

THE ICF BUGLE

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World Center for the Study and Preservation of Cranes

ICF Volunteers Make a Difference

by Rich Beilfuss,
Wetland Ecologist

Faced with the overwhelming needs of both people and wildlife, many of us wonder how we can possibly make a difference. ICF volunteer Holly Keller is a great example of how we can work together to find creative solutions for the benefit of people and for our wild heritage.

Holly, author-illustrator of a number of popular children's books, was one of a group of fourteen Western volunteers on a 1992 EARTHWATCH trip headed by George Archibald to Tram Chim Reserve in Vietnam. Although she didn't have experience doing field research with birds or wetlands, Holly knew that she could contribute in her own unique way. "When I first read about the project in Vietnam, I thought it would make a wonderful and important story for children." She spent two weeks talking to villagers and school children, discovering the history of Tram Chim through a child's eyes.

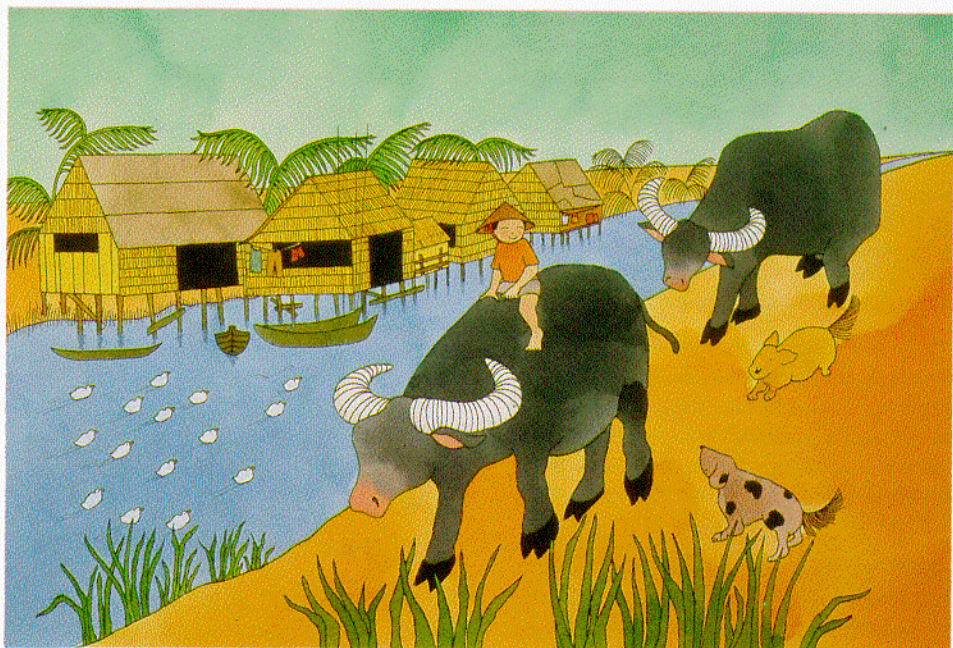
Holly's new book, *Grandfather's Dream*, tells the enchanting story of the return of cranes to Tram Chim, a wetland oasis in Vietnam that wouldn't exist without the vision of "grandfather" Nguyen Xuan Truong. Truong, who is popularly known as Muoi Nhe (10th candle) because he was the last of ten children, was born beside the marshes of Tram Chim nearly seventy years ago. Muoi Nhe remembers a time when the vast expanses of wetland at Tram Chim echoed with the unison calls of Eastern Sarus Cranes, before the wetland was destroyed during decades of war.

Muoi Nhe spent his childhood exploring Tram Chim and learning how to use the wetland wisely for the benefit of people and wildlife. During the war years, his understanding of the marsh saved him and his troops from hunger and illness.

When peace again returned to Vietnam, Muoi Nhe was named leader of the province where he grew up. He ordered the restoration of Tram Chim back to the wetland ecosystem that once provided food and other resources for people, and a safe haven for wildlife. Now retired from public service, Muoi Nhe still has tremendous influence on the care and management of the reserve. And in recent years, he has thrilled to the return of as many as 1000 wintering cranes to Tram Chim.

Since 1988, more than 50 American volunteers have worked cooperatively with ICF staff and Vietnamese colleagues to help fulfill Muoi Nhe's dream of restoring the original Tram Chim (see *Bugle*, May, 1991). Volunteers study cranes and other wildlife in the marsh, teach in local schools, and work in hospitals and clinics. Most importantly, volunteers unite peoples, once divided by war, with a common vision of hope.

Grandfather's Dream will be produced in English and Vietnamese, so that the children of both countries can share and learn from the magic of Tram Chim. Like the works of other volunteers, Holly's book will long outlast her brief visit to Tram Chim. And, although written for children, *Grandfather's Dream* inspires all with a message about our commitment to future generations.



