

Case Study

Name	Wattled Crane Recovery Programme
Client	Endangered Wildlife Trust and Johannesburg Zoo
Project Type	Endangered species protection

Overview

Atmos Consulting donates the time of expert ecology staff to assist in a Wattled Crane recovery programme in South Africa.



Atmos Consulting is helping to reverse the trend towards extinction of the Wattled Crane in South Africa. There are only 235 of the birds left in the wild in South Africa, but thanks to the Wattled Crane Recovery programme run by the Endangered Wildlife Trust and Johannesburg Zoo, 20 pairs of the Cranes have been established in captivity and the hand- raised birds are set to be released into the wild in 2010. Atmos Consulting donates the time of experienced ecology staff to provide expert advice and hands on assistance in rearing the young Cranes.

Wattled Cranes, which can grow up to six-feet in height, often lay two eggs but always abandon the second one. As part of the project, the team travel throughout breeding areas in South Africa and harvest the second, discarded egg after the first has successfully hatched. They are then transported by light aircraft to a special facility in the Johannesburg Zoo.

The chicks are reared using white hand puppets with distinctive Wattled Crane markings – grey patches and red colouring at the top of the bill – to ensure they are not ‘imprinted’ by humans. Wattled Cranes are highly intelligent and impressionable young birds are at a high risk of imprinting, which is when they adopt the behaviour of the first animal they come into contact with. By using hand puppets to rear the chicks, and later using full-length costumes with Wattled Crane markings, the volunteers ensure that the birds know that they are cranes. Once they are released into the wild, they will respond to other cranes and will not associate humans with either food or security.”

Testimonial

“The Wattled Crane is one of five critically endangered birds in South Africa. Our programme will not only supplement the wild population of the bird through releasing fledglings raised in captivity, but will also provide a genetic reservoir in case of any catastrophic extinction of Wattled Cranes in the wild.”

Mike Jordan, Senior Ecologist, Atmos Consulting

