



THE ICF BUGLE

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World Center for the Study and Preservation of Cranes

Thank You Owen and Anne

by George Archibald, Director

Often it's difficult to write about those who are closest to you. Such is certainly the case as I attempt to share with you these memories of Owen and Anne Gromme — my adopted Wisconsin family. They have stood beside Ron Sauey and myself since ICF's beginning 18 years ago. Were it not for their encouragement, wisdom and support, ICF would not be what it is today.

Owen and Anne were raised in central Wisconsin around the turn of the century. Anne's parents were Scandinavian onion farmers near Briggsville, and Owen was of German-Irish extraction from Fond Du Lac. They shared a love for the out-of-doors, and in 1927 were married near Briggsville under the oaks beside Neenah Creek.

A distinguished career

Owen's career at the Milwaukee Public Museum spanned the years from 1922 to 1965, where he served as a gifted illustrator, naturalist, taxidermist and Curator of Birds and Mammals. Spectacular mounts of large mammals collected by Owen in Africa and the Arctic continue to astonish visitors at the museum. Owen's magnificently illustrated *Birds of Wisconsin*, published in 1963 by the Friends of the Milwaukee Public Museum, is testimony to Owen's scientific and artistic brilliance, not to mention his Wisconsin roots.

Jack Puelicher of Milwaukee's Marshall and Ilsley Bank understood the quality of Owen's work, and in the mid-sixties, commissioned Owen to create 43 oil paintings of Wisconsin



Owen and Anne Gromme frequently visited ICF to see the birds and introduce their friends to the staff. In 1981, Owen was photographed holding Dushenka, the first Siberian Crane hatched in captivity from a Siberian Crane egg laid in captivity.



Anne is a constant source of encouragement and support for Owen. In 1973, the Grommes put finishing touches on "Sacred Cranes Over Hokkaido" in his studio overlooking a crane marsh. Limited edition signed and numbered prints are still available to ICF Sponsors.

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sin birds in their natural settings. This spectacular collection is exhibited in the bank's executive suites. Owen became an instant local celebrity, and as he approached retirement from the museum, was unable to meet the demand for his paintings. Dozens of Gromme paintings have been marketed in limited edition prints, and now, Gromme is almost a household word in the Midwest.

Ron Sauey admired the life-like quality of Owen's birds and the authenticity of his Wisconsin habitats. Through a mutual friend, Chappie Fox, Ron and the Grommes met in the late sixties, and in 1970, Owen painted a Barn Owl for Ron. A letter from Owen to Cornell University helped Ron enter a graduate program at the Laboratory for Ornithology. That's where Ron and I met in 1971.

A friend of the cranes

Not long after Ron and I hit on the idea of establishing the International Crane Foundation (ICF), Ron shared the news with Owen and Anne. The Grommes were thrilled that a Wisconsin-based effort might spread crane conservation worldwide. And so, Ron commissioned Owen to paint his largest canvas to date, showing Whooping Cranes at their nest. Created in 1972, "Salute to the Dawn" announced both the birth of ICF and the Whooper's tenacity for survival.

And as Owen painted, Ron's parents, Norman and Claire Sauey, allowed the transformation of their horse barns into crane pens. But funds were also needed to fuel the growing organization, and the Grommes helped to meet that need. Limited edition prints of

"Salute to the Dawn" and later prints of Red-crowned Cranes raised that critical support. In addition, the Grommes encouraged their many friends, including John and Mary Wickhem of Janesville, to help the cranes.

I'll never forget the spring storm of April 7, 1983. The Grommes and the Wickhems came to ICF for a meal and a look at my slides of cranes in Japan and Australia. As the blizzard howled, the Wickhems escaped to the

south, but the Grommes were trapped for three days at my home. While snow drifts thickened over my car, my friendship with Owen and Anne deepened, as stories spanning two-thirds of a century unfolded in my warm kitchen.

Owen becomes a Trustee

In 1978, to improve ICF management and financial support, we expanded our Board of Trustees from three to 18. Owen became and remains a Trustee, and Mary Wickhem, became and remains the Chair of the Board. At that time, ICF was outgrowing the Sauey Farm, and the Trustees made a decision to purchase the present ICF site. Owen and Anne helped make the down payment. Today, the Gromme Wetland in the heart of ICF's prairie restoration is a permanent living salute to these great friends of the cranes.

