

Community engagement in protection and restoration of degraded
Lake Ol' Bolossat's satellite wetlands as habitats for Grey Crowned
Crane



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2ND PROGRESS REPORT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The satellite wetlands of Lake Ol' Bolossat are crucial habitats for the Endangered Grey Crowned Crane, these birds face significant threats such as poaching, habitat degradation, and the spread of the invasive aquatic weed *Salvinia molesta*. Poaching for chicks, adults' birds, and eggs is fueled by an illegal market, while livestock overgrazing, and unsustainable agriculture contribute to wetland degradation. Synthetic fertilizers, soil erosion, and siltation further compromise the ecological integrity of the wetlands, thus degrading cranes' breeding habitats and food sources.

The project activities align with National Single Species Action Plan 2025-2034 which aims at stabilizing and increasing population of the Grey Crowned Crane while maintaining their current range and areas of occurrence in Kenya.

During the last six months we managed the following:

- Conducted six community meetings and engaged 293 members on conservation of GCC
- Conducted education and awareness to six schools and engaged 1407 learners and 21 teachers on conservation of GCC.
- Planted 1100 indigenous trees and 500 fruit trees in farmland near cranes breeding site to improve the habitat for GCC.
- 620 awareness posters dispensed out during awareness engagement.
- Participated in Wildlife conservation caravan around Lake Ol' Bolossat during CCV 10 years anniversary

Objective: Increased community awareness and engagement on Grey Crowned Crane conservation

Community engagements are vital to the conservation of Grey Crowned Cranes because most of their breeding and feeding sites lie within community-managed landscapes. When local people understand the importance of cranes, the threats they face, and their own role in protection, they become the first line of defense, reporting threats early, safeguarding nests, and promoting coexistence between livelihoods and conservation.

1. Community awareness at Kaimbaga

On 1st September 2025, in collaboration with the Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS), we engaged members of the Kaimbaga Blessed Group to discuss the protection of Kaimbaga Dam, a satellite wetland that supports one breeding pair of Grey Crowned Cranes. The meeting focused on practical conservation actions, including understanding the threat posed by *Salvinia molesta* and its transformation into biochar. Members were trained on biochar production, and with support from CCV, the group later established a greenhouse, linking wetland conservation to improved livelihoods.

2. Community awareness at Subukia

On 11th November 2025, CCV conducted an awareness session with 33 village elders and four local leaders from the Central Sub-location in Subukia Constituency, Nakuru County. Discussions covered the general status of the Grey Crowned Crane, key threats, and the responsibility of local communities in conservation. Participants shared valuable information, including reports of a crane chick being carried by a young boy and cases of poaching at Mathege Dam in the Kimborajo area. The meeting highlighted gaps in information flow at community level, and participants committed to protecting cranes and sharing timely information with CCV. Further, the community were enlightened on Wildlife Management and Conservation Act 2013 CAP of the Laws of Kenya.

3. Community awareness to Losogwa, Silale and Gikingi youth

On 18th November 2025, CCV and KWS held a conservation education session for 96 young men who had recently completed their rite of passage at Nyahururu. Participants were drawn from Losogwa, Silale and Gikingi areas where we have six breeding pairs. The engagement introduced them to Wildlife Management and Conservation Act 213, Kenya's rich animal diversity, the role of KWS, and the growing impacts of climate change, encouraging them to see themselves as responsible custodians of nature.

4. Community awareness to Kiandegge, Leshau and Mahianyu youth

On 19th November 2025, a similar session was conducted at Mairo-Inya PCEA hall for 45 young men following their rite of passage. Participants were drawn from Kiandegge, Leshau and Mahianyu where we have five breeding pairs of cranes. The discussion emphasized on Wildlife Management and Conservation Act 2013, the role of KWS, the endangered status of the Grey Crowned Crane in Nyandarua County, and climate change, fostering a sense of responsibility among the youth as future conservation stewards.

5. Community awareness meeting

On 20th November 2025, CCV and KWS engaged 56 young men at Nyandarua Boarding Primary School who had also completed their rite-of-passage ceremony. The session focused on Wildlife Management and Conservation Act 2013, Kenya's biodiversity, the mandate of KWS, the importance of conserving the Grey Crowned Crane.

