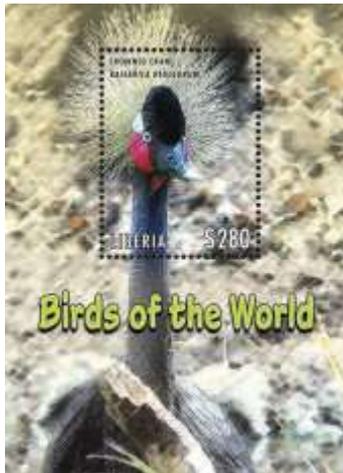


Grey Crowned Crane (*Balearica regulorum*)

Incongruous issues

When I recently wrote an article on “Incongruous issues” I included amongst these this splendid souvenir-sheet based stamp of the Crowned Crane, designed and printed by the Inter-Government Philatelic Corporation (IGPC) for Liberia; and valued at \$280.



The reason I considered that this issue was odd, centres upon the fact that the Grey Crowned Crane is not a native of Liberia, or West Africa, but is found more in Central and Southern parts of the African continent. Of course, the issue of this stamp well justified by the endangered status of this bird across Africa where it is present; as well as being part of Liberia’s “Birds of the World” series.

Update on the Grey Crowned Crane

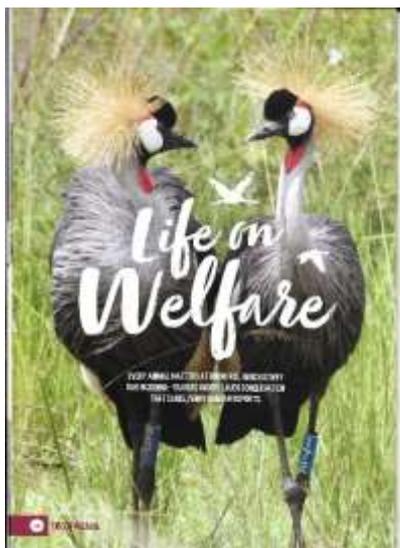


Image: Born Free Foundation Wildlife 2020

Since writing my article, I have received from the Born Free Foundation¹ its periodic journal, which features a piece on the Grey Crowned Crane and in particular, the work of Dr Olivier Nsengimana, veterinarian and founder of the Rwanda Wildlife Conservation Association (RWCA)². Amongst other things, Dr Nsengimana was inspired to combat the illegal trade in Grey Crowned Cranes in his country. His efforts have met with success, bringing to an end captive exploitation of these birds in Rwanda.

The population of Grey Crowned Cranes is estimated at 17,700 to 22,300 across Africa. Five years ago, in Rwanda, there were just 300 or so in the wild. By contrast, there were hundreds in captivity both in private homes (to the wealthy) as well as in hotels; and with many of the Cranes stressed, malnourished, and having suffered breakages to their wings to prevent flight. Thanks to the RWCA, 239 Cranes have been removed from captivity and 160 reintroduced into the wild. 51 Cranes that were not fit enough to be reintroduced into the wild have been given a safe home in a naturally restored wetland sanctuary.

Overall, the result of these efforts by the RWCA is that Crane census data shows encouraging growth in the number of birds in the wild [baseline 300 in 2015]: from 487 birds in 2017 and 459 in 2018 to 748 Grey Crowned Cranes in 2019. In 2020, there was further growth in the population to 881, showing a welcome and continuing trend in the right direction.

Other stamp issues featuring the Grey Crown Crane

A number of countries have issued stamps to feature the Grey Crowned Crane. Here are a few initial examples, from countries where you might reasonably expect to see this bird in the wild:

Botswana 2009 – Cranes and Flamingos (set of four)



Botswana 2019 – Cranes (set of three)



¹ Wildlife, Winter 2020, Born Free Foundation. Grey Crowned Crane article by Penny Banham.

² <https://www.rwandawildlife.org/saving-endangered-grey-crowned-cranes/>. The Association's logo is a colourful image of a Grey Crowned Crane. The website is well worth a visit to learn more about the conservation work.

Burundi 1996 – Birds (from a set of six)

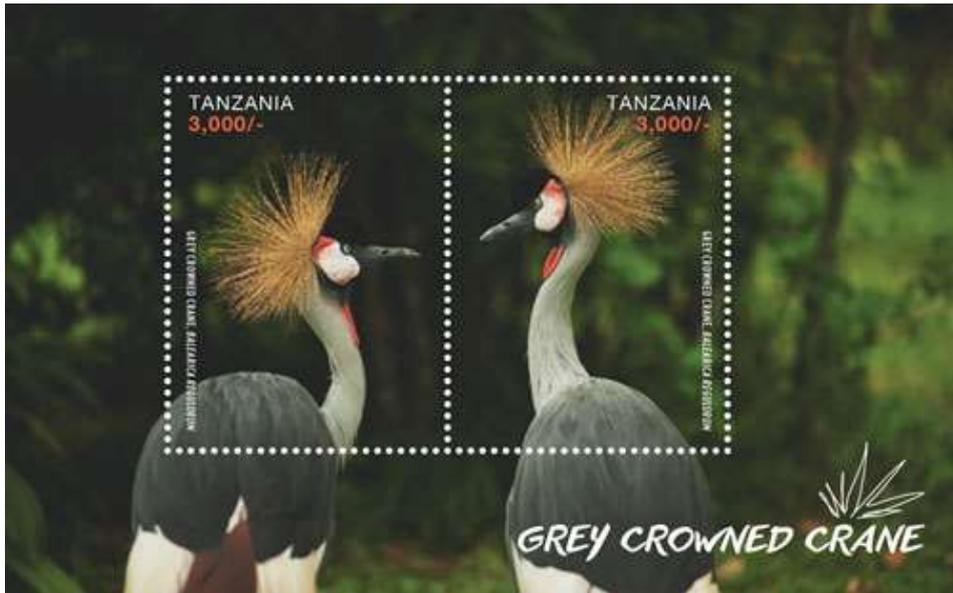


Burundi 1965 – Birds (from a set of three)



