

Rare crane in first Uganda sighting

May 14 2009



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The wattled crane -- the largest in the crane family and internationally recognised as threatened with an estimated 8,000 remaining worldwide -- has historically only been found in southern [Africa](#) with an isolated population in the highlands of Ethiopia.

But earlier this month, bird watchers in Bugiri district spotted the rare bird, Achilles Byaruhanga said.

"It is very surprising that a big bird like that would suddenly arrive here,

particularly because we have no information that this species engages in migration," he explained.

The conservationist said [climate change](#) could be a factor.

"We have seen it with other species that are starting to show up in places where they have never been seen before," he said.

Pointing to Uganda's changing rainfall patterns, he said it was possible the bird now finds Uganda's climate "more hospitable".

Uganda used to enjoy two clearly defined heavy rain seasons a year until recently.

"The more variable and in some cases milder rainy seasons of recent years may have created conditions where the bird could move further north.

"Climate change it is a big thing, but it starts with little things like this," Byaruhanga added.

While there is a huge demand for wattled cranes, Byaruhanga said there were signs of stress or fatigue to suggest the bird could have escaped from captivity.

The white and gray [birds](#) stand on average six feet (172 cm) tall and weigh 14 pounds (7.8 kg), according to the International Crane Foundation.

More than half of the world's wattled cranes are found in Zambia, but the single largest concentration occurs in the Okavango Delta of Botswana.

With 1,000 species, Uganda holds one of the world's most diversified bird populations.

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Citation: Rare crane in first Uganda sighting (2009, May 14) retrieved 3 May 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2009-05-rare-crane-uganda-sighting.html>

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