

THE ICF BUGLE

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World Center for the Study and Preservation of Cranes

A FUTURE FOR AFRICA'S CRANES

by George Archibald, ICF Director

As the sun dropped into Uganda behind Mount Elgon, two Grey Crowned Cranes on a pasture near Kitale, Kenya, arched forward, spread their enormous black and white wings and departed for the nearby Saiwa Swamp National Park. In a tower beside the swamp, I waited with crane researchers Cecilia Gichuki and Paul Mafabi. A mournful, horn-like "Kawoonk" call announced the cranes' approach.

Coming in just over the tree tops, they circled and landed just left of the tower. They drank, preened a bit, then walked slowly and deliberately through the dense aquatic vegetation. Cecilia said they were probably looking for a spot to build a nest. Paul added that several nests are sometimes constructed before the cranes lay their clutch of two to three eggs. The pair flew to several spots in the small wetland, examined each location carefully, and finally flapped to the highest branch of a dead tree where they would roost until dawn.

Until recently, the two species of Crowned Cranes, the Black and the Grey, numbered in the tens of thousands over most of their grassland range that stretches from Senegal to Ethiopia and south to the Cape. This summer I visited Nigeria and Kenya to learn more about the cranes and their problems.

Nigerian Cranes Vanish

The Black Crowned Crane lives in grasslands and savannas bordered on the north by the Sahara Desert and on the south by tropical forests. Rivers originate in the south and flow north through the grasslands.



Black Crowned Cranes inhabit grasslands and savannas of west Africa and Sudan. The species has drastically declined in Nigeria and neighboring countries. Photo by George Archibald.

The rainy season floods wide expanses of riparian lowlands, providing ideal crane nesting habitat.

Black Crowned Cranes were abundant in northern Nigeria. They preferred to roost at night in tall trees inside the villages, presumably to avoid predators. The Crowned Cranes were such a prominent feature of the countryside that they were selected as the na-

tional bird. Suddenly they disappeared.

A Nigerian conservationist, Bashir Garba, participated in a training program at ICF during September 1987 and was anxious to undertake crane research and public education efforts back home in Kano State where the cranes formerly were abundant. Despite a year-long search, he was unable to observe

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African cranes

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a single Crowned Crane in the wild in Kano State.

From 1973-1987 western Africa suffered from a serious drought. The Sahara moved south and the streams were dammed to provide life-giving water for irrigation. In Nigeria a rapidly expanding human population, now over 100 million and increasing by 4% per year, placed added demands on the limited natural resources. Shallow wetlands where Crowned Cranes nested were flooded by the backwaters of dams. Other wetlands were desiccated by lack of downstream water and by drainage. Until the late 1970s, hundreds of cranes were captured and sold to zoos worldwide.

Recognizing the importance of wetlands to people and wildlife, the Nigerian Government and the Nigerian Conservation Foundation, together with two private conservation organizations headquartered in Great Britain (the International Council for Bird Preservation and the Royal Society for the Preservation of Birds), have undertaken an ambitious project to study and save the 90 square kilometer Hadejia-Nguru Wetlands in northern Nigeria. If that wetland is secured, perhaps the cranes will return.

ICF was able to provide a small grant to our Nigerian colleagues through which aerial surveys will be conducted to search for cranes in regions where ground surveys are difficult during the rainy season. Our Nigerian colleague, Dr. Hadi Mustafa (Chief Wildlife Officer for Kano State), hopes to establish a West African Working Group on Cranes, and thereby cultivate crane conservation among the nations that are home to the Black Crowned Cranes.

Kenyan Cranes Have Mixed Nesting Success

It was a treat to visit Saiwa National Park and surrounding wetlands with my Kenyan colleagues Nathan and Cecilia Gichuki and their assistants. Saiwa is just two square kilometers in size and consists of a narrow wetland bordered by tall trees. Eight pairs of cranes and a herd of rare Sitatunga Antelope live in the wetland, while the trees are home to Colobus Monkeys and hornbills. Saiwa represents the ultimate fate of pristine nature in Africa — small, wild islands amidst an ocean of human-created habitats. Despite the pressures for development, Kenya is a leader among African nations in the wise use of natural areas.