In the story, *Grandfather's Dream*, young Nam (above) comes to share Grandfather's hope that the cranes, long banished by war and environmental damage, will return to a new crane reserve in Vietnam. On pages 4-5, we present the entire text of this story for children. Copyright © 1994 by Holly Keller.

20 Years of Counting Cranes: What Have We Learned?

by Gordon Dietzman,
Education Coordinator
and Scott Swengel,
Assistant Curator of Birds

The morning sun comes up slowly in early spring. Once up, it warms the chilly, damp air over Wisconsin wetlands even more slowly. Most of us greet these nippy mornings by pulling a thick comforter up around our ears, sinking deeper into warm beds. But sunrise on the morning of the Sandhill Crane Count finds nearly 2,600 people braving the elements to watch and listen for Sandhill Cranes in Wisconsin wetlands.

The count enables ICF to determine trends in the Sandhill Crane population in Wisconsin. This statewide survey, one of the largest single-species surveys in the world, is made possible by volunteers who participate for a variety of reasons.

Some participants see it as a chance to get outdoors and greet the spring after a long winter. Others view the count as a project having special personal significance. Still others see the count as an adventure, going to new sites every year, while some prefer counting at the same site each year.

For many it is a wonderful opportunity to see and hear cranes and other wildlife. During early morning in spring, the wetlands teem with life. Geese and ducks are migrating—to their honks, quacks, and whistles are added the songs of other early-arriving birds. Deer, fox, beaver, ruffed grouse and pheasant are also commonly reported, as are less common species such as prairie chicken or sharp-tailed grouse. The most unusual report, however, came on a very cold morning from a fun-loving counter who reported seeing Santa Claus!

Only 25 Sandhill pairs remained

Sandhill Crane sightings were almost as rare as Santa sightings in the first half of this century. Changing land-use patterns and overhunting, coupled with other forms of disturbance during settlement, coincided with a dramatic decline in the number of Sandhills in the midwestern states.

Before settlement, cranes probably foraged in prairies and savannas for part of the year. These natural communities, however, also attracted European settlers. The settlers eliminated large grazing animals and wildfires—both of which had prevented the encroachment of woody plants—so forests

began to replace savannas and trees began to invade prairies. Other prairies and savannas were plowed or turned into pasture for livestock.

Neither were savannas spared as settlers felled the open-grown oaks for building materials and firewood, or to clear additional fields. These changes in land use spelled the end of prairies and savannas in Wisconsin. A few of the old open-grown savanna oaks still remain, but now their lower branches are entwined with lesser trees, lonely sentinels guarding degraded patches of Wisconsin's past.

Prior to European settlement, one fourth of Wisconsin's land surface was covered by wetlands, but by the mid-1980s, Wisconsin had lost nearly half of its wetlands, many of them destroyed between 1870 and 1950. By the mid-1930s, only an estimated 25 Sandhill pairs remained in Wisconsin, when Aldo Leopold described the wetlands as "...humbled, adrift in history..." because cranes no longer lived there.

Despite Leopold's concern for cranes, Sandhills did not disappear from Wisconsin. In fact, the population began slowly to increase and by 1973, had recovered sufficiently for Sandhills to be removed from Wisconsin's endangered species list.

An educational and research tool

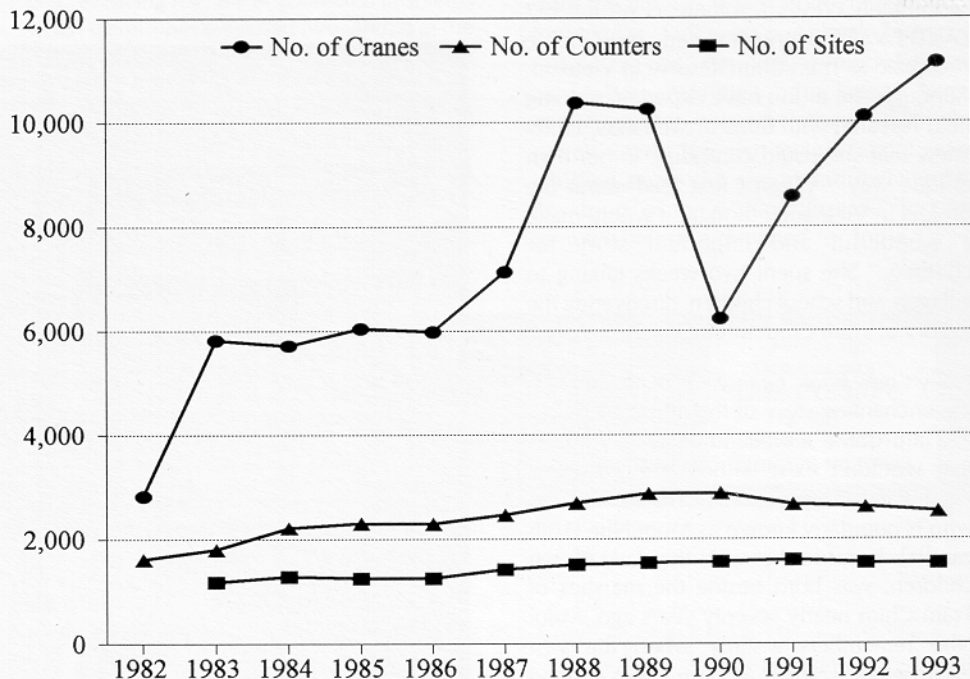
Begun in 1975 as a high school project, the count accomplishes two things. First, it's an exceptional tool for teaching about cranes and wetlands. The last two counts averaged nearly 2,600 volunteers, with about half new

