

Grey Crowned Crane

Balearica regulorum



Class: *Aves*

Order: *Gruiformes*

Family: *Gruidae*

Characteristics:

Grey crowned cranes can be identified by the unique yellowish feather crown on top of their heads. Both sexes are similar except the male is slightly larger. Breeding adults have grey to blue irises while the juvenile tend to have brown irises. The grey crowned cranes' bodies are covered with pearl grey feathers, and they have a longer back toe which allows them to perch in trees. On the neck is a red gular sac which is similar to a wattle but inflatable ([Animal Web Diversity](#)).

Behavior:

Grey Crowned Cranes are not migratory, although they may make limited seasonal moves based on food availability. They prefer to live in grasslands next to bodies of water and feed in open savannahs, pastures and grasslands. Like most cranes, the grey crowns will dance and present "gifts" (often sticks) to impress a potential mate.

Reproduction:

The timing of breeding varies depending on the rains. In East Africa, they breed during the drier season while in southern Africa they prefer to breed during the wet season. Grey crowned cranes usually nest in tall vegetation where their chicks can be concealed from predators. They have the largest average clutch size of the cranes at 2-3 eggs which hatch following a 28-31 days incubation period ([Arkive](#)).

Diet:

Wild: Omnivores- seed heads, grasses, nuts, grains, insects, frogs, crabs
Zoo: Capelin, crane pellets, chopped greens, feline diet

Conservation:

Grey Crowned Cranes were recently listed as Endangered on [IUCN](#) due to habitat loss and degradation (draining) of wetland areas, overgrazing by cattle, pesticide use, and egg collection. The population is declining very rapidly, from 100,000 to 50,000 in the last 20 years. They are also illegally captured and sold into the pet trade.

FYI:

Cranes are the international symbols of wealth, good fortune, and longevity. The grey crowned crane is the national bird of Uganda and you can actually be fined in that country for harming them.



Range & Habitat:

Wetlands with tall emergent vegetation



Lifespan: up to 30 years in captivity, 20 years in the wild.

Special Adaptations

One of only two crane species, the other being the black-crowned crane, which are able to nest in trees.

IUCN Conservation Status:

Endangered