This August at age 93, Owen was still painting. One day I received a call from Owen. He urgently needed photographs of a cliff in the Baraboo Hills for the background of a painting of wild turkeys. In a few weeks, the cliffs from behind my home were part of a Gromme masterpiece. Unfortunately, Owen hasn't been painting since the turkeys, for on August 28, he suffered a stroke and has been hospitalized ever since.

Although Owen and Anne are legendary figures in Wisconsin's history, for me they are dear friends who live in the country, and enjoy nature. I always cherish their friendship, and I will forever be grateful for what they have done for me and the cranes.



Anne broods a newly-hatched Sarus Crane chick on a frigid February day in 1984. That year, 24 Sarus eggs were transported from northern Australia to ICF. Chicks were peeping in their shells while the last nails were driven in ICF's new chick rearing house.

Crane Workshop Meets in Estonia

By Gretchen Schoff

Autumn, a time of brisk winds and migrations. On a ship between Helsinki and Tallinn, Estonia, a keen Baltic wind whipped the hammer and sickle flag on its pole. Glasnost was in the air, and on the top deck of the ship, people from many nations were beginning to gather — Finns, Swedes, Germans, Dutch, Norwegians, English, French, and Americans.

They called greetings to each other, flocked together excitedly. Here was a remarkable group of people, ethnically and politically diverse, but bound together by a common goal, the study and protection of cranes and their habitats. Conversation came in a rush. "Did you get my letter?" "One of the birds you banded showed up at our reserve." "Bad news... one of the females died."

The group disembarked within a few hours in the harbor of Estonia's capital city, Tallinn, where they were joined by others from Crane Working Groups in China, the USSR, Pakistan, India, Portugal, Spain, and Iran. From September 19-25, over 140 people from 21 countries, from the Soviet Union to Spain, met for the Palearctic Crane Workshop.

Cranes: carriers of glasnost

Putting together a conference with such international dimensions is a bit like getting D day off the ground. During the politically tumultuous fall of 1989, the task was superhuman. The meeting could not have happened without the work that E. Parmesto and J. Keskaik of Estonia, V. Flint and S. Smirenski of the USSR and Joost van der Ven of the Netherlands. It did not take long to discover that the Working Groups bring rigorous ornithological research to bear on the problems of crane survival. They also have taken on, by some magic, some of the "Wild and Free" qualities of the birds they follow — they are people with a natural glasnost or openness that seems bred in the bone.

George Archibald of ICF opened the conference with a welcome that was emblematic of the spirit of the conference. His title, "Asian Cranes: Carriers of Glasnost," set in motion six days of a packed agenda that went on from early morning into the wee hours of the night. In the main lecture hall, for example, one could hear Ma and Fan on crane research in China; Shibaev and Sorokin on Cranes in the USSR; Gole on the Black-



Tanya Kashentseva and Vladimir Panchenko both participated in the conference at Tallinn. Later, Kashentseva, Panchenko, and Archibald returned to the Oka State Reserve about 200 miles south of Moscow, where they showed Dr. Archibald their great achievement for 1989, the first captive breeding of a Siberian Crane in the Soviet Union. Here they are with two Siberian Crane chicks, and a Siberian-Sandhill hybrid (foreground).

necked Cranes of the Indian sub-continent; Ozaki on the White-naped and Hooded Cranes of Japan. This small sampling gives only a taste of the breadth and variety of presentations, 10 to 12 each day.

Add to these over 70 poster sessions. The hallways and bulletin boards of Tallinn's Sports Hotel were filled with photographs, charts, maps... often the work of years of research condensed into a fascinating panoply of information.

What set the Palearctic Workshop head and shoulders above so many other scientific conferences was that it coupled scientific rigor with dozens of informal interactions — round tables, coffee sessions, slide shows, videotapes, trips to nature reserves, and, throughout, fine camaraderie.

A variety of talents

Among photographers there were Carl Treuenfels of Germany, and Sture Karlsson and his wife Britt of Sweden. The photography was breathtaking. To get it also requires unusual patience and stamina. Karlsson was heard to say, in his quiet, self-effacing way, "About forty below zero — some of the birds didn't make it. Pretty cold for me too, but that's okay. I got my pictures." And there was a Soviet researcher, Sorokin, who still speaks of an event nearly ten years ago and his part in the discovery of Siberian Crane nests in the tundra: "It was and still is the happiest day of my life." There was Landfried of the US, interested especially in

the fate of the Siberian Cranes, and looking for ways to use technologies of satellite tracking of migration routes.

