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World Center for the Study and Preservation of Cranes

ICF, Vietnam, and Australia Build Wetland Network

by Rich Beilfuss,
Wetland Ecologist

As we gazed out over pristine floodplains of northern Australia, an image of young Muoi Nhe wading long ago through the boundless wetlands of Vietnam filled my thoughts. At last we had found a real vision for restoring Tram Chim to its former grandeur.

Since the stunning re-appearance of Eastern Sarus Cranes in the Plain of Reeds of Vietnam (see *Bugle*, November, 1987), ICF has been actively working with our Vietnamese colleagues at Tram Chim National Reserve to help restore a wetland home for people and wildlife. Led by the efforts of Mr. Muoi Nhe, the former provincial leader who was born and raised in the swamps of Tram Chim, we have strived to reverse the harmful effects of war and agricultural development through restoring the natural ebb and flow of water in this floodplain ecosystem (see *Bugle*, February, 1994). An essential part of this effort has involved training our Vietnamese colleagues so that Tram Chim and other important wetlands in Vietnam can be protected and managed.

This summer, I traveled to Australia with four Vietnamese colleagues, Thai Van Vinh, Ngo Quoc Thang, Nguyen Huu Thien, and Pham Trong Thinh (the Director, Vice-Director, and Ecologist of Tram Chim National Reserve, and the Ecologist for the Vietnam Wetlands Program, respectively). With financial support from the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation and the Asian Wetland Bureau, we spent a month learning about the Australian equivalent of the Plain of Reeds at Kakadu National Park.

A wetland paradise for cranes

Situated in the remote reaches of far northern Australia, Kakadu National Park is a sparsely populated wilderness that is geographically and ecologically closer to Southeast Asia than to the bustling cities of Sydney, Melbourne, or Perth. Kakadu has the rare distinction of being a World Heritage Site for both its ecological and cultural values. The region is owned and inhabited by aboriginal people who maintain strong spiritual links to their native land. Archeological art sites throughout the park may date back as far as 60,000 years, providing valuable clues about the history of the landscape. The gradual change of Kakadu's lowlands, from dense monsoon rainforest to open freshwater floodplain, has been witnessed through thousands of generations of aboriginal people and is revealed in their rock drawings of colorful plants and animals of the past.

At the southern end of the park, streams cascade from a weathered sandstone plateau and form the Alligator Rivers system. These rivers, much like the Mekong River branches in Vietnam, bring life to Kakadu's floodplains as the rivers meander north to the coast. As in Vietnam, Kakadu experiences two distinct monsoon seasons. In the wet season, freshwater spreads over the vast floodplains to inundate some of the most important tropical wetlands in the world for migratory and resident waterbirds. During the dry season, the floodplains bake and birds crowd the receding wet areas in tremendous numbers. Grassland fires blaze on every horizon with swarms of Black Kites patrolling the fire lines to snatch insects escaping the flames. At the end of the dry season, more

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A Brolga pair watch over their chick during the rainy season in northern Australia. Because the climate and ecosystems are so similar here to Tram Chim Reserve in Vietnam, ICF arranged a training program in Kakadu National Park in Australia for our Vietnamese colleagues.

A Tale of Two Wetlands

by Dorothy Boorse

ICF's two small wetlands provide study opportunities for both cranes and people. In 1992, Whooping Crane chicks destined for release in Florida were brought to the Gromme Wetland (above) to learn how to forage. This summer, graduate student Dorothy Boorse made a comparative study of invertebrate life in both of ICF's wetlands. Photo by David Thompson.

ICF has two small wetlands on its site, named the Gromme Marsh (west) and the Stedman Marsh. Both are pothole depressions left by a retreating glacier. They both have drainage basins of similar size, no inflow or outflow streams, and are surrounded by sandy soil. Both are underlain by a thick, nearly impermeable layer of clay. Both had open water with ducks and chorus frogs in the spring.

