



East African Crown Crane

E & W AFRICAN CROWN CRANE

Gruiforms

Family: Gruidae

Genus: Balearica

Species: regulorum & pavonina



West African Crown Crane

Range: Eastern – Eastern Congo, Uganda, and Kenya to central Tanzania
Western - South of the Sahara desert and in the western parts of Africa. It is spread especially in Sudan and Ethiopia.

Habitat: Open savannas

Niche: Terrestrial / arboreal, omnivorous, diurnal

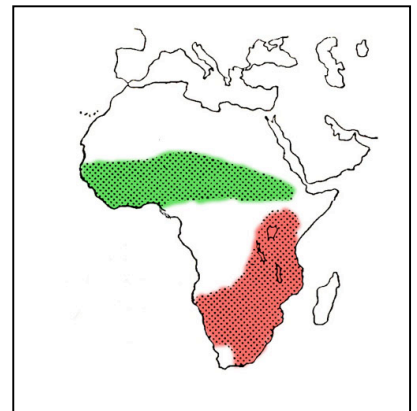
Wild diet: invertebrates, insects and vegetable matter

Zoo diet: commercially prepared 'Crane diet'

Life Span: (Wild)
(Captivity)

Sexual dimorphism: none

Location in SF Zoo: Eastern - African savanna, Western – off exhibit



APPEARANCE & PHYSICAL ADAPTATIONS:

The crowned Crane wears a fan of straw-like bristles on its head. In front of this ornament is a velvety spray of blackish feathers. Otherwise it is generally with yellowish white on wings. There is a white patch behind the eyes. Their neck is long and slender (Western neck feathers are black whereas the Eastern's are gray). Their bill is short, powerful and straight, adapted for grasping insects and grazing on vegetation. They have a short stubby tail and long legs. Though they are partially aquatic feeders, their feet are not webbed. These birds do not have a crop.

Weight: 6.6 – 8.8 lbs

Length: 39 inches

Wingspan: up to 72 inches

Their large broad wings provide excellent flying ability; they fly with their neck outstretched forward with legs stretched horizontally behind the tail, except in cold weather when they tuck their feet under breast feathers.

STATUS & CONSERVATION

Cranes in general are among the most endangered families due to a combination of loss of wetlands, plumage and egg trade.

COMMUNICATION AND OTHER BEHAVIOR

Vocalizations can carry for several miles and during migration may serve to keep the flock together. The “courtship dances” have been seen throughout the year and also preformed by juvenile birds.

Stamping their feet as they walk, they flush out insects which are quickly caught and eaten. Also, they associate grazing herbivores, perhaps to benefit by increasing number of prey, and also from prey items disturbed.

COURTSHIP AND YOUNG

Cranes perform an elaborate courtship dance that consist of head bobbing, deep bows, leaps, grasping with its bill and tossing of objects, running with wings flapping and short low ritual flights. These birds are monogamous that with the onset of the rainy season begin their mating rituals. Mated pairs retreat to secluded grasslands where they establish and vigorously defend their territory. Nests are made from grasses and reeds, usually in trees. The precocial young are fed by both parents for up to 6 months.

| | |
|---------------------|--------------------------|
| Incubation: 32 days | Sexual Maturity: 2 years |
| # of Young: 2 | Fledging: 4 months |

MISCELLANEOUS

Crown cranes are the “living fossils” among the crane family. During the Eocene, 34 - 58 million years ago, they flourished in the northern continents. The Ice Age restricted these birds to the central African savannas while cold-adapted cranes evolved to replace them in more northern regions.

They are the only cranes to perch in trees, with a partiality for solitary trees that afford a wide view. They are able to do this with their long hind toe that can grasp branches.

Eastern crowned crane (*Balearica reulorum*) is also referred to as the Grey Crowned crane and is the national bird of Uganda whereas the Western crowned crane (*Balearica pavonina*) is referred to as the Northern crowned or Black Crowned crane and is the national bird of Nigeria.

Sources:

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Handbok of the Birds of the World, Vol 3; Lynx Ediciones, 1992, Barcelona, Spain

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