

IUCN SSC Crane Specialist Group



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Trust, Johannesburg,
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**RED LIST AUTHORITY
COORDINATOR**
BirdLife International

NUMBER OF MEMBERS
65

SOCIAL MEDIA AND WEBSITE

Website: <https://savingcranes.org/crane-specialist-group>

Mission statement

The mission of the IUCN SSC Crane Specialist Group is to promote the study of cranes and their threats, develop and disseminate solutions to those threats, and enhance conservation of cranes and their habitats worldwide.

Projected impact 2021–2025

Secure all 15 of the world's cranes and the ecosystems, watersheds and flyways on which they depend. Reduce or halt the decline of the 10 threatened species and maintain stable to growing populations of the other five.

Targets 2021–2025

ASSESS

T-003 Estimate impact of poisoning on threatened crane species and advocate for reduced poisoning at hot spots by 2025.

T-010 Understand the status, distribution and threats to Black Crowned Cranes (*Balearica pavonina*) across their range by 2023.

T-011 Update and complete Red List and Green Status assessments for at least two crane species by 2023.

PLAN

T-006 Develop and implement integrated flyway level Conservation Action Plans for Siberian Crane (*Leucogeranus leucogeranus*), Red-crowned Crane (*Grus japonensis*), White-naped Crane (*Grus vipio*), Hooded Crane (*Grus monacha*) and Black-necked Crane (*Grus nigricollis*) by 2025.

T-007 Develop a user-friendly resource for *Cranes and Agriculture: A Global Guide for Sharing the Landscape* by 2022.

T-012 Develop at least two National Action Plans for cranes in Africa by 2025.

T-015 Review and revise the Crane Conservation Strategy in 2024 for the period 2025–2030.

ACT

T-001 Implement the Single Species Action Plan for Grey Crowned Cranes (*Balearica regulorum*) by 2025.

T-002 Implement the Conservation Plan for the Eastern Population of the Siberian Crane by 2025.

T-004 Identify and mitigate factors contributing to the decline of the western populations of Red-crowned and White-naped Cranes by 2025.

T-008 Secure or upgrade level of legal protection for three or more crane sites by 2025.

T-014 Implement the Crane Conservation Strategy published in 2019.

NETWORK

T-005 Complete four field training courses by 2025.

T-009 Form the Middle East Crane Working Group and develop strategies for reducing threats including hunting by 2022.

T-013 Establish working groups within the Crane Specialist Group to increase the collaboration between members around hunting, poisoning, powerline collisions, wildlife health and research by 2021.

T-017 Establish one formal partnership that will provide financial support to the Specialist Group by 2025.

COMMUNICATE

T-016 Distribute a newsletter to the Crane Specialist Group membership every second year, updating the membership on the progress made towards achieving the Crane Conservation Strategy.



Rice fields protected to help cranes during natural food shortage at Poyang Lake
 Photo: Jin Jiefeng

Activities and results 2021

ASSESS

Research activities

T-003 (KSR 5)

Number of research projects completed or supported by SSC members per taxonomic group and region: 4

Result description: Although no research projects have begun in Africa, valuable data are being logged to record incidences of crane poisoning, particularly in key hotspots such as East Africa (Kenya and Uganda), where perceived risk of crop depredation may be driving increasing occurrence of Grey Crowned Crane poisoning on agricultural lands. Since October 2020, we have collaborated with the University of Science at Ho Chi Minh City, Viet Nam, to conduct research to assess the problems associated with harmful agricultural chemicals at two national parks in the Mekong Delta. We conducted household interviews to collect data about usage, people's understanding of proper uses, environmental impacts, occupational health and safety, and integrated pest management. We also used remote sensing data and GIS techniques to assess potential exposures of waterbirds to agricultural chemicals in the

buffer zones of national parks. Incidences of poisoning continue for Eurasian Cranes (*Grus grus*) in Central Asia and data are being recorded on incidences and types of poisoning to guide future efforts.

T-010 (KSR 5)

Number of research projects completed or supported by SSC members per taxonomic group and region: 4

Result description: Black Crowned Crane distribution, threat and population research projects have continued in Ethiopia, South Sudan, Chad and Senegal. Surveys of the cross-border ranges of Black Crowned Cranes, and the threats they face (including international legal and illegal trade), have been planned in the transboundary regions of Senegal and Guinea (Conakry), Guinea Bissau, Mali and Mauritania.

T-011 (KSR 6)

Number of species that have been assessed through the different tools: 2

Result description: The Green Status assessment of the Blue Crane (*Anthropoides paradiseus*) was last assessed on 31 October 2021, where the species was found to be MD (Moderately Depleted). The Red List assessment of the Red-crowned Crane was last assessed on 27 July 2021, where it was found to be VU (Vulnerable; previously EN/Endangered).

PLAN

Planning

T-006 (KSR 8)

Number of conservation plans/strategies developed: 0

Result description: With many important changes in crane behaviour, habitat, threats, and opportunities for more significant impact, in 2023–2024 we will do a substantial re-look at the situation across the East Asia Flyway. This will include developing new strategic plans for securing Siberian Cranes, White-naped Cranes and Red-crowned Cranes. The Chinese Government is developing a national Crane Conservation Strategy and Action Plan for White-naped Cranes that will provide guidance to national, provincial and local stakeholders for crane research and conservation in the future decade. They plan to upgrade the White-naped Crane to a national first-class protected species.

Policy

T-007 (KSR 9)

Number of documents provided to support/guide policy making: 0

Result description: Funding has generously been provided by the IUCN SSC in 2022 to develop a shorter, more user-friendly version of *Cranes and Agriculture*.