Tanzania 2016 (There was also an additional sheet of two stamps, shown below)





Other countries in West Africa that have also issued stamps featuring the Grey Crowned Crane are:

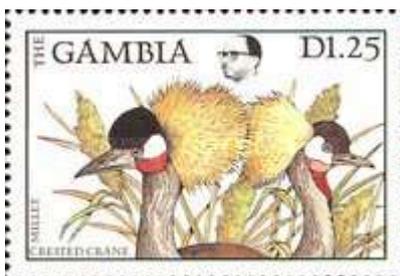
Biafra 1968 (Overprinted Nigerian stamp from a set of seven such overprints)



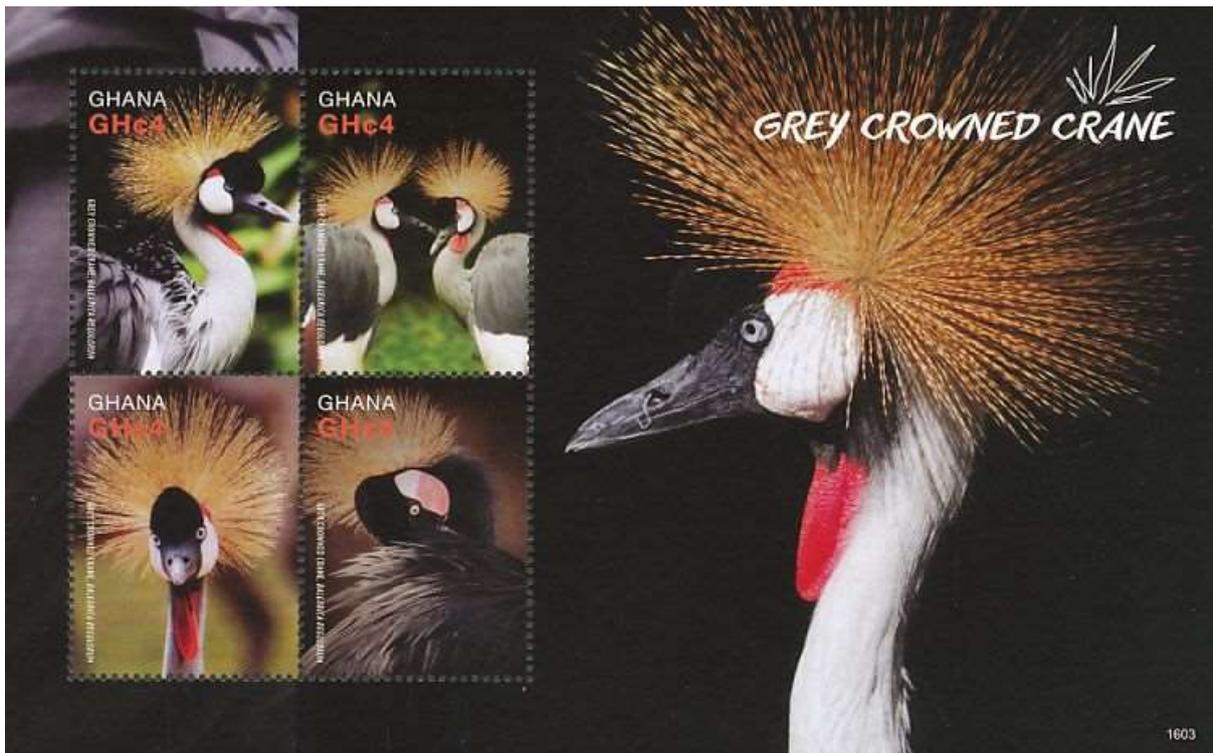
Gabon 1984 Birds (from a set of four)



Gambia 1988 Flora and Fauna (from a set of two)



Ghana 2016



Looking wider afield, these countries have also issued stamps featuring the Grey Crowned Crane:

Ajman 1969 - Airmail Birds (from a set of eleven)



Cuba 2007 - Animals in the National Zoo (from a set of six)



As a footnote to this particular issue, one of the features of the Born Free Foundation is that it opposes the exploitation of wild animals in zoos and aquariums. Rather, this particular animal welfare organisation favours the use of resources towards protection of animals in their natural habitats and not in the confines of captivity.

Antigua and Barbuda 1997



Conclusion

Given the endangered status of the Grey Crowned Crane, it is uplifting to be able to read that conservation efforts in Rwanda by the RWCA are having some success in enabling the population in the wild to grow. Let's hope that these preservation efforts continue to achieve the RWCA's aims.

Source of images: www.stampworld.com and www.igpc.com