Grey Crowned Cranes are still numerous and widespread in Kenya and may number as many as 70,000 birds. Within limits, they are adaptable birds and are often seen foraging in agricultural fields. As was the habit of the Black Crowned Cranes in Nigeria, the Grey Crowned Cranes of Kenya and Uganda



Grey Crowned Cranes search for a nest site at Saiwa National Park, Kenya.

prefer to roost at night in tall trees in the villages.

The Gichuki research indicates that Crowned Cranes nest in a diversity of wetland types, ranging from pristine wetlands, to wetlands bordered by agricultural fields, to wetlands that are heavily grazed by both wild and domestic mammals. Nesting success is highest in wetlands bordered by agricultural fields and lower in the pristine wetlands (presumably as a consequence of predation). Cranes are unable to breed in grazed wetlands because they cannot conceal their nests.

Like Nigeria, Kenya has a rapidly growing human population. It is estimated that 56% of the 23 million Kenyans are less than 15 years of age. Numbers of cattle are also increasing. Wetland reclamation and overgrazing may cause a serious decline in the numbers of Crowned Cranes in east Africa in the near future.

The PAOC offers overview of African Cranes

In late August and early September of this year, the National Museums of Kenya were the site for the Seventh Pan-African Ornithological Congress (PAOC). Three papers concerned African cranes: Paul Mafabi and Nathan Gichuki each spoke about the biology of Grey Crowned Cranes, Paul for Uganda and Nathan for Kenya; and Clifford Malambo described his work on Wattled Cranes in Zambia.

The PAOC also provided a superb opportunity for a meeting of the African Working Group on Cranes which ICF helped set up in 1983. Thirty-eight people attended the meeting that was chaired by Nathan Gichuki. The participants provided a quick overview of what is happening to cranes over the vast

African continent. Additional information was provided in the Working Group's *Crowned Crane* newsletter, assembled and printed at ICF, distributed at the PAOC, and including 29 reports from 14 African nations.

Reports at the PAOC reveal varied situations. Zambia, with assistance from the World Wide Fund for Nature, has embarked on an ambitious project to promote wise use of the Kafue Flats, where thousands of people and Wattled Cranes depend on the wetland resources. Senegal, like many countries, is rapidly losing its wetlands to agricultural reclamation projects. Zimbabwe has a concentration of 400 Grey Crowned Cranes that is inflicting serious damage to crops. Botswana's diamond mines need more water from the Okavango Swamp, and plans are being carefully developed that will minimize a negative impact on that incomparable "jewel of the Kalahari." ICF was pleased to announce that the next global International Crane Workshop will likely convene in Botswana in May of 1992, to focus world attention on the Okavango.

Africa's wetlands have been shared by people and cranes since times untold. The Crowned Crane's habit of roosting on the tall trees in villages, and their higher productivity in wetlands bordered by agricultural fields, are indications that certain human activities help cranes. Co-existence of people and cranes in and near the wetlands is possible within certain limits for human activity. We look forward to helping our African colleagues, and all African nations with cranes, to provide a future that allows the wise use of wetlands, benefiting both people and wildlife. The future of cranes in Africa is *with* people.

International Training Programs Thrive at ICF

by Jim Harris, Deputy Director

Foreign visitors hope to enjoy new experiences when they come to ICF for training. Sometimes they get more than they might have wished.

One April morning, for example, three researchers from tropical Africa found themselves up at 2 a.m., driven to a remote spot in the dark of central Wisconsin, and led across damp fields to crouch in a tiny hut for hours. By dawn, a wet snowfall had covered the earth for our astonished and sleepy visitors, but the undisturbed Prairie Chickens danced and strutted through the storm. The Africans will never forget Wisconsin's creative system for public viewing, a successful combination of research and public involvement that helped save the state's last Prairie Chickens. Such field experiences, with or without the snow, are central to our training endeavors.

ICF's International Training Programs were formally established in 1985, to help us serve more effectively the stream of foreign conservationists who travel to ICF to study methods of crane and habitat conservation. Since 1985, we have received 45 fellows and interns from 17 countries.

Foreign fellows are conservation professionals who stay three to five weeks to study and to plan with ICF staff for future programs in their home countries. Usually fellows hold professional positions and are already involved in crane or wetland projects in cooperation with ICF. Foreign interns are at beginning stages of conservation careers, and stay at ICF for three months.