In the fall, however, it's difficult to see many similarities. Gromme has mud, duckweed, shallow water and cattails. Stedman looks more like a field, with concentric circles of dry grasses, sedges, and stiff stems of drying flowers.

These differences are due to differing hydrologic systems. In the spring, the water in Stedman is supplied by rainfall and snowmelt. This standing water disappears throughout the summer because of evaporation, transpiration, and slow seepage through the clay to the groundwater which remains below throughout the year.

Gromme remains wet

In Gromme, however, groundwater flows through the wetland and maintains standing water throughout the year, in all but the driest years. Gromme Marsh has cattails, duckweed, grasses and sedges. This summer, it was home to a muskrat which built a mound of cattail stems and ate many of the cattails in the center of the marsh (called an "eat-out").

If you were to look more closely into the water, perhaps dipping with a net, you would find an extraordinary, miniature world. There are snails clinging to plants, and water striders skittering wildly on the surface. Whirligig beetles can see simultaneously into the air and down into the water with two pairs of eyes. Masses of frog eggs lie in their jelly cases among plant stems. You might see the sudden movement of a two-inch-long, giant water bug as it catches a tadpole. You might observe a dragonfly larva as its scooplike lower lip flashes out to trap a beetle larva. Small freshwater clams, some only one-tenth of an inch long, lie in crevices. Beetles half that size swim up and down in the water, through a tangled algal mat. Scoop up a little bit of water and look with a microscope, and you might see tiny algae being eaten by zooplankton, which are, in turn, soon to be eaten by something larger.

In this complex food web, the roles of predator and prey are easily confused. Diving beetle larvae, two inches long and with sharp mandibles, attack smaller diving beetle larvae. Dragonflies eat smaller dragonflies. Herbivores like snails can be attacked by predators a fraction of their size or by birds many times larger. Fly larvae break down dead plant material in the muck and themselves serve as food for ducks.

Drying out makes Stedman different

Stedman is dominated by bulrush in the center, not cattail. Because it dries out every summer, a visitor looking in the fall would see marsh aster, ricecut grass and other plants growing up from the now dry, wetland soil.

Many people think that annually drying wetlands like Stedman are worthless. Because they are neither consistently wet nor consistently dry, it's tempting to see them as either failed fields or failed marshes. Actually, annually drying wetlands are very important, providing critical habitat for a variety of plant and animal species specially adapted to the annual dry-out.

The dry-out seems like it should damage a wetland, but actually it helps to maintain the wetland's vigor and diversity. For example, changes in water level help make certain nutrients available for the growth and reproduction of plants and invertebrates, making more food available for waterfowl. Other fluctuations and disturbances, such as fires or eat-outs by muskrats, also maintain the vigor and diversity of wetland ecosystems.

In Stedman Marsh, the frequency of drying out is greater than in a wetland like Gromme, but Stedman is clearly a wetland, with a whole assemblage of plants and animals that depend on it. In fact, wild Sandhill Cranes used both Gromme and Stedman marshes this summer!

Stedman hosts a different community

This summer, Stedman hosted a variety of birds in addition to the cranes, including a family of wild turkeys, wood ducks, mallards, blue-winged teals, and red-winged blackbirds. It was also visited by many deer, a badger, and a long-tailed weasel.

Like the water in Gromme, the water of Stedman contains many smaller creatures as well, like caddis flies, tadpoles, beetles, snails, clams, and several types of crustaceans. Some of these are the same species as those found in Gromme. Each marsh, however, contained species that did not occur in the other.

Since Stedman has a dry period, one might expect water-loving organisms either to "rest" (have a dormant stage) during the dry period, or to have some way to arrive when the wetland fills or depart when the wetland dries out. Creatures that burrow in the mud or survive dry periods as eggs (like fairy shrimp) would be very likely to occur in Stedman. Insects like most adult aquatic beetles and water boatmen are strong fliers that can easily move between the wetlands.

The community membership of each marsh depends on more than simply a fit between the life history of organisms and their environment. Those that fly well or lie dormant during drought still might not succeed in

Stedman. Competition between species and the presence of predators also help to determine which species are present in a particular wetland.

