

Species Fact Sheets

Order: Gruiformes
Scientific Name: *Bugeranus carunculatus*

Family: Gruidae
Common Name: Wattled Crane

AZA Management: Green Yellow Red None

Photo (Male): Sexes are monomorphic



Photo (Female):



NATURAL HISTORY:

Geographic Range: Europe Asia North America Neotropical
 Africa Australia Other Endemic to eleven sub-Saharan countries; Angola, Botswana, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Tanzania, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

Habitat: Forest Desert Grassland Coastal
 Riverine Montane Other Wetlands/Marsh

Circadian Cycle: Diurnal Crepuscular Nocturnal Other [Click here to enter text.](#)

Cold Tolerance: To 70° F To 60° F To 50° F To 40° F
 To 30° F To 20° F Other Wattled crane are generally considered cold hardy. In South Africa, nesting birds can be

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seen brooding eggs with snow on their backs. Captive, Northern Hemisphere birds should be provided with shelter unheated or minimally heated for protection when ambient temperature falls below -4° F (-20° C).

	To 30° F	<input type="checkbox"/>	To 50° F	<input type="checkbox"/>	To 70° F	<input type="checkbox"/>	To 90° F	<input type="checkbox"/>
Heat Tolerance:	To 110° F	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other	Conversely wattled cranes can tolerate temperatures at or slightly above 100° F when areas of shade are provided. The use of a sprinkler system (hose with mist) provides relief during the peak of the day's heat. The provision of a shallow pool allows the bird to bathe and cool down.				

Diet:	Frugivore	<input type="checkbox"/>	Carnivore	<input type="checkbox"/>	Piscivore	<input type="checkbox"/>	Insectivore	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Nectivore	<input type="checkbox"/>	Omnivore	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Folivore	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other (Add Below)	<input type="checkbox"/>

Captive Dietary Needs:

Captive diet is usually comprised of some brand of commercially manufactured pellet feed, considered nutritionally complete. The addition of meat (beef, horse), and small fish such as smelt, or anchovy is often added to the pellet feed. Wild diet: Wattled crane are omnivorous consuming aquatic vegetation including tubers and rhizomes especially of the sedge (*Eleocharis* spp.), fish, amphibians and inverts. In upland habitats, they forage for grains, seeds and insects.

Life Expectancy in the Wild:	Males:	Unsupported sources indicate that wild wattled crane live 20-30 years.	Females:	Unsupported sources indicate that wild wattled crane live 20-30 years.
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Life Expectancy in Captivity:	Males:	In captivity, birds typically live into their mid 30's. The captive longevity record (from 2014 Studbook data) is 58 years.	Females:	In captivity, birds typically live into their mid 30's. The captive longevity record (from 2014 Studbook data) is 48 years.
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BREEDING INFORMATION:

Age at Sexual Maturity:	Males: 3-4 years	Females: 3-4 years
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Courtship Displays: Cranes are well known for their elaborate courtship “dances”, a series of bows, jumping, and stick/grass tossing

Nest Site Description: The nest is constructed of dried grasses, heaped into a large pile, surrounded by water at levels up to 2 ft (61 cm) deep. The nest base, at water level, can range from 4 ft (120 cm) to nearly 5ft (180 cm) across.

Clutch Size, Egg Description: One or two, mottled brown eggs, laid 2-5 days apart. Egg measurements average: 103.5 x 66.4 mm, largest: 116.5 x 68.5 mm, smallest: 91.0 x 60.9 mm. Egg fresh lay weight range 215.8 – 265.3 grams. 85% of captive clutch size is 1 egg and 15% of nests contain 2 eggs per clutch. This may be slightly higher than wild nests. Shortest inter-clutch interval range is 16-21 days.

Incubation Period: 32-33 days, though some eggs hatch as late as 36 days.

Fledgling Period: The wattled crane has the longest fledging period of any crane species, taking as long as 131 - 148 days.

Parental Care: Both parents share incubation, brooding and rearing of the chick(s).

Chick Development: Chicks hatch with pale buff down, changing to darker brown with age. The distinctive wattles of the adult are slightly evident on hatching. Chicks grow rapidly reaching full adult height by 4 months of age. . **NOTE:** parent-reared offspring should be removed from the parents’ enclosure no less than two months prior to the next breeding cycle.

CAPTIVE HABITAT INFORMATION:

Social Structure in the Wild: Monogamous pairs family group until next breeding cycle. During non-breeding periods gregarious flocks ranging from a few birds up to 100+ birds are formed.

Social Structure in Captivity: Monogamous pairs family group, usually parents and one offspring, until next breeding cycle. **NOTE:** parent-reared offspring should be removed from the parents’ enclosure no less than two months prior to the next breeding cycle.

Minimum Group Size: 1 pair

Maximum Group Size: Adult pair and offspring until next breeding cycle.

Compatible in Mixed Species Exhibits: Varies

Comments:

Wattled cranes have been mixed with other taxa with varying degrees of success and failure. Many factors play into a mixture for success, space being a prime consideration. Wattled cranes have

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cohabitated with bongos and a number of small antelopes. A more extensive listing needs to be investigated before making recommendations for appropriate mixed species. Traditionally, most crane species are housed independently for safety and breeding reasons.

Optimal Habitat Size: Enclosures should be as large as possible. It is recommended that enclosures be elongated, that is enclosure longer (depth) than wide. This provides birds with opportunity to move as far away from people as possible. It is recommended that enclosures be in the 40 ft (13.5 m) x 60 ft (20 m) range. Enclosure height needs to be 7 ft (2.3 m) to 8 ft (2.6 m). Top netting the enclosure is highly recommended at these heights and must be netted where the enclosure height is below the recommended height. Additionally, it is strongly recommended to hotwire (electric wire) the top of the fence to deter climbing predators (with or without netting). Likewise, a dig proof barrier is installed at the bottom of the fence to deter digging predators. Vinyl-coated 16-gauge over 11-gauge chain-link is recommended. The best practical material is 2" (5 cm) mesh 11 gauge galvanized steel chain-link. Aluminum is better, but more expensive than galvanized.

Management Challenges: Wattled cranes present several management challenges. Reproductively, few males perform their primary function of naturally fertilizing eggs. The challenge is further compounded by the fact that male wattled cranes do not adapt to the established crane artificial insemination (AI) techniques. Most males shut down reproductively after just 2 or 3 attempts to collect semen. Additionally, captive hatched hand-reared males become super aggressive at age of maturity, 3-4 years. These birds turn their aggressiveness toward their keepers. Inexperienced staff could be seriously injured during normal maintenance of the birds and enclosure. This can be addressed by the installation of a shelter design that allows non-contact servicing of the enclosure. Birds can be locked in or out of the shelter during daily maintenance. Likewise, hand-reared females may not bond with appropriate mates, resulting in conspecific aggression leading to injury or death of one or the other during introductions for bonding. Moving forward the program manager requests that no wattled crane chicks be hand-reared. An acceptable method for chick rearing is parent, foster, costume, or isolation rearing.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

Conservation Status: Currently (2014) listed as vulnerable in the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species. The South African population is listed as critically endangered in South African Eskom Red Data Book. Breeding Season: Wild: Varies widely throughout range countries. Records confirm that eggs are laid in every month of the year, with peak production being May through August, with another spike in October. Breeding Season: Northern Hemisphere captive: October to June, with July through September as molt months.

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African Wildlife Foundation; www.awf.org/content/wildlife/detail/wattledcrane

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