And then there were the amateurs, camp-following aficionados like Edward Downs of the UK. Downs is an 81 year old car salesman. He has severe arthritis and must use a cane, but he loves cranes enough to travel to Estonia to learn more about them. With a smile, he said, "My brother doesn't understand my love of cranes. He thinks I ought to be certified — you know, labelled one of those harmless lunatics free to walk around outside."

Geopolitics is one of the stark realities affecting crane survival, and at Tallinn, steps were taken to begin strengthening ties between nations. Drafts of formal protocols for cooperation between the USSR, India and Pakistan and between China and the USSR for work on Lake Khanka were created with participation from all countries involved. These protocols, now under consideration, are designed to foster and encourage scientific cooperation between researchers from participating countries and to enlist, wherever possible, the key ministries and political entities whose decisions affect crane habitat and survival.

The Palearctic Crane Workshop was organized by the Institute of Zoology and Botany of the Estonian Academy of Sciences, The Crane Working Group of the USSR, the European Crane Working Group, and ICF. That official listing gives some hint of the

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Meeting Helps African Cranes

By George Archibald, Director

Southern Africa is home to three species of colorful cranes; Grey Crowned, Wattled, and Blue. The Grey Crowned and the Wattled Cranes have wide ranges in eastern and southern Africa. Grey Crowneds may number in the tens of thousands, but there are perhaps fewer than 8,000 Wattled in Zambia, Botswana, and South Africa. Because of declining numbers, low reproductive potential, and threats to their habitat, ICF ranks the Wattled Crane as an endangered species.

Wattled Cranes threatened

Only about 300 Wattled Cranes remain in South Africa. They are year-round residents on wetlands in the highlands of eastern Transvaal and western Natal. Unlike the Blue and Grey Crowned Cranes that nest in spring and summer, the Wattled Cranes breed in winter (July-August). Their territorial requirements include a huge area of wetland and grassland, an area in which several pairs of Blue or Crowned Cranes could comfortably nest. Their nest is a platform structure, a small island surrounded by water, typically in a small pond located in the heart of their territory.

Unlike other cranes that usually lay two eggs per clutch, Wattled Cranes usually lay just a single egg. If two eggs are laid, the pair leave the nest after the first hatches, leaving the second egg to perish. South African researchers have collected second eggs,

hatched them in incubators, and reared them in captivity. Progeny from these captive birds may eventually be used to reintroduce Wattled Cranes into Swaziland and regions of the Cape Province, from which they have been extirpated.

Although several important Wattled Crane wetlands have been protected, most of the cranes breed on privately-owned lands, where they face mounting pressures. The damming of wetlands to create fish ponds, the forestation of grasslands adjacent to the wetlands, the burning of wetlands in winter when the cranes are nesting, and the construction of power lines in the flight paths of cranes, all result in the loss of both habitat and birds.

Blue Cranes rapidly disappearing

Blue Cranes are restricted to grasslands of South Africa and one small area in another country, the Etoshapan of Namibia. Until recently, Blue Cranes were considered to be locally abundant and secure, but recent surveys now indicate a catastrophic decline in Blue Crane populations over much of their South African range.

From October through March (spring and summer), Blue Cranes breed in the privacy of secluded grasslands. In autumn, with newly fledged chicks in tow, the pairs congregate in flocks and migrate to lower altitudes where temperatures are milder.

For feeding, Blue Cranes prefer uplands to wetlands, and they have a particular liking for agricultural fields. The cranes damage crops by consuming freshly sprouted corn. In response, farmers poisoned large numbers of cranes. In one field, 675 cranes recently

died. The cranes also fall prey to poison bait set out for other birds.

In addition to poisoning, grasslands where the cranes breed are threatened by expanding forestry practices. South Africa needs paper, and pulp-producing pines and eucalyptus trees thrive on former Blue Crane habitat.

Meeting makes recommendations

To address the problems facing cranes from the Zambezi River to the Cape, a Southern African Crane Foundation (SACF) was recently established in Natal, an eastern state of South Africa. On December 9 and 10, 1989, five members of ICF's Board of Trustees participated in a crane workshop sponsored by the SACF.

Participants identified poisoning of cranes as the foremost conservation problem. To learn more about the migration of the cranes and their interaction with farmers, young Blue Cranes will be captured and fitted with radio transmitters, then released and followed.

Education of the local people that live with the cranes was the next priority for action.

A private and extremely effective conservation organization, the Endangered Wildlife Trust, will sponsor a booklet entitled *Cranes, Vleis, and Farmers*. Two former ICF interns, Lindy Rodwell and Robert Filmer, have been selected as authors for the booklet. Thousands of copies will be distributed to farmers throughout the range of the cranes.

