

and Wildlife Trafficking; how can the media help prevent future pandemics? – case for the Grey Crowned Crane

Balearica regulorum

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INTERNATIONAL CRANE FOUNDATION

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Wildlife trade - explained

Commerce of products that are derived from non-domesticated animals or plants – usually extracted from their natural environment or raised under controlled conditions. It can involve the trade of living or dead individuals, tissues such as skins, bones or meat or other products

It threatens hundred of species – elephants, tigers, leopards, pangolins, Rhinos etc. Wildlife trafficking benefits from corruption and weak governance along the chain and it further weakens rule of law and security for communities living alongside the wildlife and wild places

Wildlife trafficking is hard to quantify because it is highly concealed – like illegal arms and drugs but TRAFFIC – a wildlife trade



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most threatened species



Wildlife trafficking

As human population grows, so is the demand for resources including wildlife.

Demand drives crime – Rhinos horns and ivory continue to command high prices among the consumers esp in Asia. The two commodities now rival or even beat gold

1. Gaps in protection:

- Corruption
- Toothless laws
- Weak judicial systems
- Light sentences



The above allow animal network groups to keep plundering wildlife with little regard to consequences . Thy make it a low risk business with high returns

Uganda's rich biodiversity

- 54% of the world's remaining population of mountain gorillas
- 50% of the world's recorded bird species)
- 39% of the global mammal diversity
- 19% of Africa's amphibian species
- 14% of Africa's reptile species
- 1,249 species of butterflies
- 600 species of fish



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Bird trafficking in Uganda

Concerning legally traded CITES-listed species, the Yellow-fronted Canary *Crithagra mozambica*, was exported in the highest numbers up to 2005.

Grey parrots are trafficked internally and out of Uganda

At NatureUganda (Birdlife Partner in Uganda) we have noted that the Grey Crowned-crane, the Grey parrot and the Shoebill have become victims of the



Recipient countries:

The Netherlands and Germany were the main import destinations for CITES-listed live birds.

South Africa was the main import destination in the African region. Many other importing countries are, for the most, importers of one/two specimens of Grey Parrots for personal use.



ICCAs are known to be destined for China, Saudi Arabia and United

Beautiful trafficked birds in Uganda

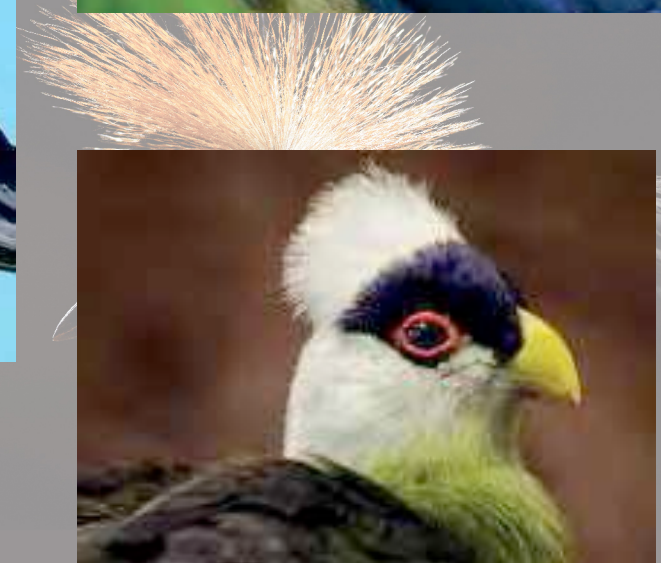
1. Red-headed Lovebird - *Agapornis pullarius*
From 2001–2005 over 260 were exported



2. Great blue Turaco - *Corythaeola cristata*
From 2000–2015 over 148 were exported



3. Bateleur - *Terathopius ecaudatus*
From 2000–2004 hundreds of Bateleur
were exported – **Near Threatened**



Also **White Crested Turacos**

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There are 15 crane species in the world

11 crane species are listed as Threatened or Endangered: Four (4) are resident in Africa!

Uganda has two crane species

- 1. The Grey Crowned Crane**
- 2. The Black crowned crane**



Black Crowned



Grey Crowned



Blue Crane



Wattled Crane



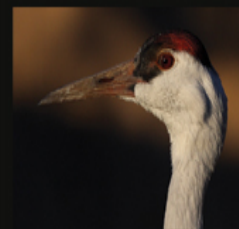
Siberian Crane



White-naped Crane



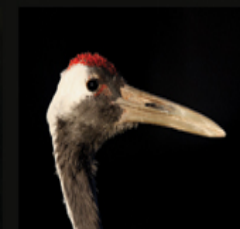
Sarus Crane



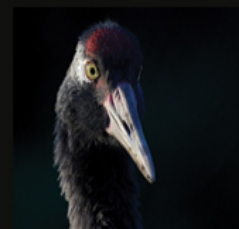
Hooded Crane



Whooping Crane



Red-crowned Crane



Black-necked Crane



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The Grey Crowned-crane – Endangered species

The species' global population has declined from over 100,000 individuals in 1985 to 50,000–64,000 in 2004.