to the count each year. At a training session held prior to the count, participants learn about cranes and the ecosystems on which they depend. Participants are provided data forms and select a site within their county to survey. They are instructed to count not only the number of cranes they see or hear, but also to observe and record the condition of the wetlands.

The other function of the count is to collect information about the distribution and frequency of cranes in Wisconsin. Participants have collected a staggering quantity of data, which ICF has shared with Wisconsin's DNR and other government agencies. Citizen groups and individuals have also requested count results to use in the permit process for controversial development projects.

What can we learn from this body of data? Before drawing conclusions, we must be aware of biases inherent in the count. The count is scheduled after migration to avoid counting migrating cranes, but before the cranes become secretive and difficult to find as the nesting season begins. A Saturday in mid-April is the best compromise. A late spring, however, brings late migration which results in a larger count, while an early spring brings early nesting, which results in a lower count.

Weather on the day of the count also affects results, since fog can obscure the birds and heavy winds may mask calls, causing the final tally to be low. Heavy snows or rainstorms may also prevent some participants from reaching their site. These



Changes with time in the numbers of Sandhill Cranes, crane counters, and sites in Wisconsin. Crane numbers are increasing in Wisconsin (see text), while the numbers of counters and sites counted has shown little change. Weather, however, greatly affects the count. For example, heavy snow in 1982, fog in 1990, and wind in 1991 all reduced the numbers of cranes detected.

effects all complicate the process of making comparisons between years, and explain much of the year-to-year fluctuation in the numbers of cranes shown in the graph on page 2.

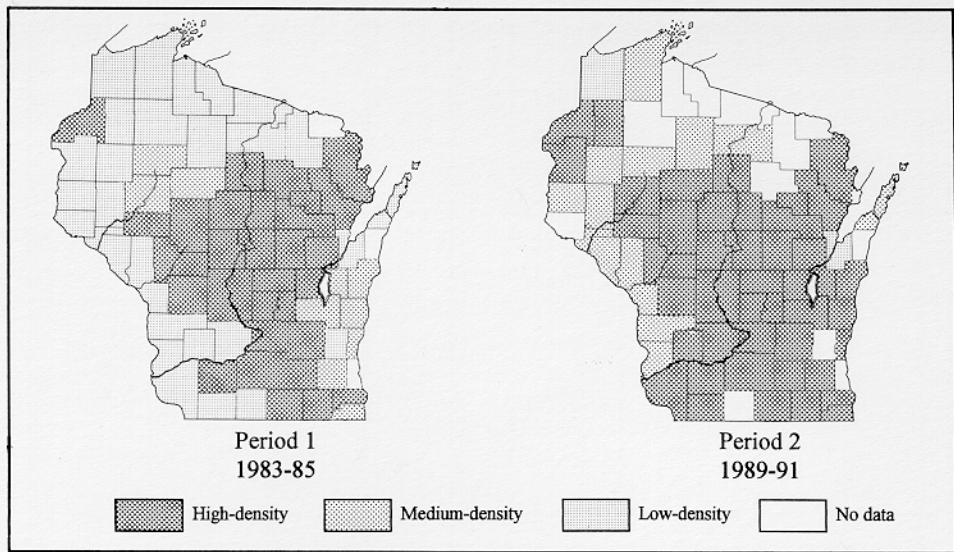
But we still wanted to analyze how populations were changing over time. To diminish the effects weather may have on results, data were averaged within two periods of three years each, and then the two periods were compared. We will call the counts of 1983, 1984, and 1985 "Period 1," and the counts of 1989, 1990, and 1991 "Period 2." By comparing the average number of cranes per site, and also the average number of pairs per site for these two periods, we were able to confirm the population increase suggested by the graph on page 2. Between Period 1 and Period 2, the number of cranes per site increased by 19% (t-test, $p < .001$) and the number of pairs per site increased by 7% (t-test, $p < .01$).

