



**ENDANGERED
WILDLIFE TRUST**
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Stopping Illegal Trade of Africa's Iconic Crowned Cranes



Photo by Shawn Olesen

The magnificent crowned cranes of Africa are in serious trouble. The Grey Crowned Crane, once common across its range from Uganda to South Africa, was recently uplisted to Endangered, having declined by 80% over the last 25 years in East Africa. The Vulnerable Black Crowned Crane of West and Central Africa has also declined precipitously over this period and will likely be uplisted to Endangered when sufficient data exist to confirm suspected trends.

Illegal trade adversely affects many wildlife species in Africa. The exploitation of rhino horns, elephant tusks, and pangolin scales, among other examples, has garnered worldwide attention over the past decade. Many bird species, including parrots and cranes, also suffer from illegal trade. Recent reports suggest that the bird and reptile trade across Africa is significantly increasing as the focus shifts toward species that have not yet attracted broad public attention.

Live-trapping for illegal trade is driving the decline in crowned crane numbers and is a major threat to the survival of both species. Demand for illegal trade comes from captive facilities, which use the elegant birds for decoration

Did You Know

- ✓ Illegal wildlife trade is implicated in the decline of many species, and remains a significant threat today.
- ✓ Large numbers of birds are illegally caught and traded every year despite national laws and international restrictions.
- ✓ Illegal bird trafficking has been linked to the smuggling of elephant tusks and rhino horn.
- ✓ More than one-third of all bird species (more than 3,000) are victims of international pet trade.
- ✓ All 15 crane species have been subjected to illegal capture and trade.
- ✓ Nine crane chicks die for every crane captured for illegal sale in West Africa.
- ✓ In Rwanda, more Endangered Grey Crowned Cranes were found in captivity than in the wild.
- ✓ Wildlife collectors in Asia and the Middle East have imported as many as 500 wild cranes in a single shipment.

Help us stop illegal trade!

because of their unique and striking appearance. The illegal captive trade occurs across Africa, but is particularly prevalent in South Africa, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda, Mali, Guinea, South Sudan, and Sudan. Demand arises primarily from domestic trade within Africa (especially South Africa, Rwanda, Mali, and the Democratic Republic of Congo). Reports suggest that cranes are traded through the United Arab Emirates and into China, the Middle East, and East Asia for captive collections and safari parks. Both Grey and Black Crowned Cranes are listed under Appendix II of the International Convention on Trade in Endangered Species (CITES). Currently, trade controls in most range states are weak and ineffective.

OUR IMPACT

For more than 20 years the International Crane Foundation and Endangered Wildlife Trust have collaborated to expose and reduce illegal trade in Africa. In Mali, our undercover research with Wetlands International revealed that nine Black Crowned Cranes perish for every one crane that is successfully captured and exported for trade. In Rwanda, more Grey Crowned Cranes are held in captivity in the capital, Kigali, than in the wild. We are partnering with the Rwanda Nature Conservation Association to confiscate illegally held cranes, rehabilitate the birds in veterinary facilities, and release them back to the wild at Akagera National Park. In South Africa, our research has confirmed that significant numbers of Grey Crowned Cranes are removed illegally from the wild, but we have been unable to detect the final destinations or numbers. However, we do know of a case where up to 40 chicks were taken in one season from just one area. In southwestern Uganda, we have determined that Grey Crowned Cranes are being traded through market chains that extend to Tanzania, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Rwanda.



Photo by Claudien Nsabagsari

At the regional level, we triggered a CITES Significant Trade Review Process in 2009 that confirmed that trade in wild-caught crowned cranes is having serious negative impacts on wild populations. Trade is now suspended for Grey Crowned Cranes from Tanzania, and Black Crowned Cranes from Sudan, South Sudan, and Guinea. Considerations are underway to include Mali in this trade suspension.

The International Convention on Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) is a powerful tool for combatting illegal trade. Trade suspensions remain in place until the country in question can prove that export will not be detrimental to the wild population. Countries must also provide evidence that they are able to check export permits granted against actual exports, with the goal of limiting exports in order to prevent species extinction.

Going forward, we will focus on five key strategies to reduce demand and the supply of illegally traded crowned cranes. We will:

- Support efforts in Rwanda to confiscate captive Grey Crowned Cranes and reintroduce them to the wild. Apply the lessons from this successful approach to build comparable programs in neighboring countries.
- Research and document barriers to effective law enforcement that combats trade across East Africa. Collaborate with relevant law enforcement agencies and conservation authorities across the region to develop an action plan to address these barriers.
- Conduct a legislative review of four key East African countries (Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda) and four West African countries (Senegal, Guinea, Bissau, and Mali) where the illegal removal of crowned cranes and cross-border movement occurs. Advocate for stronger policy, legislation, and enforcement.
- Investigate the United Arab Emirates as an additional conduit for the trade of Black and Grey Crowned Cranes.
- Research and document the drivers of demand for crowned cranes and the extent of captive demand from safari parks, captive facilities, and wetland parks in China.



Photo by KS Gopi Sundar

WE NEED YOUR SUPPORT

The International Crane Foundation and Endangered Wildlife Trust are committed to saving the imperiled crowned cranes of Africa—birds that are at risk of extinction because of their unusual beauty. These birds are revered in Africa for their cultural significance. They are celebrated on flags and stamps, and woven into the continent's stories and myths. We will promote, develop, and implement a comprehensive trade mitigation strategy across Africa that incorporates our experience and knowledge of the illegal captive crane trade and that ensures survival of these iconic African species.

Please help us end illegal crane trade and ensure a future for our cranes in the wild in Africa.

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:

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