The declines are mainly attributed to habitat loss, fragmentation and trapping for domestication and international (illegal) trade

Mainly to Rwanda, China and



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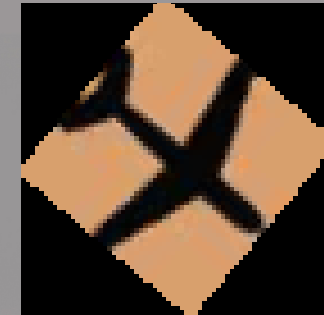
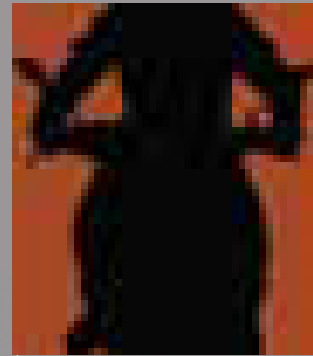


Crane trade routes identified in Uganda

The structure of syndicates in Uganda:

1. Lower (or first) level - the poacher, going through the local middlemen (second level) – these are common men in Uganda that get to the field, run after and capture cranes -
2. Second level – middle man – these buy cranes from the captors
3. Third level - the transporter – these deal in transportation of merchandise including cranes concealed in boxes or other cargo
4. Forth level - the urban middlemen corresponding to the kingpin
5. The fifth level - the kingpin or powerful criminal businessman financing the entire chain.

We estimate that over 200 cranes are traded in



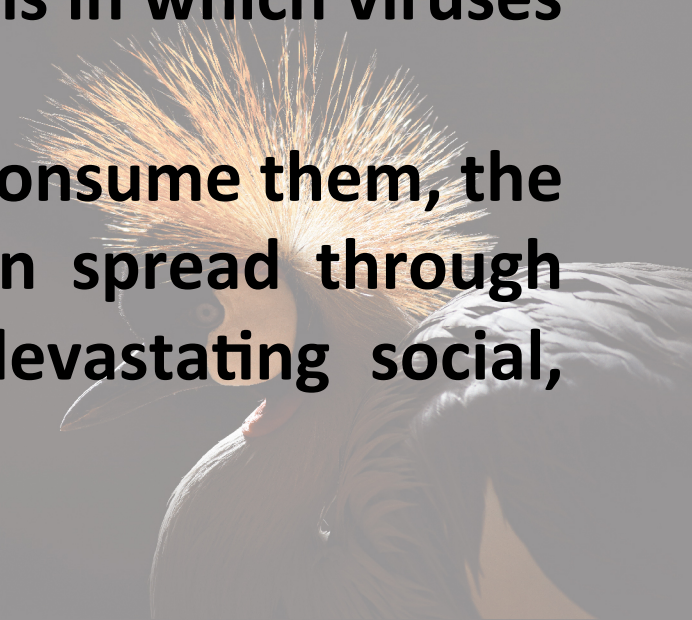
Effects of Wildlife trafficking – cranes inclusive

When wild animals are removed from their natural habitat and brought into contact with humans and other animals, under highly stressful conditions and with little regard for their health or welfare needs, the chance of inter-species disease transmission increases. Animals that would usually never interact in the wild are placed in cramped spaces, often stacked in cages, in highly stressful environments. The presence of bodily fluids, such as blood, urine, and faeces, provides conditions in which viruses can transmit between species.

As humans encounter wildlife in these environments, or consume them, the risk of transmission increases. These diseases may then spread through human contact and lead to global pandemics, with devastating social, economic, health, and conservation consequences.



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Other effects of wildlife trafficking

1. Interruption of nature- overexploitation affects the living planet in wider ways – it affects the chains and webs of nature
2. Invasive species emergence – these have been purposely and sometimes inadvertently introduced by wildlife traders / buyers. The invasives prey on or compete with the natives species and are a threat to the balance of nature
3. Incidental killings of nontarget species – example is the traps laid for certain animals which end up catching non-target ones



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Combating wildlife trafficking in Uganda.