Capacity building for White-naped Crane project in Mongolia
Photo: Nyambayar Batbayar



T-012 (KSR 9)

Number of policies where SSC members provided technical input: 0

Result description: The Uganda National Action Plan was concluded and launched in 2020 and is being implemented, and a National Action Plan for Kenya is in preparation.

ACT

Conservation actions

T-001 (KSR 10)

Number of actions addressing major drivers/emerging threats of species or population loss: 10

Result description: Good progress continues to be made on the African Eurasian Migratory Waterbird Assessment's International Single Species Action Plan for Grey Crowned Cranes. Ongoing monitoring of Grey Crowned Cranes in South Africa, Zambia, Uganda, Kenya and Rwanda provides us with information on the trends in the population. In both South Africa and Rwanda, stable to increasing trends have been recorded. We also now have baseline breeding productivity data from South Africa, Uganda, Rwanda and Kenya, against which we can monitor trends. Crane ringing efforts in Kenya and Rwanda and satellite tracking of cranes in Rwanda are providing us with crucial information on the movement patterns of the species and the threats they face. Poisoning, powerlines, illegal and legal trade, invasive species, disturbance, and the encroachment of agriculture into their wetland breeding habitats are being addressed in all of the critical range states for Grey Crowned Cranes. This work is happening through integrated community-based conservation efforts and direct threat mitigation.

T-002 (KSR 10)

Number of actions addressing major drivers/emerging threats of species or population loss: 2

Result description: Through a 10-year Saving Wildlife grant from the Disney Conservation Fund, we are making significant progress towards conservation goals for Siberian Cranes. Adaptive management is practiced using Miradi software developed by the Conservation Measures Partnership. Synchronised surveys were completed in spring, fall and winter with a revised population estimate of 5,500 Siberian Cranes counted, indicating a population increase. Changes in habitat use and foraging behaviour were documented, including the increased use of agricultural lands, with corresponding changes made in protection and management strategies. The proposal to construct an outlet dam on Poyang Lake has resurfaced, raising serious concerns on changes to the ecosystem for one of the most important wintering areas for birds in East Asia. To ensure migratory connectivity, we are working hard to promote the necessary conditions so that enough wetlands are available each year to support Siberian Cranes. Due to the project's awareness and partnership efforts, local authorities are releasing water to create suitable habitat at critical periods.

T-004 (KSR 10)

Number of actions addressing major drivers/emerging threats of species or population loss: 3

Result description: Satellite tracking identified the most important stopover area for the declining western population of White-naped Cranes near Duolun in Inner Mongolia, China. Collaborative research initiated on population trends and timing, habitat choice, and existing and potential

threats was used to prioritise conservation actions for both stopover and winter areas. For the declining western population of Red-crowned Cranes, satellite imagery is being used to assess habitat change and identify potential areas for breeding and sites of local threats. Efforts are underway to protect critical habitat near the Civilian Controlled Zone in Korea where populations of Red-crowned and White-naped Cranes remain stable or slightly increasing.

T-008 (KSR 10)

Number of areas under management for the species or group of species: 6

Result description: There are currently around 100,000 ha under consideration for improved protection in South Africa. The establishment of Liaohe National Park in China has doubled protected area (250,000 ha). The scope of Tumuji National Nature Reserve was adjusted to cover the important staging area in the south of the original reserve (289,000 ha). Agricultural land was protected for foraging Siberian Cranes including Wuxing Farm lotus ponds (increased by 700 ha) plus rice fields managed by Yugan County Forestry Bureau (230 ha). Core breeding habitat for the declining western population of White-naped Cranes in Mongolia has been protected as the Khurkh-Khuiten River Nature Reserve (193,593 ha).

T-014 (KSR 10)

Number of intervention letters addressing major drivers/emerging threats of species or population loss: 0

Result description: Although a directed approach to implement the Crane Conservation Strategy did not happen in 2021, a large number of activities are underway, and threats are being addressed by members and the broader crane network across the world.



Khurkh-Khuiten Valley designated as Nature Reserve
Photo: Nyambayar Batbayar

NETWORK

Capacity building

T-005 (KSR 2)

Number of people trained in conservation action: 6

Result description: ‘Crane Custodians’ (community members who safeguard breeding cranes and crane feeding and breeding sites) have been trained across East Africa to monitor Grey Crowned Cranes and record their distribution and breeding success on an online app (Survey123). Uganda field staff have also been trained in poison incident management. A combination (‘hybrid’) online and in-person meeting was held in Mongolia to train government officials, reserve staff, and researchers on the socio-economic aspects of engaging herding and farming communities in protected area management. Local Chinese volunteers have been trained to conduct surveys of White-naped Cranes at unprotected stop-over sites.

Synergy

T-009 (KSR 1)

Number of in kind partnerships established and maintained: 0

Result description: A meeting was planned for the Middle East Crane Conservation Group as part of an international crane workshop in Estonia that had to be postponed due to COVID-19 and political unrest. The goals of the meeting were to address threats (especially hunting and poisoning) and identify conservation priorities for the region. A newsletter is being prepared to circulate to the group to capture current conservation and research activities in the region.

T-013 (KSR 1)

Number of in kind partnerships established and maintained: 4

Result description: Leads for each of the working groups have been identified and all have agreed to help establish and coordinate each of the working groups. Microsoft Teams sites were set up for each and several of the leads have already loaded background documentation to the site and approached other IUCN Crane Specialist Group members to join them.

Acknowledgements

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Summary of achievements

Total number of targets 2021–2025: 17

Geographic regions: 11 Global, 3 Africa, 3 Asia

Actions during 2021:

- Assess: 3 (KSR 5, 6)
- Plan: 3 (KSR 8, 9)
- Act: 5 (KSR 10)
- Network: 3 (KSR 1, 2)

Overall achievement 2021–2025:



3 (18%) 14 (82%)

■ Not initiated ■ On track ■ Achieved