It is especially important to consider where these increases occurred. Based on the data collected in Period 1, we divided Wisconsin into three zones: A "high-density" area where all counties averaged over 2 cranes per site, a "medium-density" area where all counties averaged 1-2 cranes per site, and a "low-density" area where all counties averaged less than 1 crane per site. The left-hand map on page 3 shows the distribution and average density of cranes per site for Period 1. The right-hand map shows the same information using the same criteria, but for Period 2.

All counties designated as high-density counties in Period 1 were also high-density counties in Period 2 (excepting Langlade County, which didn't have enough Period 2 data to classify). When we looked at the medium and low-density areas of Period 1, we found that by Period 2, the crane populations had doubled in the medium-density areas, and tripled in the low-density areas.

In other words, between Period 1 and Period 2, nine medium-density counties changed to high-density counties, while no high-density counties declined to medium-density. Likewise, many of the 28 counties classified as low-density in Period 1 were reclassified as medium-density in Period 2. (Several of the Period 1 low-density counties had insufficient data to classify in Period 2.)

Other count results demonstrate that the average number of breeding pairs per site remained the same in Period 1 high-density counties through the end of Period 2, suggesting that Sandhills have occupied all potential breeding territories in these counties. But between Period 1 and Period 2, the average number of pairs per site increased by 80% in the Period 1 medium-density counties, and by 169% in the Period



Sandhill Crane population density in Wisconsin. Two periods are compared to reveal distribution and population density trends over time. The data suggest that crane populations are expanding in peripheral areas where there is still vacant habitat, but populations are holding constant in core areas, where all good habitat is occupied (see text). Note especially the outward expansion that occurred between the two periods.

1 low-density counties.

In summary, the data reveal stable crane populations in the high-density counties, while medium and low-density counties have rapidly increasing crane populations. For example, the counties having the lowest density in 1983-85 had the greatest rate of increase.

We hypothesize that the growth of crane populations in Wisconsin has progressed through two stages. First, the substantial increase in crane populations at the edge of their 1983-85 range in Wisconsin is caused by newly-formed pairs establishing new breeding territories in medium and low-density counties, where competition with established pairs is lower. Second, a few years later, young produced by these new breeding pairs also begin to reproduce, adding to the growing populations in medium and low-density counties.

All too often, biologists are only able to document the decline of a species. But now, crane counters are witnessing the opposite trend, as crane populations increase and expand their range outward from central Wisconsin. Further evidence for range expansion comes from neighboring states. Illinois, Indiana, and Ohio have all recorded nestings in the 1980s, their first in over 70 years. Iowa recorded a nesting in 1992, the state's first since 1894!

The count reaches out

It was still dark on the morning of the 1991 count as a slow-moving van weaved its way along a back road in Marquette County. Scott and Ann Swengel, the Marquette County Coordinators, nervously watched the van's approach as they changed a flat tire on their

own car. When the van stopped for directions, the Swengels were relieved to recognize ICF's own Eric Scott at the wheel. Eric had been trying to read a road map while driving and communicating with five Tibetan and Chinese biologists on their first Wisconsin crane count. Scott gave Eric directions, then drove away to find his own site before the sun rose.

Biologists and reserve managers from all over the world come to ICF to learn about captive breeding and reserve management, but they also learn about environmental education programs such as the crane count. The count demonstrates to our colleagues the important role of public involvement in preserving endangered species of cranes, and in saving the wetlands and grasslands on which both people and cranes depend.

Crane counts are popular in other countries as well. For example, Japanese school children count Red-crowned, White-naped, and Hooded Cranes. Eurasian Cranes are counted in France, Germany, Russia, Spain, and Sweden. Counts of other species have been conducted in China, India, Kenya, and South Africa.

On April 16, the Sandhill Crane count will celebrate its 20th anniversary. In the gray twilight of that early morning, volunteers will once again take to the wetlands to listen for the sounds of spring and for the calls that herald the return of Sandhill Cranes.

Editor's note: If you are interested in being a County Coordinator or would like to participate in the count, call Rob Nelson at ICF for more information.

This article provides a preliminary look at results of the crane count. ICF staff are now working on a more comprehensive report.

Grandfather's Dream

by Holly Keller

Editor's Note: The text below is excerpted from GRANDFATHER'S DREAM by Holly Keller, and is reprinted by permission of Greenwillow Books, a division of William Morrow & Company, Inc. Copyright © 1994 by Holly Keller. Unfortunately, we only had space to show two of the 25 beautiful illustrations in Holly's book, which provide an evocative glimpse of rural life in Vietnam. To obtain a copy after May 1, contact your local book store, or write Terry Brooks at ICF and send a check payable to ICF for \$17.50 (includes postage; Wis. residents add 5.5% tax).

Prologue

For as long as anyone can remember, the Plain of Reeds, in the Mekong delta in the country of Vietnam, was a large and beautiful wetland, where many birds, plants, and animals made their homes. The largest flying bird in the world, the Sarus crane, lived there and was treasured by the Vietnamese people as a symbol of long life and happy families.