The role of the Media – to unearth trafficking information, make it known to the public and call for action by the responsible agencies. We have regularly engaged media houses – The New Vision, TV West and Radio, Voice of Kigezi, NTV, NBS to make crane trade cases known by all and sundry; we call for action to be taken NOW and not later.

We work with schools, judiciary, police and border personnel. They play vital roles.



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How can we combat wildlife trafficking in Uganda?

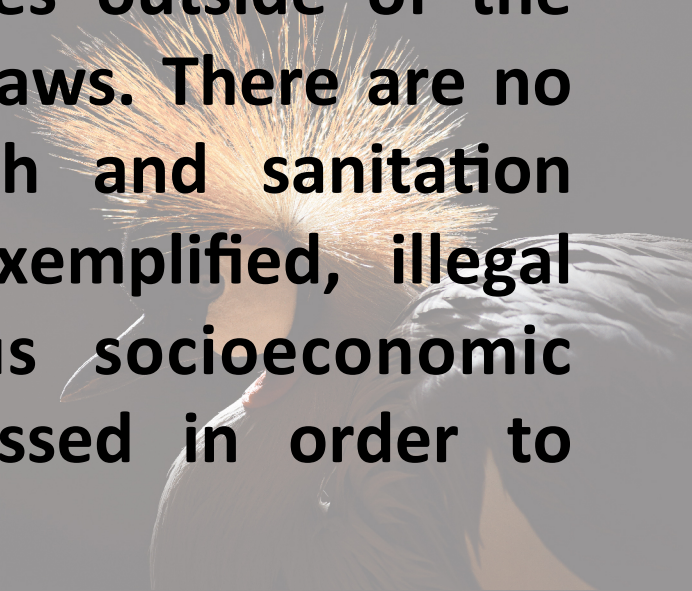
Globally, wildlife trade is regulated by the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Flora and Fauna (CITES). The aim of this agreement is to ensure that international trade in specimens of wild animals and plants does not threaten their survival. The regulations outlined by CITES, as well as regional and national legislation on wildlife trade, should be upheld by all Parties.

Illegal wildlife trade is conducted covertly and operates outside of the regulatory systems defined by national or international laws. There are no minimum requirements for animal welfare, or health and sanitation measures. As the current COVID-19 pandemic has exemplified, illegal wildlife trade is a conservation crisis with serious socioeconomic consequences and must therefore be urgently addressed in order to safeguard human society and wellbeing globally.



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Conclusion

While the world's attention is on COVID-19, we must not ignore the global health implications of dozens of other zoonotic diseases, which infect and kill millions of people annually. Other viruses, both known and unknown, may yet evolve to spill over from wildlife to humans. We need to get a greater understanding of the causes of zoonoses and threats to biodiversity that arise from unregulated, unsustainable, unsanitary, and high-stress trade in wild animals.

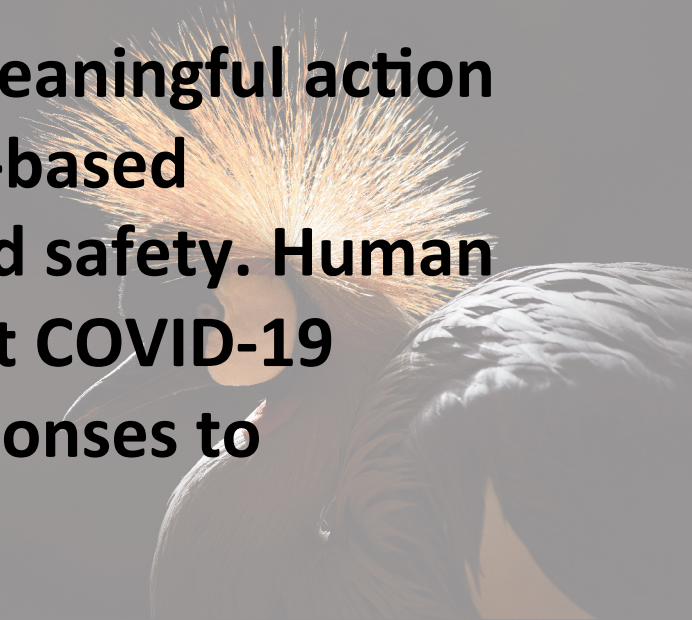
In fact governments should take urgent, cohesive, and meaningful action to tackle all forms of illegal wildlife trade using evidence-based approaches to minimise risks to conservation, health, and safety. Human health and nature are inextricably linked, and the current COVID-19 pandemic demonstrates a need for enhanced global responses to

addressing the illegal wildlife trade.



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