Andoni waterhole. On 25/9/17 at about 17:50 Mr Thomas Kornelius observed **32 cranes** at Namutoni Andoni waterhole.

(Ed: 32 is a record count, compared to our current maximum of 23; hopefully these numbers will be sustained)

14/9/17 Gabriel Shatumbu (gshatumbu@gmail.com)

Today from Lake Oponono I passed by at Andoni waterhole and following were observed: 18 blue crane total, among those there were known individuals: NEF (which I ringed at Twee Palms in May 2017) + 2, NBZ, NCJ + 1, NHH/N? (NHH), NCH/N? (NCN).

2/10/17 Toni K Hart (tkhart@iway.na)

We counted **26** Blue Cranes at Andoni on Monday 02 October 2017. I have taken some pictures of the legs which had rings.

30/11/17-2/11/17 Ann & Mike Scott (ecoserve@iway.na)

We checked all the known crane sites (including Andoni) and found 0 cranes. There was heavy rain at Halali and elsewhere on 1-2/11/17.

7 & 9/11/17 Uschi Kirchner (uschi@safarisuk.ch) & **Hanjo Böhme**

7/11/17: 2 Blue Cranes at Nebrownii/ 1 with ring NCJ/ 1 unringed (seems like the "old" pair)

9/11/17: 3 Blue Cranes at Klein Namutoni/all unringed (new site???)

9/11/17: 13 Blue Cranes at Andoni Waterhole/1 with ring NEF/another one ringed, but cannot see initials/all the others unringed.

4-6/12/17 Phil Palmer, Bird Holidays, UK (nightjar43@gmail.com)

Just back from Etosha and a green ringed bird was incubating at the same nest old site at Salvadora on 4/12/17 - too far away to read the ring and no other crane seen there.

We saw 2 more birds on the flat plain between Reitfontein & Halali on the same day - one was ringed NCJ.

5/12/17: We then saw 2 between Halali & Namutoni.

6/12/17: On the causeway near Namutoni airstrip we saw 2 more with one ringed but too distant to read (green ring on left leg), while 11 were at Andoni an hour later.

22 & 24/11/17 Hannelore & Marek Hrywniak and Neil Thomson (hrywniak@iafrica.com.na)

I am attaching three photos of a pair of blue cranes we saw at Kapupuhedi last week, while visiting Etosha. The one bird wore a ring with NCJ on it.



27/12/17 Alice Jarvis (alice@jaroconsultancy.com)

We saw 2 blue cranes: 27/12/2017 18:01

-18.829403, 16.924562 (Chudop Triangle – east). One was ringed - seemed to be 78N/NBZ.

3/1/2018: Gabriel Shatumbu (gshatumbu@gmail.com)

On 3/1/18 Mr Johannes Kapner observed 2 adults with two tiny brown chicks at Halali seepage. Among adults one had green ring.

8-10/12/17 Sibylle Haehner

(sibyllehaehner24@gmail.com)

Neil Thompson gave me your e-mail address to send you photos I took of Blue Cranes in Etosha recently.

We saw about 4 birds - all in the area of Salvadora.

The Crane with the Tag NHM was seen on 8/12/17 at Salvadora.

Are they also fitted with satellite tags?

On the morning of 10/12/17 we saw 4 Blue Cranes but I would think that one of them was Friday's individual.

One Crane was sitting at Salvadora waterhole on a nest.

One Crane we saw on the way from Halali close to Salvadora and the other 2 very far between Salvadora and Sueda.

I hope this information helps you a bit and thank you for the work you do with these wonderful birds!!

WATTLED CRANES

(See also photo from 1950s/1960s above)

4/1/2017 Fred Hodgson (fhodgson@manx.net)

I saw and photographed a 'family' of three Wattled Cranes in Mahango NP (now Bwabwata). One large adult with well developed wattles, one slightly less developed but adult plumage and an obviously younger bird with pure white head.

The Wattled Cranes were seen over several days, the attached photos being on 4/1/17 at 18D 11' 44.38"S 21D 44' 14.66"E.



22/5/17 Peter Hills (hills.peterw@gmail.com)

Via **Kerryn Morrison** (kerrynm@ewt.org.za)

Just to let you know my latest crane sightings. During May 2017 we spent almost a month in Namibia. At Etosha Namutoni we spotted both Blue Cranes and one (surprisingly) a Wattled Crane at the following location: S 18°47.221' E 16°55.816' on 22/5/17 at 07h18 (Ed: Fischer's Pan, north-east of the causeway).



See the attached photo that is yet to be added to my web site.

During August /Sept. 2014 we visited China Qinghai Prov. and spotted a Black-Necked Crane on 29/8/16.

9/11/17 Uschi Kirchner (uschi@safarisuk.ch) & **Hanjo Böhme & Gudrun Middendorff**

1 Wattled Crane at Andoni Waterhole.



24/11/17 & 1/12/17 Heidi Dednam GAVA Explorations, (heidid@gavaexplorations.com) & Peter Bridgeford

24/11/17 There is a Wattled Crane at Klein Namutoni.

1/12/17 A Wattled Crane was spotted at Andoni this afternoon as well.

6/12/17 Phil Palmer, Bird Holidays, UK

(nightjar43@gmail.com)

There was also a Wattled Crane at Andoni.

31/12/17 Chris Brown (chrisbrown.namibia@gmail.com)

I take this opportunity to report on Wattled Cranes in Mahango on 31 December 2017 in monad 1810_2143.

Two pairs plus a flock of 16. The latter probably in transit between Zambia and Botswana or vice versa.