6. Community awareness meeting to Baari, Githungichu and Mairo-inya local people

On 21st November 2025, CCV and KWS held a conservation awareness session with 27 local people at Mairo-Inya. Participants from Baari, Githungichu and Mairo-inya area where we have ten breeding pairs. The session included a documentary highlighting Kenya's wildlife heritage, creating a strong emotional connection to conservation. Participants were engaged on wildlife conservation, animal diversity, and the role of KWS, reinforcing the vital role women play in nurturing conservation values within families and communities.





School Education and Awareness

School education and awareness programme is vital to the long-term protection of Grey Crowned Cranes and other wildlife because children are often at the center of both risk and opportunity. Many children spend time near wetlands and grasslands where cranes breed, and some unknowingly participate in collecting eggs or chicks for fun, while others are be used by illegal wildlife traffickers due to their easy access and lack of awareness. Engaging learners early helps prevent these practices by building knowledge and responsibility.

Sironi Comprehensive school

On 10th August 2025, CCV, in collaboration with the Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS) Education and Awareness Team, conducted a conservation session at Sironi Comprehensive School, reaching 93 learners from Grades 4–9 and eight teachers. The session introduced students to crane conservation at national and regional levels, explained the mandate of KWS and the role of communities, and explored wildlife found in Laikipia, with a focus on elephants, hyenas, and lions.

Muruai Comprehensive school

On 30th September 2025, CCV and KWS held a wildlife conservation awareness session at Muruai Primary School, engaging 272 learners and eight teachers. Learners were guided on the importance of wildlife conservation and their personal responsibility in protecting nature. During the discussion, a pupil named Isaac openly shared that he had taken two crane eggs from Ngombe Nguu Dam the previous year, clearly demonstrating how school engagements can uncover hidden threats and support positive behavior change.

Kimaru Comprehensive School

On 19th January 2026, CCV and KWS visited Kimaru Comprehensive School for a combined conservation education and hands-on environmental action activity. A total of 450 learners took part in a tree-planting exercise, during which **30 avocado trees (*Persea americana*)** were planted to support habitat restoration and environmental conservation. To encourage holistic development, the school also received a football and a set of uniforms donated by CCV to support sports and teamwork.

Subuku Primary School,

On 27th January 2026, CCV and KWS conducted a conservation education session at Subuku Primary School, engaging 460 learners. Discussions focused on the conservation of the endangered Grey Crowned Crane, wildlife found in Nyandarua County, and the key role played by KWS. The session strengthened learners' understanding of why protecting cranes and other wildlife is essential for the county's ecological future.

Ndogino and Mung'etho primary schools

On 10th October 2025, CCV, in collaboration with the Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS) Education and Awareness Team, conducted a conservation session at Ndogino and Mung'etho Comprehensive School, reaching 132 learners and six teachers. The session introduced students to crane conservation at national and regional levels, explained the mandate of KWS and the role of communities, and explored wildlife found in Laikipia, with a focus on elephants, hyenas, and lions.





CCV 10 years Anniversary

Since 2015, Cranes Conservation Volunteers have played a crucial role in conserving cranes in Lake Ol' Bolossat and across Nyandarua and Laikipia Counties. To mark their 10th anniversary, the organization held an event celebrating a decade of impact—including a remarkable increase in successfully fledged chicks, from zero in 2015 to 169 in 2024.

Support from the Rufford Foundation has been instrumental, with two grants significantly strengthening conservation efforts both within and beyond the initial project scope.

The celebration featured several community-focused activities: a conservation caravan reaching villages around Lake Ol' Bolossat; football training sessions for under-15 pupils—an important group to engage, as many young people are often involved in egg collection in wetlands; the Korongo Tournament, which brought together ten teams from communities around the lake; and an essay competition involving ten local schools, helping nurture young talent and inspire commitment to protecting the endangered Grey Crowned Crane



Picture of participants during 10 years anniversary

Objective: Improved wetland habitat quality for Grey Crowned Cranes

Planting fruit trees and indigenous trees

Planting indigenous trees on farmlands and around schools near crane breeding and feeding sites is a vital conservation action. These trees help create buffer zones that reduce soil erosion, protect wetlands from siltation, and improve the quality of habitats used by Grey Crowned Cranes. When communities and learners are actively involved in tree planting, the activity becomes an incentive

rather than a restriction offering long-term benefits such as improved soil fertility, shade, fruit production, and alternative livelihood opportunities, while at the same time restoring the environment and strengthening community ownership of crane conservation.

