

FACT SHEET – Grey Crowned Crane

The crane family, with 15 species worldwide, is globally threatened, but fortunately this status does not yet extend to the Grey Crowned Crane. However, like most crane species, the Grey Crowned Crane is associated with wetlands which are under pressure across the globe, and the Grey Crowned Crane may well join the ranks of its congeners if care is not taken to ensure its wellbeing.



It is one of the ornithological mysteries in Botswana that this species is not common in the Okavango – instead the Makgadikgadi wetlands, and especially the Nata Sanctuary, are its stronghold. It has been recorded breeding in the Sanctuary, and during 2007, the largest flock recorded in Botswana, 17 birds, was seen in the vicinity of the Nata River delta. The precise size of the population in Botswana is not known, but is felt to be low relative to available habitat.

Photo: W T arboton

The species is not under any obvious threat in Botswana, but is regarded as a Bird of Conservation Concern because of the low numbers, and pressures experienced in most other parts of its range. These include habitat destruction, collision with powerlines and especially illegal trade – because it is so beautiful, it is highly sought after as a decorative bird and this is decimating wild populations. In Botswana, the Grey Crowned Crane is a specially protected animal under the Wildlife Conservation and National Parks Act of 1992; trade is also regulated by the Convention on Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), to which Botswana is a signatory. However, there is no reason for complacency, and it is essential to gather as much information on this species as possible to ensure that informed decisions can be made regarding its conservation.