

# IUCN SSC Crane Specialist Group

2018 Report



Kerryn Morrison

## Chair

Kerryn Morrison

## Red List Authority Coordinator

BirdLife International

## Location/Affiliation

International Crane Foundation/Endangered Wildlife Trust, Johannesburg, Gautang, South Africa

## Number of members

320

## Social networks

Website:

<https://www.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.

## Targets for the 2017-2020 quadrennium

### Assess

Research activities: (1) publish and disseminate the Cranes and Agriculture Handbook; (2) estimate the impact of poisoning on threatened crane species and identify strategies; (3) implement the 1000 Crane Tracking Project; (4) set up the Research and Monitoring Working Group, starting with crane tracking and movement studies.

### Plan

Planning: (1) publish the Crane Conservation Strategy; (2) implement the Crane Conservation Strategy; (3) develop a user friendly resource of the Cranes and Agriculture document.

Policy: (1) advocate for reduced poisoning at hot spots; (2) secure or upgrade level of legal protection for three or more crane sites.

### Act

Conservation actions: (1) implement the Single Species Action Plan for Grey Crowned Cranes (*Balearica regulorum*); (2) implement the Conservation Plan for the Eastern Population of the Siberian Crane (*Leucogeranus leucogeranus*); (3) estimate the impact of power lines on threatened crane species and work with power utilities in high impact areas to reduce/mitigate their impact.

## Network

Capacity building: complete four field training courses.

Synergy: hold regular meetings of species level networks for Red-crowned Crane (*Grus japonensis*), White-naped Crane (*Antigone vipio*), Hooded Crane (*Grus monacha*) and Black-necked Crane (*Grus nigricollis*).

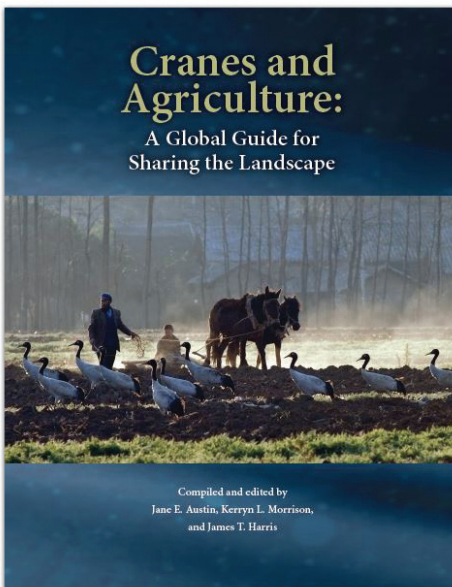
## Activities and results 2018

### Assess

#### Research activities

**i.** The IUCN Crane Specialist Group published *Cranes and Agriculture: A Global Guide for Sharing the Landscape*. This has been distributed widely in electronic and hard copy format to crane, waterbird and flyway networks across the world. It brings together published literature, experiences and lessons synthesised by 59 authors from 14 countries around the world into eight chapters and 18 case studies. (KSR #43)

**ii.** Several poisoning incidents of Blue Cranes (*Anthropoides paradiseus*) and Grey Crowned Cranes have been investigated in South Africa by local NGOs and the relevant government conservation agency. Almost all the cases investigated confirmed organophosphates as the cause of poisoning. Unfortunately, no arrests or prosecutions were made in connection with any of the poisoning incidents. Reports in the media of deaths of Red-crowned and Siberian Cranes in China from eating poisoned grains indicate that poisoning is an important mortality factor requiring closer attention. (KSR #32)



Cranes and Agriculture, Front Page  
Photo: Crane SG Archives

**iii.** Aimed at fitting trackers to 1000 cranes to monitor movement patterns of the 15 species across the world, we are slightly behind schedule on this project as we work on improving the technology. However, most of the tracking devices have been produced and a few have been fitted on cranes. Assuming that the challenges will be resolved, we should shortly be back on track. We have received official ethics clearance on the project from an independent ethics committee linked to the Endangered Wildlife Trust, which we can now use for all permits required in Africa. (KSR #12)

**iv.** The concept of a Research and Monitoring Working Group was introduced at the European Crane Working Group Meeting in December 2018. Lively discussion on crane tracking and movement studies fed ideas to the organisers; these in turn will be refined and brought forward to the next North American Crane Working Group Meeting in 2020. (KSR #12)

#### **Plan**

##### **Planning**

**i.** The IUCN Crane Specialist Group is nearing completion of the updated *Crane Conservation Strategy* for publication and distribution in 2019. This comprehensive report assesses 19 direct and 8 indirect threats to cranes and defines objectives and priority actions to address these threats over the next five years. It also provides updated assessments of the status and conservation priorities for each of the 15 species of cranes, bringing together expertise of more than 200 specialists. (KSR #15)

#### **Policy**

**i.** We have established that Grey Crowned Cranes are being poisoned around the South Luangwa National Park in Zambia due to the freely available access to agrochemicals for the cotton industry. As a result, we developed a project in collaboration with local stakeholders to address this threat and are looking for funds now to implement the project. (KSR #27)