The participants recognized that a national wetland inventory must be compiled, with wetlands prioritized by conservation importance. Key wetlands must be identified, protected, and then monitored to assure their security.

The unauthorized taking of cranes from the wild for recreational and commercial reasons must be stopped. Captive breeding centers have a function in public education and restocking, but such efforts should not be given greater importance than protecting the wild cranes and their habitats.

Mr. Don Porter, chairman of SACF, said the decline in Blue Cranes was a "terrible loss," particularly in a province which sets such high conservation standards. "We have a lot of plans for the conservation of cranes, but they will mean a great deal of money."

SACF now faces the challenge of helping to mould a future with room for cranes, crops and forests. Perhaps flocks of Blue Cranes can be lured to and safely held at refuge fields where their favorite crops are planted. Obviously, widespread education of the farmers, fishermen and foresters is required. And then as crane conservation programs become firmly established in southern Africa, perhaps SACF can aid other African nations where cranes are in danger.



Imagine this beautiful scene minus the farms, forests and fish ponds. Visualize herds of black wildebeest and flocks of Blue Cranes to glimpse the pristine grasslands of western Natal. Man has transformed the landscape, and now conservationists must fight to assure survival for the cranes.

The Great Crane Escape

by George Archibald, Director

The rocky and grass-covered escarpments of eastern Transvaal are the sources of rivers, and provide prime nesting habitat for South Africa's national bird, the Blue Crane. This December, I spent five days learning more about the cranes and their problems.

Only eight years ago, dozens of pairs of Blue Cranes nested on the grasslands within the same study area, yet this time I was able to find only three pairs with chicks, and five non-breeding pairs. During my watch, I was fortunate to observe one family during a close encounter with predators!

Since dawn the Blue Crane family — a pair with two downy chicks — had walked the pastured grasslands of a valley in the highlands of eastern Transvaal. Bordered on the west by cliffs and to the north by a pine planting, the valley sloped downward, then opened to the east. The valley floor was carpeted with a green-covered wetland called a "sponge," or in Afrikaans, a "vlei."

There were two man-made ponds: a small one near the top of the valley, and a second and larger pond located 500 yards downhill from the first. Both had been created by building dams across the vlei. In November, the Blue Crane pair returned to the valley to breed. They nested on the vlei along the back shore of the small pond. In mid-December, their grey chicks with blond heads hatched.

Unlike most other cranes, Blue Cranes prefer grasslands to wetlands. The neatly-grazed sheep pastures of that mountain valley, and the shore of the pond provided ideal feeding and roosting habitat for the family.

At dusk on December 17, parked along a dirt road near the cliff, I peered down on the cranes. They had returned to the far side of the small pond. The female sat on the ground and brooded her chicks while the male stood guard nearby.

A desperate maneuver

Suddenly, two African boys with four dogs emerged from the pine forest at the top of the valley. To traverse the valley and keep their feet dry, the boys decided to use the dam of the small pond to cross the vlei. But unfortunately, the dogs circled around the edge of the pond and ran right into the cranes.

I couldn't see the chicks in the dim light—but the adults stood erect with wings spread, called loudly, and faced the four dogs. As the dogs charged, the cranes attacked. . . a confusion of barks and calls followed. Sudden-



Beautifully blended with the grassland panorama, a majestic Blue Crane male gave an alarm call as I approached his family. Unlike many other species of crane that nest and rear their young in wetlands, Blue Cranes breed in grasslands. While rearing chicks, a family is continually on the move, searching for small animals and seeds.

ly, the female crane lay prostrate on the water near the dogs. With wings spread and head lowered, she solicited their attack. Crowding in for the kill, the dogs rushed again but the crane pushed off, swimming as best she could with her webless feet. One fragile bird led the pack of four splashing predators, furiously paddling just inches behind her, all the way across the pond. She made it to the far shore in a photo finish.

Running up the dam from the water's edge, she burst into flight, but landed less than 20 feet down the vlei from the dam. With wings extended and head down, she ran in a circle in front of the dogs, enticing their attack. It worked, but when they started to charge, she flew a short distance, only to land and repeat her provocative "distraction display." By repeating the sequence seven times, she led dogs down the vlei to the large pond, far from her family. Finally, the dogs gave up the chase and ran across the valley to the road, where they met the boys.

A happy ending

Meanwhile, the chicks and the male were waiting back at the small pond. The male had walked into the pond while the two chicks swam beside him like ducklings.

