

Sighting of Demoiselle Crane *Anthropoides virgo* at Haripura Reservoir, Uttarakhand, India

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Demoiselle Cranes, belonging to the family Gruidae, are the smallest of the world's 15 crane species with an average adult length of 90 cm (Ali 1941; Grimmett and Inskipp, 2010). Most cranes have bare, red skin patches on their heads; however, demoiselles have a completely feathered head with a white line that extends from the corner of their red eye, to the back of their head (Meine and Archibald, 1996). The black breast of these cranes is their best identifier from a distance (Grimmett and Inskipp, 2010).

Demoiselle Cranes species have an extremely large range, and hence does not approach the thresholds for "Vulnerable" under the range size criterion (BirdLife International 2013). They are listed as "Least Concern" in IUCN Red List of threatened species 2013.1. Habitat loss and degradation due to agricultural practices is the primary threat to them throughout their range (Ellis *et al.* 1996, del Hoyo *et al.* 1996). Their global population is estimated to number 230,000-280,000 individuals. The overall population trend is increasing, although some populations are decreasing, stable or have unknown trends (BirdLife International 2013). As demoiselles are migratory birds, their winter habitats include those of Northeastern Africa, Pakistan, and India (Meine and Archibald 1996).

In both its breeding and wintering ranges demoiselle cranes show a preference for grassland habitats in close proximity to streams, shallow lakes and other wetlands, also frequenting desert areas where water is available (Johnsgard 1983, Ellis *et al.* 1996, del Hoyo *et al.* 1996, Meine and Archibald 1996).



Demoiselle crane at the agricultural field

The Corbett Foundation, as a part of its scheduled work plan, conducts waterfowl census during winters on fortnight basis in few selected wetlands around Corbett Landscape. These censuses assist in estimating the relative occurrence of migratory species each year in the respective wetlands. The Haripura Reservoir (29° 06' N, 79° 20' E), on Baur River is located in Terai Central territorial forest division of Uttarakhand. It was visited by a team of The Corbett Foundation (TCF) on 3rd November 2012 for carrying out the regular waterfowl census. At about 04:41 hrs, the author spotted a large bird sitting with its head tucked inside its wing on the agricultural field between the road and water from the reservoir. After waiting for ten minutes, the bird eventually stood up and started walking towards the water. It was the time when the author could identify it as an adult demoiselle crane. After careful scanning of the area it was recorded to be the only individual present in the reservoir at that time. The bird stayed there

without being bothered of the audience for about half an hour after which TCF team left the area for continuing the census in the rest of the wetland. The bird was never observed during the next few waterfowl census carried out at the Haripura reservoir for the whole winter season left. Since it was the first sighting of demoiselle crane by TCF team since the initiation of this census, this information of sighting of the demoiselle Crane hopes to help update its present distribution in Uttarakhand.

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