During the Vietnam War several canals were dug across the wetland to drain the area. This damaged the vegetation that had been providing a good hiding place for soldiers. The canals also destroyed the natural flow of water in the Plain of Reeds, and the birds and animals could not continue to live there. Most of them disappeared or died. After the war much of that land was turned into rice fields.

Some of the older people remember the cranes, and would like to restore the wetland so that the birds can live there again. Most of the younger people would like to use the land to plant more rice. It is always hard to balance the traditions of the past and the needs of the future.

"The new dikes are built," Grandfather announced as he dropped a piece of fish into Nam's bowl.

"Will the cranes come back now?" Nam asked.

Grandfather sighed and took some rice. "We will see. Once there were so many that when

they flew from the feeding ground at sunrise, they covered the whole winter sky. Then the war came, and when it was over, they were gone."

Where did they go?"

"Safer places," Grandfather said, "and places where there was still plenty of food."

Mama poked the fire impatiently and turned over the last piece of fish. "Hurry and finish now, Nam," she said. "It's late. Your grandfather has made the whole village of Tam Nong worry about these birds that aren't good for anything!"

Papa patted Nam's hand. "When the rains come, the land inside the dikes will flood with water the way it always used to. The plants will grow again, and the cranes will come home."

"What if they don't?" Nam asked anxiously.

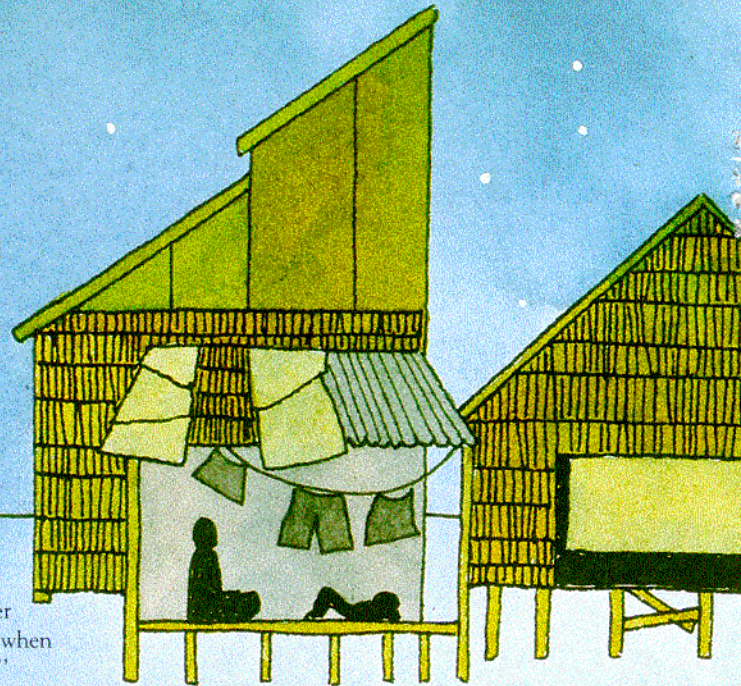
"If they don't," Papa said, putting down his bowl, "then the farmers will take back the land your grandfather and the others have reserved for the birds, and use it to plant more rice."

Grandfather shook his head. "And then all we will have are fat stomachs," he said angrily, and he got up from the table.

"It's past bedtime Nam," said Mama.

Nam followed his grandfather out onto the back porch. He moved his sleeping mat close to where Grandfather was sitting, and his puppies, Cho-tom and Cho-phen, stretched out next to him.

"Grandfather," Nam asked, "why do you want the cranes to come back so much?"



"Because Vietnam was their home," the old man answered.

"Cranes are strong birds and live long lives. We believed that they brought us good luck. Now the war is over, and we are all safe. The birds must be made safe, too, or they will be gone forever."

Grandfather sat for a long time without talking.

"Aren't you going to tell a story tonight?" Nam asked finally.

Grandfather smiled. "A short one," he said, "because it's late. In the old days," Grandfather began, "when there were still otters in the river, my father caught two young ones. He brought them home for me, and we fed them little pieces of cooked fish. Then my father and I trained them to catch live fish and bring them home."

"Why didn't they eat the fish they caught?" Nam asked.

Grandfather laughed. "Because we had taught them to eat only cooked fish, and they had forgotten that they were supposed to eat the live ones!"

Grandfather chuckled again as he



"You are living in the past," Mama said, and she frowned. Those birds are gone."

The days of the dry season were passing, and there was still no sign of the cranes.

The village committee met and decided that if the birds did not come back before the next rainy season, the land in the reserve would be planted with rice.

Grandfather was very sad. "It was a silly dream," he said, and Nam felt sad, too.

A few weeks later Nam was in the fields watching the water buffalo. Cho-tom and Cho-phen came running across the field to play. Each dog had a small bird in its mouth.

