Common Crane
*Grus grus*

The global population has been estimated to be around 270,000. Although it was considered to be Least Concern in the 2004 IUCN Red List, it is Vulnerable or Rare in many range States. The total population appears to be increasing although some local declines have also been reported.

The main threat to Common Cranes is habitat loss and degradation which has occurred throughout their range, in breeding and wintering grounds and along migration routes. The principal causes are drainage, dams, changes in agricultural practice, development and other human activities. Historically, hunting has been a significant threat, especially in Afghanistan and Pakistan but less in countries such as France, Spain and Morocco, the eastern European populations moving southwards in north Africa and probably Egypt and Ethiopia, and European Russian populations moving south to the Middle East. The centre of the Turkic population is unclear but it probably also winters in the Middle East. During migration, the Common Crane readily crosses wide stretches of water.

During migration, Common Cranes regularly use staging areas such as Lake Hamborga (Sweden), Riserva-Bielle (Italy), Danube Delta (Romania), Hula-Tal (Israel), Lac du Der-Chantecoq (France) and Laguna de Gallocanta (Spain). They forage in agricultural fields, pastures and meadows, and roost in shallow lakes, lagoons and along the edges of reservoirs, and in other wetlands.

The Common Crane is a large, elegant bird, with a wing span of 220-245 cm. Its plumage is mainly grey, but its head and upper neck are darker and marked by a white band from the eye and it has a prominent, red patch on the forehead. It is omnivorous, and feeds on a wide range of plants and small animals.