Both fellows and interns attend lectures by ICF staff, gain practical experience with ICF programs, visit other conservation facilities, and pursue independent work of their choosing. Interns have a much heavier emphasis on learning through participation in ICF's ongoing work.

Our training program is small, to allow flexibility for meeting each participant's needs. Each session is individually designed. Increasingly, we have exposed our visitors to the wealth of conservation activities pursued by other organizations in Wisconsin and elsewhere. In this way, our foreign colleagues receive a broader experience with American conservation approaches. These visits have also fostered closer ties between ICF and our American colleagues.

Programs pass both ways. As ICF staff provide training, they receive vivid impressions of the conservation challenges in Africa and Asia, and a better sense of what conservation approaches work and do not work in developing countries. While all ICF staff contribute toward success of our international efforts, we lack the funds for most of them to travel overseas. Through the training visits, however, we all gain a more personal commitment to this work, after sharing a meal of dumplings cooked by the Chinese, joking about first frost with the Nigerians, and listening to memories of home as our friendship deepens with the Vietnamese.

We also encourage interaction between our visitors and ICF members and the public, through public lectures and through foreign delegate participation in our annual meeting and on-site tours for the public. Some of our field trips for the foreign delegations also are open to members.

Renewed funding assures stronger program

For the past two years, our international training has been supported by a \$30,000 grant from The Pew Charitable Trusts. We are delighted to announce that the Pew Trusts have just made a new commitment of support, of \$90,000 for the next three years. Such continuity is extremely important because long lead time is necessary to arrange for many delegations.

Foreign training is expensive. We also wish to acknowledge past supporters of our training efforts. We have received significant funding from the General Service Foundation, the National Wildlife Federation, the Frances R. Dewing Foundation, and the Institute of

Museum Services. In addition, individual ICF members have made important contributions.

Program has multiple benefits

As we have gained experience with training, our perspectives have changed on the values of the program. Certainly the original goal remains central: to provide a variety of skills and expertise through ICF staff instruction, whether for producing slide shows, burning grasslands, or incubating crane eggs.

But equally significant is the chance for foreign visitors to see the results of a strong tradition of wildlife management and conservation in our country, and the tremendous diversity of approaches to resource use. Most countries lack a long experience with conservation, and our colleagues are making a beginning, with few or no models within their countries. A view of American efforts gives them a context from which to devise creative solutions to the challenges in their developing regions, where conditions are so different from America. We try to provide a way of thinking about problems and solutions, and examples of how conservation evolves from a mix of methods, out of the input and needs of the many people depending on the wild resources so necessary for cranes.

Perhaps the greatest value of the foreign training is the expansion of personal contacts. Through the foreign training and also crane workshops, a network is building in the many countries where cranes are in trouble. Our past participants form the leadership for the regional crane working groups, and pass their knowledge on to co-workers within their regions. It is through these networks that all of us join in developing solutions to the crisis that confronts the world's wetland resource.



Jeb Barzen, ICF Wetland Ecologist, shows Professor Le Dien Duc how to load rockets with fuel as they prepare to capture cranes with a rocket net. Professor Duc, from the University of Hanoi, studied at ICF this fall in company with three other Vietnamese. Photos by George Archibald.

Training is a two-way exchange

The benefits of the International Training

Members Share Their Wetlands Photos

by Jim Harris
Deputy Director

Photography is one of the best ways to study wild nature, because the photographer must observe carefully and understand what he or she sees. This understanding is not just scientific; wetlands will forever be mysterious and alien to us land creatures. We must be guided by deepening feelings for the quivering mats of sedge and sphagnum, for the million reed stems arching over a single bittern, for the dark waters oozing with life. To the photographer, there is also a sense of danger, of mud and infirm footing, and the everpresent chance of falling in.

It has been a great pleasure to look over ICF members' photographs of wetlands and wetland wildlife, submitted in response to recent notices in the *ICF Bugle*. A selection is printed here, chosen to represent the variety of responses and approaches to photographing wetlands.

Aside from their physical dangers to person and camera, wetlands are difficult for photographers. They are flat, and the plants have a simple pattern endlessly repeated. Wildlife vanish among the reeds or underwater. And we have little tradition for appreciating wetlands. Mountains are sublime, forests magnificent, and farmlands productive. But wetlands, in so many cultures, have been wastelands.

