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**SYMPOSIUM: DISTRIBUTION AND ABUNDANCE OF AFRICAN BIRDS**

**CHAIR: LES UNDERHILL**

*Abstract*

**The World Crane Action Plan: implications for conservation of cranes and wetlands in Africa**

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The IUCN Species Survival Commission recently published The Cranes: Status Survey and Conservation Action Plan. Prepared over the past three years by the IUCN Crane Specialist Group, the document reviews the status of the world's cranes (Family: Gruidae) and their habitats, summarises recent crane conservation actions, and specifies priority measures for the future. Eleven of the 15 crane species are now proposed for inclusion on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Animals, and several subspecies and populations are critically endangered. Africa supports six species of cranes in 39 countries. The Black Crowned Crane *Balearica pavonina*, national bird of Nigeria, is resident in western and central Africa. The Grey Crowned Crane *B. regulorum*, national bird of Uganda, spans eastern and southern Africa. The Wattled Crane *Bugeranus carunculatus*, largest and rarest of Africa's cranes, ranges from Ethiopia to South Africa. The Blue Crane *Anthropoides paradiseus*, national bird of South Africa, is endemic to South Africa and Namibia. The Demoiselle Crane *A. Virgo* and Eurasian Crane *Grus grus* are winter visitors. Cranes have been the focus of intensive captive propagation and reintroduction programs as well as extensive habitat protection efforts. They are also excellent umbrella species for ecosystem-level conservation efforts. Wetlands that provide a home for cranes include the floodplains of the great river systems of Africa, such as Kafue Flats and Zambezi Delta of the Zambezi River system, the Okavango River Delta, the Sudd of the Upper Nile River, the Bangweulu Basin and swamps of the Zaire River system, the Senegal River Delta, and the Inner Niger River Delta, and the wetlands of Lake Chad. Small, isolated wetlands provide vital breeding habitat. This presentation will provide an overview of the action plan for those interested in cranes in particular, as well as those working in ecosystems and regions where cranes occur.