Nam smiled. "Good dogs," he said, because he could see that the birds were not hurt.

When Nam got home, Grandfather was taking a nap.

"My dogs are just like your otters, Grandfather!" Nam called.

Grandfather opened his eyes. "Are they catching fish?"

"No," Nam said, and he laughed. "Birds, baby birds." Then Nam whispered to Papa, "The birds were gray and funny looking, and I have never seen that kind before."

Papa rubbed his chin thoughtfully, and then he put his finger across his mouth so Nam would know not to say anything.

remembered. "If the otters couldn't find a fish in the river, they would steal one. The women who were fixing dinner at the edge of the water were too busy talking to notice if a fish was snatched, and later they could never figure out what happened to their food!"

Nam fell asleep smiling, because the otter story was his favorite.

The monsoon began in the middle of May. The rain came down gently at first, and then in blinding sheets. The river swelled and the banks were flooded. The water stayed inside the dikes and did not drain off the land.

Nam spent most of his time in the house with the puppies, who were growing fast. Grandfather checked the dikes every morning and then he sat patiently and watched the sky.

When the rains finally stopped, Grandfather got up early every morning to look for the cranes. Mama always had a bowl of steaming soup ready for him when he came home.

"Did you see any today?" Papa asked.

Grandfather shook his head. "But they will come, you'll see. Last night I was sure I heard their call."

The next morning Nam and Papa slipped out of the house before dawn. The village was dark and quiet. They reached the cranes' old feeding area just as the sun was beginning to rise. When Nam's eyes had adjusted to the pale light, he could see the cranes off in the distance.

"I have counted nearly two hundred!" Papa said.

"Can I tell Grandfather now?" Nam pleaded.

Papa nodded and pushed Nam off toward the village.

Nam couldn't get his feet to move fast enough. The sun was getting brighter, and he knew that the birds would soon be in the sky. "Come quickly, Grandfather," he shouted as he ran down the path.

He pulled Grandfather by the hand across the bridge and out toward the dikes.

In a few minutes more cranes than anyone could count flew over Tam Nong. The air was filled with their noisy call, and the whole village came out to see them.

Grandfather could hardly believe his eyes. "Aren't they beautiful!" he shouted happily.

And everyone agreed—even Mama.

That night when Nam was ready to go to bed, Grandfather sat down next to him.

"It was a good dream, after all," Nam said softly. "Do you think the cranes will stay now?"

"That is up to you," Grandfather said.

And Nam understood.

Tram Chim Declared a National Park

Editor's Note: Today, as we go to press, we have just received a fax from Vietnam with long-awaited good news. The Tram Chim Protected Area, which was recognized as a reserve on the provincial level, has been upgraded to the equivalent of a National Park.

February 7, 1994

Dear Dr. George Archibald,

At the beginning of the New Lunar Year, I have the pleasure to inform you that the Vietnamese Government has just recognized the status of National Nature Reserve for the Tram Chim Protected Area, by a decree announced on February 2nd, 1994.

We consider this event as a very important step toward the full realization of our common goal. It is the result of many years of intensive effort and support of the International Crane Foundation.

On behalf of the Tram Chim Nature Reserve staff, I would like to present our best consideration and thanks to you, and by your intermission, to the other international organizations and friends who have supported us since the establishment of the Tram Chim Reserve.

I hope that this news will tighten ICF and his friends more to the cause of Tram Chim Reserve.

I look forward to see you again at Tram Chim and wish you good health and best successes for 1994.

Sincerely Yours,

T.C. NGO QUOCK THANG
Vice Director
Tram Chim Nature Reserve

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

Children's Letters

Editor's Note: Every year, ICF's Education Department answers about 1,000 letters from school children of all ages. They write to thank ICF, send donations, or for information. The department has ten different fact sheets to respond with, but if these do not answer the question, they also have text segments on computer disk that answer any question a child could ask. These answers are inserted into personalized letters. Working with children is the most effective way of assuring a favorable "climate" for conservation in the years ahead.

Here are two of the more interesting letters recently received, without corrections. The first was a thank you for an ICF performance (see Bugle May 1992, p.3):

To: the Crane Foundation people

Thank you for the Show crane Foundation People! I liked the Storys. I'm going to help cranes now. I didn't know how importint cranes are tel now. This show chaged my life.

From Amy Meyer, Baraboo, WI

To Whom It May Concern,

I have to write letter to you for school so I'll just get it over with.

What does the Crane Foundation do?

Are cranes the birds that have long legs and walk on water? If not what are they?