The world's wetlands are in trouble because they have been undervalued esthetically, economically, and ecologically. All of us—officials, farmers, and photographers—must study the values of wetlands. The photographer has the chance to share these discoveries with others. We at ICF have found crane photographs a key to awakening local support for the crane reserves in Asia and Africa.

Let's hope that more and more people will explore wetlands with the camera. We need to learn a new way of looking at the world—even if we do lose our balance, and slide in among mud and pollywogs! The camera can be restored much more easily than the lost wetland, or the vanishing cranes.

We wish to thank all members who submitted pictures, and hope you continue your efforts. We will feature member photos again. We also wish to thank photographers from around the world who allow ICF to use their pictures for public education.





Top left: Mute, Whooper, and Tundra Swans, the Wildfowl Trust, Welney, England. Photo by Campbell Read. Top right: feather on Purple Loosestrife, Minnesota. Photo by Ellen Lawler. Bottom Left: White Waterlilies, Oklahoma. Photo by Elaine Burstatte. Bottom right: Pied-billed Grebe rotates egg, Minnesota. Photo by Ellen Lawler.

The Bottom Line

Gifts and Pledges ICF's Capital Campaign Received April-August, 1988

by Bob Hallam
Development Coordinator

Last year's fall issue of the *Bugle* contained a "special gift envelope" which gave each member a chance to donate to a particular ICF program of his or her personal interest.

Contributions received for "International Education" went toward producing photographic and written materials for the Wildlife Clubs of Kenya to support a crane count project modeled after Wisconsin's Sandhill Crane Count. The Wildlife Clubs of Kenya held their first Crane Count last June.

Generous contributions to Habitat Restoration allowed ICF to tackle three projects. First, ICF established native grasses and forbs over a plugged erosion ditch which has been a problem for the past two years. Second, ICF developed a brochure about habitat restoration. Finally, habitat contributions allowed ICF to rebuild a garden tractor donated by Nan and Larry Stocking. This tractor will help ICF maintain trails and continue more efficiently its prairie restoration efforts.

Aviculture has expanded veterinary care this year; the special funds were used for purchasing medical supplies such as anesthesia equipment for in-house surgical care.

The staff wishes to thank all our members once again for their continued faithful support, and we hope you will renew your "special gift to the cranes."

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**Co-Founders: George Archibald
Ron Sauey**
Editor: Jim Harris

ICF offers memberships at the following annual rates:
Individual \$20 Foreign \$25
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We wish to express our deep gratitude to all those who have contributed to our Capital Campaign.

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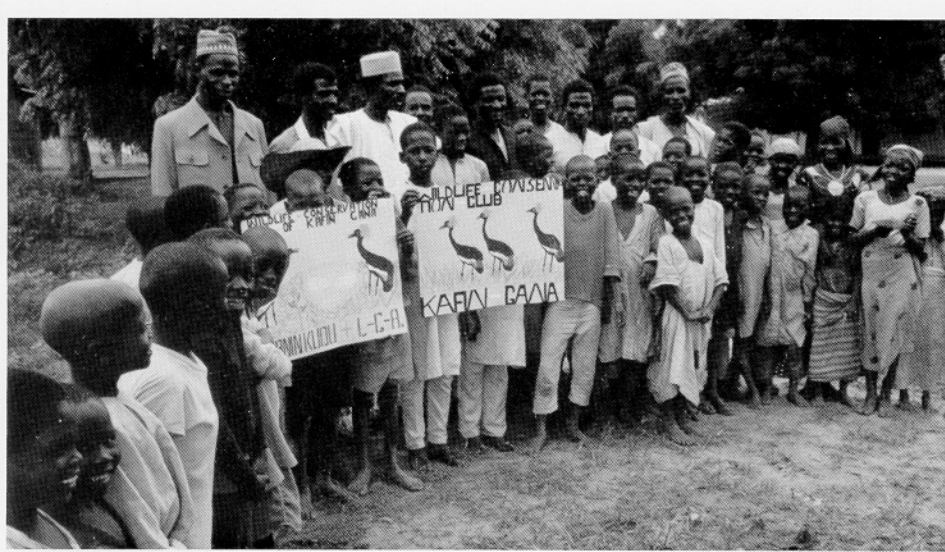
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This wildlife club in Kano State, Nigeria is publicizing the needs for crane and wetland conservation. Bashir Garba, second from the left at rear, has established wildlife clubs in Kano after his training at ICF in 1987. Photo by George Archibald.