Eight minutes after the dogs had disappeared, the female flew up the valley and landed on the far hill, from where she had an excellent view of the small pond. Then, five minutes later, she flew directly to her

family. As she landed, the male walked from the water and they greeted each other with loud calls. Next, she approached her chicks, lowered her head and emitted low contact calls, which I could hear from the road through the still evening air. Having confirmed that all was well with her family, the female leaped, bowed, and ran in a small circle before settling down for the night.

Distraction displays

Distraction displays are common among birds. From the broken-wing act of the Killdeer to the raucous calling of Crows, displays have evolved to lead predators away from nests, eggs and chicks. The distraction displays of cranes are particularly complex and dramatic.

When confronting the four dogs at the edge of the pond, the cranes knew they could not win in physical combat. Exposing herself to danger through altruistic behavior, the female prostrated herself in front of the predators, and then by swimming, running and flying, she led them away. In my 23 years of observing cranes, I had never witnessed a complete sequence of distraction displays in any species of crane.

As the human and dog populations continue to increase, such encounters between cranes and predators will undoubtedly become more frequent. Let's hope the distraction display continues to outsmart the dogs!

broad base of the conference and its ground-breaking character as the first such conference held on Soviet soil.

But the spirit of the conference can be put more simply, as it was by George Archibald. Sitting at breakfast one morning, I heard him say to the Germans, Swedes, and Japanese eating their Estonian oatmeal: "You know, the most important thing to remember is this — we have to do what's best for the cranes."

Editor's note: Participation of delegates to the Palearctic Crane Workshop from China, India, Pakistan and the US was made possible by a grant to ICF from the Trust For Mutual Understanding.

ICF To Be Open Daily

Starting this May 1 and extending through October 31, ICF will be open daily for members and the general public from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Although you can see the birds, browse in the gift shop, picnic, or walk on our trails throughout these extended hours, guided tours are limited to the same hours as in 1989. Tours will be available at 10, 1, and 3 on weekends in May, September, and October, and daily from Memorial Day through Labor Day. If you arrive when no tours are scheduled, you can borrow a tape recorder for self-guiding visits to the adult birds, restored prairie, wetlands, or savanna.

Spring Field Trip

Enjoy a sun-up reading of Aldo Leopold's "Marshland Elegy," accompanied by the bugling of wild cranes. Leopold's daughter, Nina Bradley, will read this classic work about cranes, and tell the story behind its writing. We'll meet at ICF at 5:00 a.m. on April 28, then drive to the nearby Leopold

THE ICF BUGLE is the quarterly newsletter for members of the International Crane Foundation (ICF). Articles review ICF programs as well as crane research around the world.

Co-Founders: George Archibald
Ron Sauey
Editor: David Thompson

ICF offers memberships at the following annual rates:

Individual	\$20	Foreign	\$25
Family	\$30	Sponsor	\$500
Associate	\$100	Patron	\$1,000

shack for the reading. After breakfast, we'll continue, looking for Sandhill Cranes, observing their behavior, and identifying other species of birds.

Participants will be responsible for their own food and travel expenses. We'll send you information regarding the meeting time, directions, and what to bring. To reserve a place, write a check for \$20 to ICF, and send it to David Thompson at ICF. Include your name(s), address, and phone number.

Plan Now for ICF's Bird-A-Thon

Watch your mail in March for an announcement of ICF's Second Annual Bird-A-Thon. Last year, participants raised over \$16,000—\$8,000 from direct donations, over \$5,000 from people who counted birds and collected pledges, and nearly \$3,000 from pledges to ICF's crack team. Half of the funds went to ICF operations in Baraboo, and the other half went to the Ron Sauey Conservation Fund!

We have extended the last day you can count to May 31. The longer period should allow you to observe peak migrations in the northern areas of the US.

This year we hope with your help to top \$25,000!

ICF Members Invited to Join Work Trip to China

ICF is organizing a work trip to Zhalong Nature Reserve in northeastern China. Zhalong is one of the largest wetlands in Asia, and serves as home to four breeding crane species and as a resting area for two migrating cranes species.

Activities will include (1) repeating bird transects initiated by ICF teams in 1983, to detect changes in bird populations due to habitat changes or human activities in the past seven years; (2) collecting data on habitat needs of nesting White-naped and Red-crowned Cranes; (3) continuing public education programs for people living within the marsh and sharing its resources with the cranes; and (4) sightseeing in Beijing.

The tentative dates are June 28-July 18, 1990. We prefer volunteers with bird watching, photography, or related skills, or with a special interest in public education. Participants should be in good health, but there will be no strenuous activities.