Habitat size also changes throughout the season. Both marshes are like small "islands" in a sea of prairie. The size of the "island" of water, which changes both in depth and surface area in each marsh, gets smaller more quickly in Stedman. So, by mid-summer, some large predatory beetles simply cannot find enough food there. This may allow small things to live in Stedman's safer, though temporary, pool.

Wetlands affect one another

The two wetlands are close enough to influence one another. For example, Gromme may provide immigrant species to Stedman after Stedman fills with water. Stedman may, at other times, provide a refuge for species that would be preyed upon in Gromme. Small wetlands such as these, then, need to be considered in the context of their setting among other wetlands, not just by themselves. Understanding how wetland communities are interrelated on a regional scale will help managers make decisions about protecting different types of valuable wetland pockets across a whole area, including those with permanent water, as well as those which dry out frequently.

Editor's note: Dorothy Boorse is a graduate student at the University of Wisconsin—Madison. Her work focuses on how the hydrologic differences between wetlands affect their invertebrate communities.

ICF Team Discovers Rare Wildlife in Cambodia

by Jeb Barzen
Director, Field Ecology

"I see a crane!" said Maurizio Dioli. All I saw was the dipping wing of our Cesna 206 as we flew 150 feet over a wetland in northeastern Cambodia. "Let's make another pass," I murmured, though my thoughts were reeling.

As the Cesna continued its slow turn, I wondered if we would finally see a pair of Eastern Sarus Cranes. Two previous surveys by ICF and one survey by the Asian Wetland Bureau had failed to locate live cranes. Yet Bubphar Amget (from the Royal Forestry Department of Thailand) had discovered that flightless crane chicks were being captured alive in Cambodia and sold in Thailand. She and American photographer/conservationist Eleanor Briggs had also heard accounts from rural people suggesting that cranes nest in scattered areas across the northern third of Cambodia. Collectively, these reports brought us close to finding cranes—yet tangible proof still eluded us.

Cambodia is about the size of Wisconsin; approximately one third of the country is covered by floodplains, rivers, and boengs (small wetlands). Perhaps only 300 crane pairs nest within this vast area of potential habitat. Finding even a few of them would not be easy.

For the first time since the early 1960s, Eastern Sarus Crane nests have been located in Cambodia. Three nests were found in small, widely scattered wetlands like this one. Photo by Jeb Barzen.

Ornithological reports for Cambodia are scarce and outdated. William Thomas wrote that Eastern Sarus Cranes were uncommon in Cambodia during the early 1960s; he reported them on broad, grassy plains or in sparse, open forest—in other words, on almost any type of wetland existing in Cambodia.

Conversations with local residents suggested that cranes may nest in small, isolated wetlands of five provinces: Siem Reap, Preah Vihear, Stung Treng, Prey Veng, and Pursat. It was difficult, however, to be sure that the "kriel" (meaning crane in Khmer) described by Cambodians was the species we sought.

Eastern Sarus Crane chicks had even been captured in Siem Reap Province by local hunters and kept in Siem Reap town by forestry officials. Unfortunately, the breeding location of these birds was in an area controlled by the Khmer Rouge, making it too dangerous to travel there.

Perhaps most encouraging was ICF patron Charles Haffner's account of a trip that he took by elephant along the Sre Pok River in northeastern Cambodia during November, 1954. He recalled seeing isolated, small (2-4 acre) marshes located along the Sre Pok. These boengs commonly harbored two, three, or four Sarus, but no crane flocks. If these cranes were breeding, their territorial nature would keep them dispersed. Unsuccessful breeders, or pairs that produced one or two chicks, would explain flock sizes ranging from two to four. Could the cranes still be breeding here after forty years?

I see cranes, but are they nesting?

