

# Grey Crowned Crane

*Balearica regulorum*

That shining golden crown, the beautiful burst of feathers around the head, the spectacular appearance of these birds makes them vulnerable to removal from their homes in the wild.

## HABITAT

Grey Crowned Cranes require mixed wetland-grassland habitats. Within South Africa, the largest population of Grey Crowned Cranes is found in the northern Eastern Cape and southern KwaZulu-Natal. They are, however found throughout the grasslands of KwaZulu-Natal, Mpumalanga and Eastern Free State.

## FOOD

The diet of the Grey Crowned Crane is generally omnivorous, consisting of insects, seeds and other invertebrates in their natural habitat. Their preference for foraging in agricultural lands of sprouting or ripening maize, other cereal crops, or even cabbage, causes them to be widely regarded as a crop pest.



## BREEDING

Grey Crowned Cranes breed in the summer months with a peak in egg laying around November/December. They typically nest within or on the edges of wetlands with tall reed beds so that the nest is concealed from predators. The Grey Crowned Crane has the largest average clutch size of any crane, with up to four eggs being laid. Both parents incubate the eggs for a period of 28 to 31 days.

## STATUS

At present there are around 4 500 Grey Crowned Cranes in South Africa. THEY ARE CLASSIFIED AS VULNERABLE.

## THREATS

Habitat destruction and alteration – 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 to sell to captive bird market.

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](http://www.ewt.org.za)