**ii.** Documents are completed and under review to upgrade the core Siberian Crane breeding area at Kytalyk from a provincial level wildlife refuge to a Russian Federation level national park. Negotiations are in progress with the Ministry of Environment and Tourism to upgrade the core breeding area for White-naped Cranes in the Khurkh and Khuiten River Valleys in Mongolia to a federal level wildlife reserve. In South Africa, over 32,000 ha of key crane habitat for breeding and foraging of Blue, Grey Crowned and Wattled Cranes (*Bugeranus carunculatus*) has been legally protected through South Africa's National Environmental Management: Protected Areas Act. This legislation allows for the legal protection of important conservation sites through a legally binding agreement between the landowner and government. The land in most instances can remain a working landscape, provided it is managed effectively for biodiversity as well. (KSR #27)

Grey Crowned Cranes live in close association with people in western Kenya  
Photo: Kerryn Morrison



## Act

### Conservation actions

i. The first International Grey Crowned Crane Working Group meeting of the African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbird Agreement will be held in July 2019 in Uganda. In the interim, significant progress has been made on the action plan. The International Crane Foundation/Endangered Wildlife Trust (ICF/EWT) Partnership has now established community-based crane conservation projects in the Drakensberg and Highveld regions of South Africa, around the Kafue Flats and Liuwa Plain National Park in Zambia, in western Kenya, in south-western Uganda and around Rugezi Marsh, Nyabarongo and Akanyaru Wetlands in Rwanda, with regional offices set up in South Africa (in partnership between the ICF and the EWT), Zambia (in partnership between the ICF/EWT Partnership and BirdWatch Zambia) and Uganda (in partnership between the ICF/EWT Partnership and Nature Uganda). Together with the ICF/EWT Partnership, Ezemvelo KwaZulu-Natal Wildlife conducted the 23rd aerial survey of cranes in KwaZulu Natal, once again showing an increasing trend in Grey Crowned Crane numbers. Wamiti Wamyoika, under the National Museums of Kenya, is in the middle of his PhD aimed at better understanding Grey Crowned Cranes around Lake Ol' Bolossat in Kenya, and co-led with Nature and Biodiversity Conservation Union (NABU) a National Crane Census in Kenya in 2018. In addition, NABU and Crane Conservation Volunteers are collaborating in a community-based project to secure Grey Crowned Cranes around Lake Ol' Bolossat in Kenya. The Rwanda Wildlife Conservation Association (RWCA) has continued its groundbreaking work on addressing the illegal Grey Crowned Crane



Workshop participants for the workshop to develop a plan to mitigate wildlife poisoning in South Luangwa, Zambia  
Photo: ICF/EWT Partnership

trade in Rwanda, where it works in close collaboration with the Rwandan Development Board to confiscate cranes being held illegally in captivity and return them to the wild where possible. In addition, the RWCA has led a national survey of Grey Crowned Cranes, and has been actively involved in conservation efforts across the country, and in particular around Akagera National Park and Rugezi Marsh. (KSR #37)

**ii.** A conservation plan developed using the Open Standards for the Practice of Conservation is adaptively managed by a core team and 100+ partners. Nine strategies address key threats at breeding, stopover, and wintering sites including applied research, development of best management practices, improved legal protection and community engagement. (KSR #37)

**iii.** In South Africa, reactive crane collision investigations were completed and recommendations for mitigation were provided to Eskom (the local power utility company) and all recommendations were implemented. Proactive marking of high collision risk lines near Blue Crane roost sites in the Karoo and Western Cape has been completed. In addition, the effectiveness of power line marking in reducing collisions by Blue Cranes on transmission lines has been completed, with a 92% reduction in collisions by Blue Cranes. We have identified power line collisions and electrocutions as a primary threat to Grey Crowned Cranes in Uganda and are working on a plan now to mitigate for this. (KSR #27)

## **Network**

### **Capacity building**

**i.** A field training course on the application of hydrology and ground water dependent wetland system assessment and data collection was organised in Mongolia. This was co-hosted by the Wildlife Science and Conservation Center of Mongolia and ICF, and led by two experts from the US Forest Service. (KSR #17)

### **Synergy**

**i.** A six-country meeting is being planned for migratory Red-crowned, White-naped, Siberian, and Hooded Cranes to be held in China in 2019. An annual meeting by the Black-necked Crane Network assessed progress on research of factors affecting breeding success and incorporating curricula into schools near key sites. (KSR #29)

## **Acknowledgements**

We thank the host organisation, International Crane Foundation, which provided salaries for the Co-Chairs and Programme Officer as well as administrative support, and also the Endangered Wildlife Trust that supported activities by Kerry Morrison. We also thank well over 200 Specialist Group members who volunteered their time and knowledge for our activities. We would like to also thank the various government departments who assisted us with several of the project activities, and in particular those that resulted in land being secured under the protected area network. We had numerous sponsors for the activities completed in 2017–2018, and we want to thank them all for their support.

## **Summary of activities 2018**

Species Conservation Cycle ratio: 4/5

Assess	<b>4</b>	
Plan	<b>3</b>	
Act	<b>3</b>	
Network	<b>2</b>	

Main KSRs addressed: 12, 15, 17, 27, 29, 32, 37, 43

KSR: Key Species Result