"I saw the cranes near those trees," shouted Maurizio, over the roar of the engine. His voice jolted me back to the present survey—our second pass was about to begin, this time even lower. Near a small, deep pool stood two adult Eastern Sarus Cranes. Only the upper half of each bird was visible but there was no doubt the lead-grey birds were Sarus. The pool was six feet in diameter and covered by sparse vegetation, while the entire wetland was about 90 acres in area. Could this be the nest location?

I asked our pilot, Jean Marie Hommy of *Aviation Sans Frontieres*, to fly one more pass while David Ashwell (of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature) fixed the precise coordinates of the marsh. During the final pass, the principal observers (Bubphar, Pak Vong Somethy of the Cambodian Wildlife Protection Office, Maurizio, and myself) strained to detect any evidence of breeding. Then, as the roar of our strange, metallic raptor passed low overhead, one of the adults jumped a few feet, exposing a

chick measuring about one third of the adult's size. All six team members simultaneously erupted with excited "whoops." Breeding cranes had once again been located in Cambodia! Protection of nesting Eastern Sarus Cranes could now be pursued for the first time in 30 years.

We still had 90 minutes of our survey to fly and, for the first time, it seemed that our strategy of the past two weeks was beginning to work. As the plane turned from the Se Kong River and headed towards the Sre Pok, I began to reflect upon an earlier survey trip completed eight days before.

A crane search from the ground

Bubphar and I had driven north on August 6 from Stung Treng to the Lao border with our Cambodian guides. We were searching for nesting cranes reported by people living in the area. On the next day, we hiked five miles through open dipterocarp forest to a small wetland measuring 300 by 150 feet (see photo). No cranes were present and no evidence of a nest could be found.

What Bubphar and I did find, however, was much more important. The wetland was laced with fresh mammal tracks. Perhaps wild bovids like Batang, Gaur, or Kouprey were still surviving in this region, suggesting that little human disturbance was occurring. In addition, though we were in the midst of the rainy season and water abounded, animals still focused upon these small, isolated wetlands that were engulfed by huge expanses of open forest.

If we were going to find any cranes, we would have to concentrate our search on wetlands like this one. In the past, we had done aerial surveys by methodically flying over a chosen region. No cranes had ever been found. Perhaps we could better conduct our surveys by flying from one wetland to the next. This would minimize the time spent over open forest devoid of crane habitat.

Giant Ibis sighted

Just as we approached the Sre Pok River in our Cessna, a large, brown bird flushed from a tree, riveting my attention to the job at hand. The bird's wings were short and broad. The dark flight feathers contrasted with the lighter wing coverts. While in flight, the bird's primaries were clearly not slotted (widely spaced), a trait common to storks and cranes. The legs were relatively short and there was a distinct downward curve to the bill. It was a Giant Ibis.

In 1992, one Giant Ibis was seen in Laos, 70 miles north of our present position. Prior to 1992, the species had not been seen for over 30 years and was feared extinct. Our observation confirmed its continued survival.

We flew on, zig-zagging from one wetland to the next, roughly following the Sre Pok River and entering Ratanakiri Province. We found the next Sarus nest in a wetland similar to the first. This time, two shiny, white eggs rested on top of a vegetated mound. Both parents walked a few feet away from the nest before stopping to watch us pass.

Before turning the plane towards Phnom Penh, we found one more pair of Sarus, making a total of three pairs seen. Although there were many more areas to survey, we were running low on fuel.

During slightly more than four hours of survey time (over two days), we saw 6 Eastern Sarus Cranes, 1 Giant Ibis, 8 Lesser Adjutants, 10 Greater Adjutants, 4 Red-headed Vultures, 1 Osprey, 3 Black-necked Storks, 10 Woolly-necked Storks, 2 Barking Deer, 1 Batang, 2 Asian Wild Dogs, and 1 Wild Boar. Few other water birds and no other mammals were seen. The total numbers of animals seen during our survey was small. Many more could be tallied on a similar survey during the dry season. Yet of the species we saw, most were rare—in critical need of protection.

