Observations on nesting of shoebill Balaeniceps rex and wattled craneBugeranus carunculatus in Malagarasi wetlands, western Tanzania

Author(s)

Jasson R. M. John,

Cuthbert L. Nahonyo,

Woo S. Lee

Charles A. Msuya

Introduction

The populations of shoebill Balaeniceps rex and wattled crane *Bugeranus carunculatus* are listed as 'vulnerable' by IUCN and threatened by habitat destruction and trapping (BirdLife International, 2012a). They both have narrow and disconnected distribution in sub-Saharan Africa along major water basins (Hancock, Kushlan & Kahl, 1992; Meine & Archibald, 1996). Their global population is small (<8000 birds for each species), and in Tanzania, numbers are in low hundreds (Dinesen & Baker, 2006; Beilfuss, Dodman & Urban, 2007). But yet, there is virtually no published information on nesting in Tanzania. The first and the only published breeding of wattled crane is that of Elliott (1983) from Southern highlands where wattled crane has almost been extirpated (Beilfuss, Dodman and Urban, 2007). Small viable populations for both species are found in Malagarasi wetlands. Basic ecological information of these threatened-flagship species is needed for both scientific and management purposes. In this article, we report observations of the first ground study on nests of shoebill and wattled crane in Tanzania, made between 2005 and 2011.