

# African Crowned Crane

**Scientific Name:** *Balearica regulorum gibbericeps*

**Class:** Aves

**Order:** Gruiformes

**Family:** Gruidae



These beautiful birds can be recognized immediately by their velvety black crown with its fan of yellow feathers, white cheek patches, red dewlap and grayish white to pale blue eyes. They stand 38-45 inches and weigh approximately 15 pounds. East African crowned cranes have short, stout bills and legs. They lack the highly elongated windpipe that is characteristic of the more advanced cranes.

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## Range

Their range is central and southern Africa.

## Habitat

Their habitat includes a mixture of wetlands and open grassland or savanna.

## Gestation

Incubation: 28 to 31 days

## Litter

Clutch: 1 to 4

## Behavior

Unique among cranes, the East African crowned crane prefers to roost in elevated locations, especially in trees. They are quite social outside of the breeding season. They are usually seen in pairs or small family parties. Crowned cranes tend to stamp their feet while walking through grassy vegetation, apparently to disturb and expose insects. These birds are also attracted to freshly plowed fields and tend to feed in short grass. They are sometimes attracted to rubbish dumps where insects are associated with waste food.

## Reproduction

Crowned cranes begin their dance differently than other cranes. Without moving their bodies, they bob their heads up and down 4-10 times. Then, spreading their wings, they jump 6-8 ft. into the air with their legs drooping motionless beneath them. Sometimes they call, sometimes they don't. The dancing crane often goes completely around his mate, and sometimes both dance. Both members of the pair help in building the nest. The female does most of the incubation, although the male takes over so she can forage for food. The male will stand guard about a mile away while the female is on the nest. Although the first and last eggs of a nest may be laid nearly a week apart, the entire clutch usually hatches within 24 hours. Once hatched, the chicks stay close to the nest for the first day, but by the second day they are off searching for food. The family will remain together for approximately 9 or 10 months.

## Wild Diet

Seed heads, grass tips, insects, frogs, lizards, crabs