

WETLANDS HABITATS IN WEST AND CENTRAL AFRICA

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1 INTRODUCTION

In W Africa, Crowned cranes' concentrations exist in 2 main areas, Senegambia and the Chad basin, with intervening area sparsely populated. According to URBAN *and al*, 1986, numbers in W Africa reduced during 1970s ; total population Senegambia and Mauritania, 2500-3500 ; Mali, Upper Volta, Ivory Coast, Ghana and Niger combined, only a few thousand at most ; NE Nigeria, low hundreds ; now probably extinct in most of former Nigeria range. Status, 1980s in W Africa (*Balearica pavonina pavonina*) threatened in parts of its range or on verge of extinction, e.g. Nigeria.

2 CROWNED CRANE'S HABITATS AND FOOD

Crowned cranes inhabit dry and wet open areas including marshes, damp fields and open margins of lakes and rivers ; they are rarely associated with open water. They roost in trees. Feeding grounds may be several km away, although sometimes within walking distance (URBAN *and al*, 1986). These birds feed most often on the cultivation and they are also to be met with frequently on the sandy beds of the rivers or on their banks (BANNERMAN, 1931).

Food : Mainly live prey, according to BOUET, 1955. MACKWORTH-PRAED and GRANT, 1970, note small reptiles and large insects (locusts and grasshoppers). But crane is also fond of plant material, rice and water lilies' seeds (BOUET, 1955) and is often encountered feeding on cultivation (BANNERMAN, 1953). The biggest concentrations I personally saw were always on dry ploughed rice fields.



Mi pour la casale

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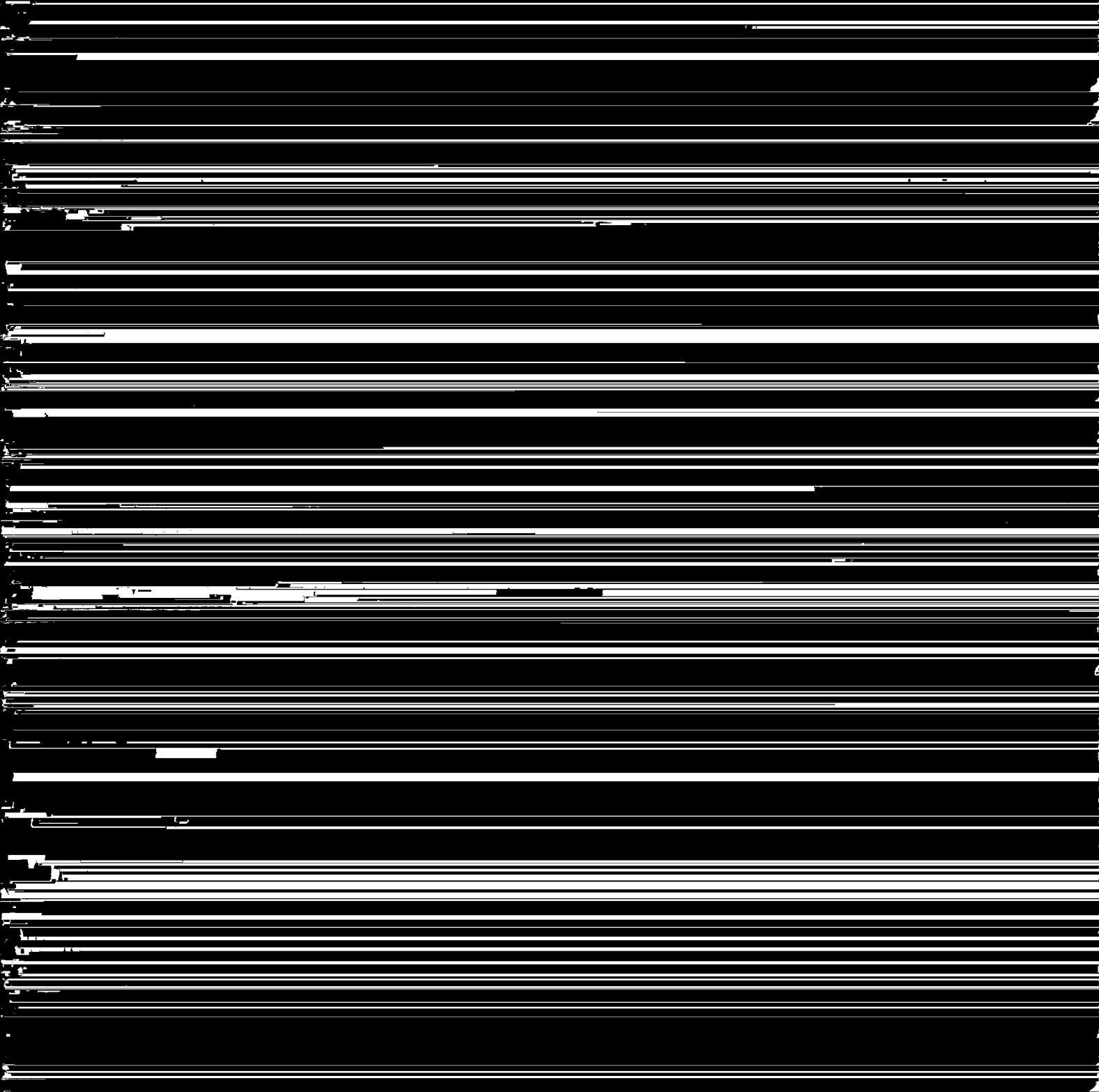
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Rapport de mission au Nigéria (23/02 - 03/03/1992)