Sincerely,

Isaac Mann, Hilliard, OH

Plan Now for ICF's Bird-a-Thon

by Bob Hallam,
Development Coordinator

Last year's Bird-a-thon raised a record \$20,513 for the Ron Sauey Conservation Fund and for ICF operations here in Baraboo. Since 1987, the Bird-a-thon has raised almost \$84,000. **This spring, help us push the Bird-a-thon over the \$100,000 mark!**

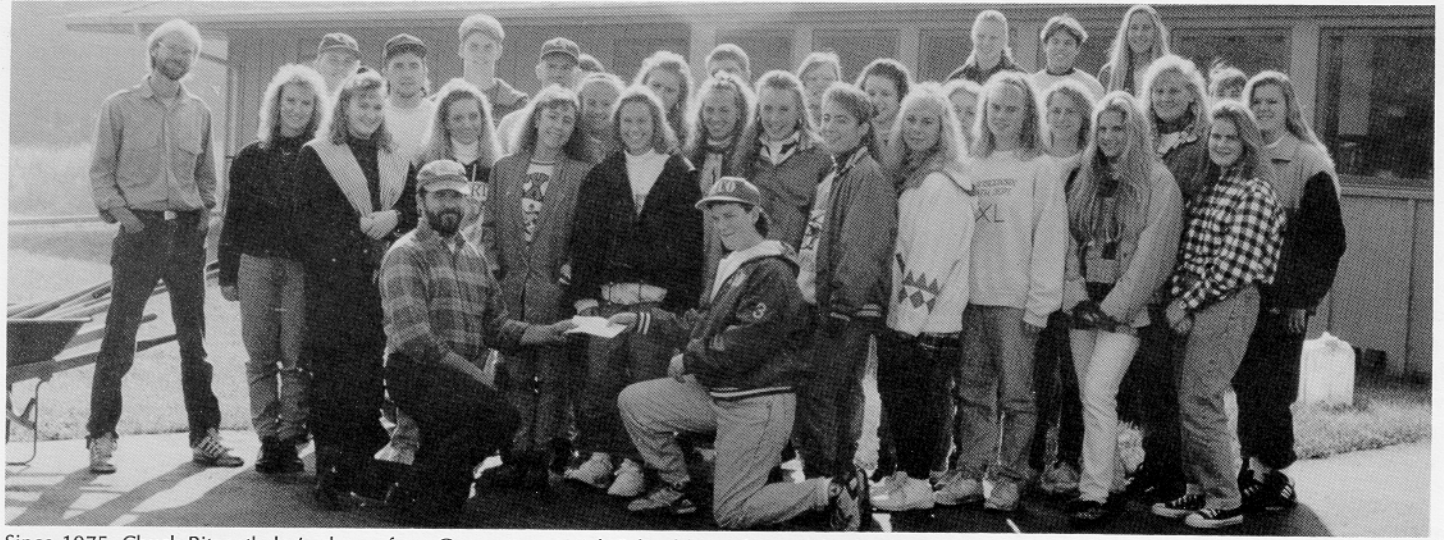
In March, we will mail you detailed information about ICF's Sixth Annual Bird-a-thon and how you can participate.

Still Room On Platte River Trip

Experience what some regard as the greatest wildlife spectacle in North America, with a congenial group of 14 people. See endless streams of cranes returning in the evening, or exploding from their roosts at dawn, from the best blinds on the river. This superlative trip, guided by crane conservationist Jim Rogers, has been scheduled to avoid weekend crowds: March 21-24. A fee of \$300 per person, in part tax deductible, will cover your motel for three nights, breakfasts, blind reservations, orientation materials, and a contribution to ICF. Transportation is not included, nor are lunches and dinners. For more information, or to reserve your place with a \$50 non-refundable deposit, contact Rose Blada at ICF.



On November 11-12, 1993, 27 ICF Board Members and staff met in Kohler, Wisconsin, at the Windway home for a long-range planning retreat. Productive discussions about ICF's future focused on ICF's Mission Statement and goals. Many thanks to moderator William Conway (far left), Director of NYZS/The Wildlife Conservation Society, who graciously lent his wit and perspective to our deliberations. Here, Trustee John Day presents results of a subcommittee discussion about "ICF's business." ICF wishes to sincerely thank Terry and Mary Kohler for their hospitality. Photo by David Thompson.



Since 1975, Chuck Ritzenhaller's classes from Germantown High School have donated \$9,200 and provided much volunteer help to ICF. On October 19, 1993, 30 Germantown students took a tour of ICF, planted bur oaks and picked seed in ICF's restored prairie, then presented a check for \$1,135 for ICF to Jeb Barzen (front left). ICF's Wetland Ecologist, Rich Beilfuss, is on the far left. Photo by Eric Scott.