All costs are tax deductible. Send a note to Jim Harris at ICF if you would like to receive trip details.



Stephen Potzwahl, Curator of Birds at Vogelpark in Walsrode, West Germany, supervises the first pen sharing of an ICF-produced male Siberian Crane (left) with a female that was reared at the Vogelpark in 1980 from an egg imported from the USSR. Many Siberian Cranes are extremely aggressive, and must be closely watched during formation of the pair bond.





Many of ICF's staff, volunteers, and foreign guests gathered for a special briefing about Whooping Cranes on July 24, 1989. Volunteers continue to play an important role in ICF's summer programs. From the left rear: Frank Iwatiw, Mr. & Mrs. Bob Kerr, Maxine Brown, Lisa Kreuger, Karen Wollenberg, Barb Salna, Dorothy Fitzgerald, Sergei Smirenski, Blanche Evans, Joanne Cummings, Ginny Anderson, Gail Hempfling, Nancy Liggett, Karen Klemm, Karen Rasmussen, Meredith Selden, Hu Hongxing; Ian Fisher, Amy Kornkven, Bettylu & Ernie Anderson, Patti Herman, Heather McSharry; Gordon Dietzman, Tony Kalenic, Steve & Chris Brown, Karen Filus, Mary Fitzgerald, Marianne Wellington, Celia Lewis, Li Fengshan, and Su Lying.

Contributions

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Whoopers Arrive!

By David Thompson
Education Director

In late 1989, Whooping Cranes once again graced the skies of the Midwest. But this time they flew aboard aircraft, when 22 Whooping Cranes were shipped to Baraboo from Patuxent Wildlife Research Center, to help protect the captive flock against catastrophe.

The first group of eight cranes touched down on November 8, after a press briefing held at the airport. When the last speaker finished, reporters and guests hurried to the edge of the parking ramp, and moments later landing lights of the huge plane appeared in the distance against an overcast sky. As the Marine Corps Reserve KC-130 lumbered onto the parking ramp and dropped its cargo door, the air was filled with expectation. I walked up and peered into the black maw of the plane, a rear door big enough for tanks and trucks. Instead of a platoon of paratroops, I saw just eight small crates, sitting alone inside the nearly empty plane.

Legs . . . legs . . . and more legs!

Later at ICF, Aviculturist Marianne Wellington helped one of the first Whoopers named Fred out of his crate. Glenn Olsen, Patuxent's veterinarian, slowly slid the door up while Marianne crouched ready to grab the bird. "As the door came up, I could see legs . . . Legs . . . and more legs. He was a really big crane . . . I was very impressed."

After lunch at the airport, the air crew visited "Crane City." Moving briskly down Whooper Way in a tight group, there was no doubt that the Marines had arrived. Lt. Col. Kennon Hines remarked that "usually, people think of the Marines as destroyers, but I'm glad we could do something for Mother Earth for a change."

Nearly 400 sixth and seventh graders from



Dr. Glenn Olsen (left) and Claire Mirande (right) unload a Whooping Crane chick. Photo by Belinda Wright.

Baraboo turned out to welcome the third shipment on December 7. The eager kids worked hard to control their energy, because they didn't want to disturb the cranes. Filing out into the frigid air, after a presentation in the hanger, the children lined up on either side of an aisle leading from the tail of the airplane. They held banners and signs with messages like "Back from the Brink," and "Whoopee! The Whoopers Are Here!"

When all was ready and the kids were quiet, a color guard marched forward, followed by the first crate. As the color guard stood at attention, six children came up to greet the crane chicks and bestow gifts of fish and cranberries.

Hugs and handshakes

Claire Mirande has many memories of the third shipment: "The aviculture team was nervous, but we all knew what we had to do. There was a strong sense of responsibility,

with each person an important part of the team. As the plane landed, I remember waiting at the fence, and just watching the faces . . . the glow, the joy, and the support. It was really nice to be able to share it with all those people . . . the community, and our wonderful volunteers."

Mirande continued: "Because so many people care, our program is stronger. If the Whoopers survive, it's not just because of ICF and Patuxent breeding the birds, but because of a larger community that's involved . . . people contributing funds, helping with public education, or passing conservation legislation." All have a part to play in this historic drama of survival.

On that frigid but sunny day when the last Whoopers arrived, we had a chance to meet that community, and they had a chance to greet the birds they were saving. It was a homecoming for the birds, a day of fulfillment for ICF, and a day of excitement for the community.

International Crane Foundation

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