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La conférence internationale sur la grue couronnée et ses habitats humides en Afrique de l'ouest et centrale s'est tenue au Bagauda Lake Hotel de KANO, au nord du Nigéria, du 24 au 27/02/1992. Cette conférence financée par l'ambassade des Pays-Bas au Nigéria a réuni une centaine de personnes parmi lesquelles on peut citer Richard BEILFUSS, des USA, représentant l'*International Crane Foundation*, Phillip HALL, directeur technique de la *Nigerian Conservation Foundation*, Dr Hadi MUSTAPHA, du *Ministry of agriculture and natural resources Kano State Nigéria*. Le SOUDAN et l'Ethiopie étaient



Parmi les principales recommandations, on peut retenir :

- la recherche des données numériques de base par deux recensements annuels (août et février) ;
- la création d'un centre de coordination pour rassembler les résultats des recensements dans chaque pays ;
- la recherche des sites importants pour la survie des grues couronnées (par exemple en fin de saison sèche) ;
- la recherche des besoins des populations rurales vivant dans les mêmes zones que les grues ;
- la recherche des zones de reproduction et une étude des modalités de reproduction dans chaque pays ;
- le renforcement des lois de protection ;
- l'éducation du public par tout moyen audiovisuel approprié ;
- des enquêtes sur l'usage des pesticides ;
- une étude d'impact sur l'environnement avant tout aménagement hydro-agricole important...

Le texte des différentes communications et les recommandations seront publiées dans des *Proceedings*.

Les 27 et 28 février, nous avons été rendre une visite de politesse au vice gouverneur de l'état de Kano, puis à Sa Majesté l'Emir de KANO. Puis une visite des zones humides de la région de HADEIJIA-NGURU près de la frontière avec le TCHAD fut couplée avec un relâcher de 2 grues couronnées venant du Parc zoologique, devant une très importante population locale et avec un maximum de publicité.

J'ai eu quelques difficultés pour trouver une place dans
un avion pour rentrer en Gambia et de puis finalement arrivé

3 RECENT CHANGES IN WEST AND CENTRAL AFRICA'S HABITATS.

3.1 climatic changes in the Sahelian zone

3.4 Quantity of available food (antilocusts spraying)

Aerial spraying have extended during the past decades in order to fight the locusts swarms which were one of the main food sources for crowned cranes. Besides the possible direct poisoning of cranes eating sprayed locusts, the lack of food (large insects) may have a real impact on cranes' population.

The area sprayed in 1988/1989 is greater than the cultivated area because some parts have been sprayed twice or more. By mean, 2 500 000 ha per country have been sprayed in 1988/1989 in Mali, in Niger, in Chad and in Mauritania. In Senegal, only 246 640 ha sprayed. In Burkina Faso and in the Cape Verde Islands, although there have been locusts' swarms, no extensive spraying occurred (A. NDIAYE, personnal communication).

3.5 More informations about recent changes in some countries

3.5.1 SENEGAL

Two dams have recently been built on the Senegal river. Manatali's dam in Mali

will retain the flood and permit the irrigation of a huge area for agricultural

As for the Djoudj national Park, where crowned cranes breed, there is now a need for water management. Water is available in quantity because of the dams on the Senegal river, but changes in the environment have been recorded recently

3.5.4 BURKINA FASO

The only large lake, the Mare d'Oursi, is now rather intensively cultivated and human population has noticeably increased. There are proposals (STUART *and al*, 1990) for new ornithological reserves at Beli and Mare d'Oursi. The effects of irrigation projects on wildlife should be monitored, particularly in the north of the country.

3.5.5 NIGER

According to STUART *and al*, 1990, Niger is one of several sahelian countries that has suffered very severe degradation of its natural resources as a consequence of droughts and overgrazing by livestock... "W" National Park is one of the key areas for conservation of savanna in West Africa. Further to the north along the Niger River are some other important habitats for wildlife... Important wetlands exist in the southeast around Lake Chad, but these are not currently the subject of any conservation initiatives. There are numerous seasonal wetlands or "mares" with ponded water, which are often wooded, across the Sahel zone. These are extremely important for wildlife, particularly birds, and need to be evaluated.

3.5.6 NIGERIA

Nigeria has many important wetlands sites, particularly in the north, e.g. Lake Chad, the Hadejia-Nguru Wetlands and others in many areas, including around Kano. Current problems which need addressing, according to STUART *and al*, 1990, include sustainable use of wetlands resources by local people and the ecological implications of irrigation schemes (in the north of the country).

3.5.7 CAMEROON

Water management schemes in the north have disrupted natural flooding regimes, with a resultant serious deleterious effect on species and habitats. In Waza National Park, there have been decreases of wildlife owing to the reduced flooding of the plains since the creation of a dam on the Logone River (STUART *and al*, 1990).

3.5.8 CHAD

Due to the drought, cattle go now further south, where there is still water and pasture to feed on. That leads to an important population increase in some places that were good habitats for crowned cranes. STUART *and al*, 1990, note that several wetlands areas in the country are at risk from pressure to pursue intensive irrigated agriculture and increasing use of pasture and fisheries resources. Also Chad's critical

The need is great for a common strategy, for a research's coordination, for a census of populations and the diffusion of results in the different countries involved. The monitoring of cranes' populations needs an urgent agricultural - conservation - fishing and hunting coordination.

5 BIBLIOGRAPHY

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