Foreign Efforts Boosted by ICF Training

The true measures of ICF's international training efforts are the achievements of foreign fellows and interns after they return home from ICF. Conservation is slow work, and often the results are not apparent until after years of effort. But we have received encouraging news from some of our colleagues, just months after they have left ICF.

Nepal: Rajendra Suwal came to ICF in the fall of 1987. In recent years, there have been very few reliable sightings of Indian Sarus Cranes from Nepal, prompting fears that the crane was disappearing.

Rajendra recently reported on his initial efforts, the first Sarus survey in Nepal. He found 30 Indian Sarus in 5 districts, foraging mostly in agricultural fields. He administered a questionnaire and learned that 95% of the people interviewed like cranes; most see no problems with cranes living near the villages. But they indicate hunting is a major threat to cranes. Rajendra plans further studies and public education efforts, based on the survey.

Kenya: Joseph Rugut of the Wildlife Clubs of Kenya also came to ICF in the fall of 1987, as a foreign fellow. While at ICF, he made plans for developing a Crowned Crane Count to be held through large areas of his country by the wildlife clubs. These clubs have been organized in thousands of schools to familiarize the youth with wildlife and involve them in conservation.

Joseph and his co-workers organized the count for Kenya and held it this past June. They are now evaluating methods and train-

ing materials, so that the count can be held on an annual basis. Results will assist Kenyan scientists who lack the country-wide information that the crane count can provide.

Nigeria: Bashir Garba and Ali Lowal of Kano State in northern Nigeria were also foreign fellows at ICF in fall of 1987. Upon returning to Nigeria, they began organizing wildlife clubs in the schools surrounding the wetlands in Kano. Bashir now has formed a number of clubs that are helping him look for Black Crowned Cranes. The children have focused on learning about wetlands and ways their values can be preserved as humans use these rich ecosystems.

China: Two other foreign fellows in the fall of 1987—Ding Wenning and Xu Yangong of the Institute of Zoology in Beijing, China—returned home with plans for migratory studies of cranes. Cranes have received protection on their wintering and summering areas, but little is known about their long migrations, or about critical migratory habitats that require protection.

This past spring, Mr. Ding began migration observations on the coast of China east of Beijing. His work was coordinated with ICF's observations of the departure of the Siberian Cranes from their winter reserve at Poyang Lake, and with counts of Siberian Cranes arriving at an important rest area at Zhalong Nature Reserve far to the north (the latter counts were made by Li Peixun and Li Fangman of Harbin Normal University). Starting next spring, Mr. Ding will be seeking to identify important resting habitat for the Siberians.

In the spring of 1988, ICF hosted four foreign fellows involved in captive management of cranes in China. They developed plans for coordinated conservation and breeding of the Black-necked Crane in cap-

tivity. This second rarest of the world's cranes is present in sufficient numbers in Chinese zoos to support captive management.

Upon the delegation's return to China, their proposals were discussed and amplified by the Chinese Zoo Association. The preparation of a Black-necked Crane studbook and a multi-institutional conservation strategy will be an important precedent for conservation in Chinese zoos.

We salute these efforts of our friends overseas. While discussions and planning sessions in Baraboo are only a small part of the process, our catalytic function is vital. For a small organization like ICF, our chief hope is to inspire and facilitate the creativity of our colleagues.

Crane Workshops in India and Vietnam

A Workshop on Cranes and Wetland Research will be held in Pune, India from January 20-24, 1989. The meeting will focus on cranes in India, and will cost only \$200 US, including field trip, food, and lodging. For more details, contact Organising Committee, Crane Workshop, c/o Ecological Society, 1B Abhimanshree Society, Pashan Road, Pune 411 008, India.