On 30th October 2025, CCV supported the planting of 600 indigenous trees within a school compound to enhance tree cover, stabilize soils, and improve the local environment. The activity also served as a practical learning opportunity for students, linking environmental restoration with everyday conservation actions.

Earlier, on 10th October 2025, the Nyahururu KWS Station took part in Mazingira Day celebrations, conducting tree-planting activities in three primary schools. During this exercise, a total of 200 fruit trees and 200 indigenous trees were planted, combining environmental restoration with livelihood support. The activity engaged 102 pupils at Ndogino Primary School, 30 pupils at Mungetho Primary School, and 42 pupils at Muruai Primary School, fostering early conservation values among learners in areas close to important wildlife habitats.

In addition, learners at Sironi Comprehensive School planted 100 indigenous trees, reinforcing the role of schools as centers for environmental stewardship and habitat restoration. At Kimaru Comprehensive School, 30 fruit trees were planted, supporting both environmental conservation and future nutritional and income benefits for the school and surrounding community.

Together, these tree-planting activities strengthened buffer zones around crane habitats, reduced environmental degradation, improved ecosystem health, and provided tangible benefits to communities. By directly involving learners and local institutions, the initiative enhanced environmental awareness, improved livelihoods, and reinforced the link between healthy landscapes and the long-term survival of Grey Crowned Cranes.





Threats

Monitoring activities identified several threats to the survival and breeding success of the Grey Crowned Crane. These threats were grouped into two main categories:

1. Threats reducing adult and juvenile survival

Predation:

Raptors, including African Marsh Harriers and Augur Buzzards, were observed around breeding territories in Ziواني,Subukia. Their presence poses a significant risk to crane chicks, especially during the early stages of development.

Persecution:

No cases of deliberate killing of cranes were recorded in Nyandarua and Laikipia during the project period. However, cranes with physical injuries such as broken limbs were observed, mainly resulting from people throwing objects at them in response to crop damage. In Subukia, cranes were reported feeding on maize farms, leading to conflict. Although many farmers adopted non-harmful deterrent methods after engagement, isolated cases of farmers hurling objects at cranes were still reported.

Poisoning:

In the Ngurumo area, west of Lake Ol' Bolossat, two individuals posing as fishermen were reported to have used a mixture of boiled wheat and tobacco, spread in harvested wheat fields, to poison cranes and other waterfowl. On 8 December 2025, two cranes and over 100 Egyptian and spur-winged geese were reportedly poached and taken to a local market. The incident was reported to the Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS) Nyahururu for further investigation.

2. Threats reducing GCC breeding performance**Human****disturbance**

Although the Grey Crowned Crane is considered one of the more adaptable crane species, it remains highly sensitive to human activity around breeding sites. In areas such as Shiru Farm, west of Lake Ol' Bolossat, livestock grazing within breeding habitats caused frequent disturbance. This increased the risk of nest destruction, loss of eggs, and chick mortality. Two breeding pairs in the area were confirmed to have lost two chicks each due to such disturbances.

Egg**and****chick****collection:**

Cases of egg collection were reported at Mukindu and Mugamba Ciura Dam, with local youth and fishermen identified as the main actors. Targeted one-on-one awareness engagements improved understanding and strengthened community commitment to conservation.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the satellite wetlands of Lake Ol' Bolossat remain a vital stronghold for the Endangered Grey Crowned Crane, yet they continue to face growing pressure from poaching, habitat degradation, invasive *Salvinia molesta*, overgrazing, and unsustainable farming practices that undermine breeding habitats and food sources. Over the past six months, this project has taken practical steps to address these threats in line with the National Single Species Action Plan (2025–2034), reaching 293 community members through six meetings, engaging 1,407 learners and 21 teachers in six schools, planting 1,100 indigenous trees and 500 fruit trees near crane breeding sites, distributing 620 awareness posters, and actively participating in the wildlife conservation caravan around Lake Ol' Bolossat during CCV's 10-year anniversary. Together, these actions have strengthened community awareness, improved habitat conditions, and reinforced collective responsibility for safeguarding the future of the Grey Crowned Crane and its wetland ecosystem.