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First Record of the Black Crowned Crane (*Balearica pavonina*, Linnaeus, 1758) in Libya

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ABSTRACT

On 7 August 2025, a single adult Black Crowned Crane (*Balearica pavonina*) was observed and photographed in Tripoli, Libya (32.87806°N, 13.13656°E), perched on a domestic water storage tank in a residential area. This represents the first confirmed record of the species in the country. *B. pavonina* is widely distributed across the Sahel region of Africa but has not previously been documented in Libya. The bird's presence outside typical wetland or grassland habitat suggests either natural vagrancy, displacement, or escape from captivity. This observation extends the known northern limit of the species range and underscores the need for continued avifaunal monitoring in Libya.

التسجيل الأول للكركي المتوج الأسود في ليبيا (1758, Linnaeus, *Balearica pavonina*)

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في 7 أغسطس 2025، تم رصد وتصوير فرد بالغ واحد من الكركي المتوج الأسود (*Balearica pavonina*) في طرابلس، ليبيا (32.87806° شمالاً، 13.13656° شرقاً)، وكان واقفاً على خزان مياه منزلي في منطقة سكنية. ويمثل هذا أول تسجيل مؤكد لهذا النوع في البلاد. ينتشر *B. pavonina* على نطاق واسع في منطقة الساحل الإفريقي، لكنه لم يُوثَّق سابقاً في ليبيا. يشير وجود الطائر خارج موائله المعتادة في الأراضي الرطبة أو المراعي إلى احتمال أن يكون ذلك نتيجة شروود طبيعي أو نزوح أو هروب من الأسر. وتمثل هذه الملاحظة امتداداً للحد الشمالي المعروف لنطاق انتشار هذا النوع، وتؤكد على الحاجة إلى استمرار مراقبة الطيور في ليبيا.

Introduction

The Black Crowned Crane (*Balearica pavonina*) is a large, conspicuous crane species occurring across the Sahel zone of Africa, from Senegal and Gambia in the

west to Ethiopia and Sudan in the east (Borrow and Demey, 2014). It inhabits wetlands, floodplains, and grasslands, and is currently classified as Vulnerable on the IUCN Red List due to habitat loss, hunting, and

trapping for trade (Meine and Archibald, 1996; IUCN, 2023).

While the species has been reported from neighboring Chad, Niger, and Sudan, there have been no confirmed records from Libya. This note documents the first confirmed observation of the species in Libyan territory.

Materials and Methods

On 7 August 2025, a single adult Black Crowned Crane was observed in Tripoli, Libya (32.87806°N, 13.13656°E). The bird was perched atop a domestic water storage tank in a residential area. Observation was made at close range using the naked eye, followed by photographic documentation with a digital camera.

Identification was based on distinctive field characteristics; The photograph was compared with regional avifauna guides (Borrow and Demey, 2014) and online ornithological databases to confirm identification.

Results

A solitary adult Black Crowned Crane was observed in a residential area in Tripoli. Depending on the house owner and some neighbors, this bird was observed since a month ago. The bird leaves the place from dawn to dusk and turn back to the same site.

Bird description: predominantly black body plumage, broad white wing coverts with golden-buff tips, a crown of stiff golden feathers, pink cheek patch beneath a white patch behind the eye and slender black legs and bill (fig 1, 2).



Fig. (1): Black Crowned Crane perching on a house water tank. (© Eisa).



Fig. (2): An overview of the site with the Black Crowned Crane. (© Abuzaid).

Discussion and Conclusion

This record represents the first confirmed occurrence of the Black Crowned Crane in Libya. Its appearance in an urban setting raises several possible explanations: Natural vagrancy from nearby populations in the Sahel region, possibly driven by seasonal movements or dispersal. The second probability is due to climatic or habitat factors causing temporary displacement from typical range. Third, the bird may have escaped from captivity, a plausible scenario given the well-known bird trade, especially with the proliferation of private zoos and their granting of licenses to import various species of animals. The observation site was not associated with typical crane habitat, suggesting the bird was either in transit or displaced. Without evidence of other individuals or suitable feeding grounds nearby, it is unclear whether the bird will remain in the area.

Regardless of origin, this sighting expands the northernmost confirmed range of *B. pavonina* and highlights the importance of documenting incidental records in under-surveyed regions such as Libya. Continued ornithological monitoring could determine whether this represents an isolated vagrant or the start of occasional appearances. However, since the publication of the Libyan Birds Book, there are a total of 351 species of birds (Isenmann *et al.*, 2016), and new species have been recorded, reaching 359 (Benyezza *et al.*, 2017; Eisa and Etayeb, 2022, 2024; Elsayayeb and Etayeb, 2022; Gurgi, 2022; Etayeb *et al.*, 2025; Etayeb and Elkrew, 2025; Eisa *et al.*, 2025). With the current recording, the number of birds recorded in Libya to date has reached 360.

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