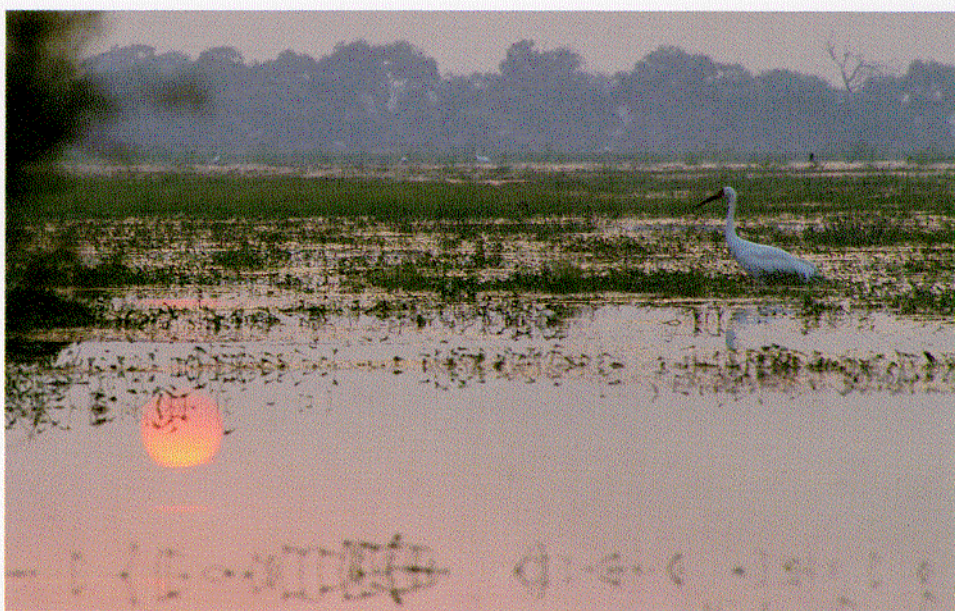
A Workshop on Conservation of the Sarus Crane will be held near Tram Chim Nature Reserve in southern Vietnam from January 11-18, 1990. Researchers and conservationists from southern Asia and Australia are invited. Cost is \$500 for all expenses in Vietnam. Contact George Archibald at ICF for more information.

ICF Members Invited to Join Expedition to Vietnam

ICF Director George Archibald will be leading a study team to the Tram Chim Nature Reserve in Vietnam. ICF members are invited to join the expedition and assist with counts of cranes and with education programs for the local communities.

This reserve on the Mekong Delta is the last known winter area for Eastern Sarus Cranes in Asia, with about 1,000 birds counted here in the spring of 1988. Development pressures are heavy, and ICF is helping provincial officials balance needs of people and wildlife for this 5,000-hectare wetland.

The expedition will run from March 1-18, 1989. Contact George Archibald at ICF for more information. **The application deadline is December 15.**



A Siberian Crane stands alone at Keoladeo National Park near Bharatpur, India. Numbers of cranes here continue to decline, with only 32 Siberians during winter 1987-88 (sharply down from previous winters; from 1981-87, the number ranged from 36-41 birds). Only 10 Siberians are known to survive from the Caspian lowlands of Iran. One bird in Iran was apparently killed at the end of last winter, highlighting concerns for the flock. Urgent action is required in both countries if their flocks are to survive. In China, over 1500 Siberian Cranes wintered at Poyang Lake in 1987-88, although even the eastern flock is vulnerable because it is concentrated so highly in winter and migrates through unprotected regions. Photo by Christine Tracey.

Crane Celebration on Platte River March 17-19, 1989

Spring on the Platte River attracts one of the greatest concentrations of cranes on earth. Each year in late March, a half million Sandhill Cranes pause here during their migration toward Canada. On March 17-19, 1989, the "Wings Over the Platte Celebration" offers a special chance to watch the cranes and learn about this unique area.

The program features workshops on cranes and the Platte River by the U. S. Fish &

Wildlife Service, Nebraska Game & Parks Commission, Nebraska Wildlife Federation, the Platte River Whooping Crane Habitat Maintenance Trust, and ICF. Crane viewing tours have been arranged for the weekend. ICF's Deputy Director, Jim Harris, will be the banquet speaker on March 18, with a talk titled "Preserving a Future for the Migratory Cranes."

The cranes themselves are an extraordinary attraction. You'll also discover what threatens the Platte, and what make this braided river so important to migratory Whooping and Sandhill Cranes and a host of other birds. Contact the Grand Island/Hall County Convention & Visitors Bureau for more information at 800-247-6167, extension 625.



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