Contributions

Received October through December, 1993



Lufthansa

ICF's Official Airline

Grants and Awards: Alma Doten Trust; AMOCO; George & Kyoko Archibald; Laurie Baeten; Mrs. James P. Balding, Jr.; Baraboo National Bank; Eugenie Mayer Bolz Family Foundation; Katharine Bradley; Joe Branch; Robert & Kathleen Brumder; Buchanan Family Foundation; Myrtle Busse; Carolyn Foundation; Bill & Priscilla Chester; Chicago Metallic Corp.; Reed Coleman; Donald & Lois Cottrell Fund "J"; Mr. & Mrs. James Cubbidge; Dairyland Charitable Foundation; John & Judy Day; Arthur Donald Foundation; Gaylord & Dorothy Donnelley Foundation; Tom Donnelley; Eliot & Ann Donnelley Foundation; Albert & Flora Ellinger Foundation; Environmental Protection Agency; Sam Evans; Ralph F. & Gertrude S. Findley Foundation; Mary Fitzgerald; Elizabeth Foster; J.L. French Foundation; Germantown High School; Norman H. Giles; Mary Livingston Griggs and Mary Griggs Burke Foundation; Haffner Foundation; Mr. & Mrs. James Hageman; Edward & Yvonne Henze; The Hubbard Foundation; Institute of Museum Services; Thomas H. Jacob Foundation; Sam Johnson; Journal Times—Racine; Knox Family Foundation; Charles A. Krause Foundation; The Kresge Foundation; Katherine Kuletz; John D. & Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation; Ronald Mattox; Chauncey & Marion Deering McCormick Foundation; Menasha Corporation Foundation; Donald Messersmith; Miller Brewing Co.; Virginia Murray; National Audubon Society; National Wildlife Federation; Neenah Foundry Foundation; The New Tudor Foundation; Phil Orth; Oshkosh B'Gosh Foundation, Inc.; Puelicher Foundation; Eric & Rebecca Ratering; Jean Richter; Robert Riemer & Mary

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Cranes on the Move

by David Thompson,
Education Director

ICF has accumulated a lot of experience with crane shipments since the first bird arrived at ICF in 1973. The birds are shipped to exchange genetic stock with other breeding facilities, to receive birds taken from the wild because of injuries like a broken wing, or to send chicks for reintroduction into the wild. Eggs, such as those of wild Whoopers in Canada, are also shipped.

According to Julie Langenberg, ICF's veterinarian, "Shipping cranes involves more than just putting them in a box and delivering them to the plane. It often involves navigating through the maze of permits designed to protect endangered species."

And it can take years to plan for and complete an exchange of cranes between zoos. Usually, the initiative comes from the "studbook keeper" for a species of endangered crane. Through analyzing records of genetic lines and locations of cranes, that person may conclude that a crane in Germany needs to be mated with a crane in Baraboo, in order to maintain the genetic diversity of the worldwide captive population of the species. The two institutions come to a cooperative agreement about what birds or eggs will be exchanged. Each partner gets something they need to improve their program.

Permits have to be applied for, both to ship and to receive birds. Quarantines and health exams at either end of the shipment have to be arranged, to safeguard against transmission of disease. In all, it takes dozens of phone calls, faxes, and letters, to discuss and finalize all the arrangements. And, of course, shipping containers and travel details are planned to assure comfort for the cranes while en route.



In January, ICF shipped two juvenile Siberian Cranes to India for release into the wild. Here aviculturist Bryant Tarr (left), a Siberian chick, and veterinarian Julie Langenberg inspect the shipping crate before departure. Lufthansa German Airlines donated transportation for the two chicks and Julie to India, and for two other cranes from Germany to ICF. Photo by David Thompson.

ICF shipped an especially large number of birds this fall and winter. On November 16, ICF sent out nine Whoopers—six to the Calgary Zoo to help build their captive breeding program, two to Florida for the experimental release there, and one to the San Antonio Zoo. On this one day, ICF shipped over 3% of the entire world population of Whoopers. ICF's Marianne Wellington, who coordinated this shipment, said: "In spite of triple-checking all details before leaving ICF, we encountered problems when the airlines switched two aircraft at the last minute, and the crane crates wouldn't fit through the cargo doors of the new aircraft. The problems were solved when several crates were hand-loaded, and another was rerouted. All arrived safe and sound. ICF has never lost an endangered crane in transit."

On January 8, ICF shipped two Siberian

Cranes to India. They joined two from Russia and two from India's Jaipur Zoo for release at Keoladeo National Park, where the wild flock had dwindled to only five birds by last winter. Lufthansa German Airlines donated air transportation for the two cranes, named Gorby and Boris, and also a seat for their escort, Julie Langenberg. This particular shipment illustrates the difficulty of navigating the permit maze. Since one paper was missing a signature, German authorities did not want the birds to depart from Frankfurt. But fortunately, Lufthansa's Animal Transport Office saved the day. According to Langenberg, "Skillfully using faxes, telexes, and computer networks, they solved the permit snarl. The two cranes and I were whisked across the airport and delivered to the doors of the waiting airplane, just ten minutes before it departed for India."

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