

Crab Plover - Rick Simpson



Crab Plover - Aditya Roy

Crab Plover *Dromas ardeola* Paykull 1805

IUCN Least Concern

Scientific name explained:

- *Dromas* - Greek *dromas* meaning running.
- *ardeola* - Latin; *ardeola* or *adiola* little heron, diminutive form of *ardea* heron.

Alternative English name; Crab-Plover - **Afrikaans name;** Krapvreter - **Arabic names;** حنکور, حنکور, زقراق السرطان الحنکور - **Bengali names;** কাঁকড়া চজচয়া, কাঁকড়া জিরিয়া, কাঁকড়াচজচয়া (transliteration) kāmkaṛā jiriṃyā, kāmkaṛājiriṃyā - **French names;** Drome ardéole, Drôme ardéole, Pluvier crabbier - **Gujarati names;** શંખલો, શંખલો (transliteration) Shankhlo - **Hindi name;** कर्कट टिटिहरी (transliteration) Karkat Titihari - **Malagasy names;** Firatsa, Tsakaranta, Tsarakaranta - **Malayalam name;** തണ്ടുണ്ണി - **Maldivian names;** Theyravaa/Moalha Lunbo - **Marathi name;** चिबोरी खाऊ - **Persian names;** سلیم خرچنگ خوار, سلیم خرچنگ خوار - **Swahili name;** Ndoero - **Tamil name;** Nandu Thinni - **Thai name;** นกหัวโตกินปู (transliteration) - nók hŭa-too-kin-puu.

Taxonomy; monotypic

This is a species whose affinities are uncertain. It is traditionally believed to be closely related to both the stone-curlews, with which it has a striking structural similarity, and the pratincoles and coursers, but might be more closely related to gulls and auks.

The Crab Plover is the only member of the family, Dromadidae. Morphological analyses placed the Crab Plover in the suborder Charadrii, however recent molecular phylogenetic studies, have indicated it would be better placed in the sub order Lari where it is likely to be accompanied by the Glareolidae (pratincoles and coursers). The new thinking on the suborder is as follows;

Family Turnicidae – Buttonquails (18 species)

Family Dromadidae – Crab-Plover

Family Glareolidae – Coursers & pratincoles (17 species)

Family Laridae – Gulls, terns, skimmers (103 species)

Family Stercorariidae – Skuas (7 species)

Family Alcidae – Auks (25 species)

Currently wader Quest continues to include the Crab Plover in the sub order Charadrii (of Charadriiformes), thus a wader. If we adopt this taxonomy, along with Glareolidae (Pratincoles and Coursers) the Crab Plover would be lost to us, as would the Turnicidae (Buttonquails).

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Taxonomic history and synonyms;

Family: Dromadidae (Gray G, R, 1840)

Subfamily: None

The genus *Dromas* was first coined by Baron Friherre Gustav von Paykull (1757–1826) a Swedish naturalist and collector when he named the species *Dromas ardeola*. It was not given a family of its own until 1840 when G. R. Gray erected Dromadidae, recognising that it didn't fit in with the plovers.

Synonyms: protonym *Dromas Ardeola*

Least Concern: Crab Plovers have a large range, appear to be stable and a large population, all of which mean they are categorised as of least concern.

Uniquely among waders they nest between April and August in burrows which they dig in the sand with their bills. They form in dense colonies mainly on islands nesting close together.

A single white egg is laid in a simple, unlined chamber at the end of a burrow (again unique among waders, most broods are of two or more eggs with camouflaged shells due to their ground nesting nature). Burrows vary from 1 - 1.5 metres in length.



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Crab Plover with prey - Aditya Roy

The young are not precocial as most other wader species are as they are unable to forage for themselves in the burrow. They are therefore also nidicolous meaning they remain in the nest until they can fend for themselves. Obviously this means the parents need to feed the young. They do not regurgitate food, they have no crop, (Magellanic Plover is the only wader to possess a crop and feed their young in this way). The young are fed initially with small morsels at the end of the burrow, gradually moving to the mouth as they grow. The morsels will grow in size until small dead crabs are presented. Later live crabs will be left for the young to practise hunting. Even when large and able to fend for themselves completely immature birds can still be seen begging for food from their parents.

Away from the breeding area birds will feed singly or in small groups, although they will gather in large aggregations at roosting sites, usually at high tide. They are most active away from the heat of the middle of the day.

They breed on dunes and sandy islands but will winter on intertidal zones such as sandflats and mudflats, estuaries as well as lagoons and coral reefs, where they catch mainly crabs, as their name suggests, but will also take other crustaceans molluscs and worms.

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Although of least concern there are threats to their status. There are few breeding colonies and this makes them vulnerable to ecological disasters such as oil spills, coastal development, wars and introduced predators at nesting sites. Traditionally eggs and young were collected but although this practise may still persist in some areas it is much reduced. The planting and spread of mangroves on previously open areas may also reduce both nesting and feeding opportunities.

They breed along the coasts of the Arabian Peninsula and around the Persian Gulf. Many winter south along the African coast as far as South Africa and Madagascar, and also in north-western India, southern India and Sri Lanka, and also in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands and peninsula Thailand.

The Crab Plover is available as a Wader Quest pin badge, number 22 and is available through our online shop [here](#).



Flock of Crab Plovers - Aditya Roy



Flock of Crab Plovers - Elis Simpson