Probably the scattered, isolated nature of these wetlands has provided safe haven for breeding cranes and other rare animals, allowing them to survive years of warfare. When the civil war currently disrupting Cambodia ends, programs for protection of these scattered wetlands will need to address conflicts that will result when people move back into this area to exploit its resources. To prepare for peacetime, we must complete surveys of these forgotten wetland complexes so that we can understand what wildlife resources remain, for Cambodia and for the world, before they disappear.

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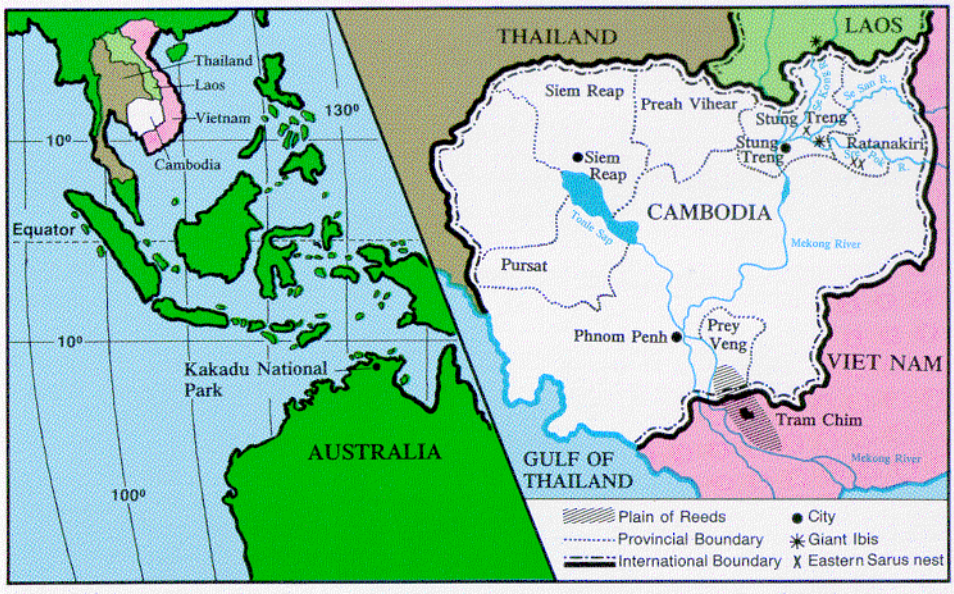
than three million Magpie Geese blacken the remaining wet areas along with countless ducks, wading birds, and sea-eagles.

Widely scattered across this wetland paradise, small flocks of Brolgas feed on *Eleocharis* sedge tubers in a manner identical to their cousins, the Eastern Sarus Cranes at Tram Chim. As at Tram Chim, these sedges thrive in dense stands on naturally acid soils. Together with the tuber-eating Magpie Geese, the Brolgas work systematically across the floodplain until scarcely a patch of wetland is left unturned. The Brolgas continue to concentrate throughout the dry season, forming flocks as large as 200-300 birds at the onset of "gunumeleng," the aboriginal word for the time when afternoon thunderstorms bring a touch of green to the parched earth and signal the arrival of the next wet season.

Learning from our colleagues

Our understanding of the many ecological similarities between Kakadu and Tram Chim would not have been possible without the team of talented and energetic Australians who provided our training. Working together, we pursued three goals during the visit. First, we familiarized the Vietnamese with the ecology and hydrology of the floodplain wetlands of tropical Australia as a model for wetland restoration at Tram Chim and elsewhere in the Mekong Delta. Second, we provided the Vietnamese with first-hand experience of the practical methods of national park management. Third, we helped establish ongoing scientific cooperation between Vietnam and Australia. My role, as



This map of Cambodia shows the location of three Eastern Sarus Crane nests, Giant Ibis sightings, and provinces where reports from local residents suggest that cranes may be breeding. The inset map shows that the Plain of Reeds in Vietnam and Kakadu National Park in Australia are equally distant from the equator, resulting in similar monsoon climates and strikingly similar wetland communities.

Vietnamese wetland managers spent a month exploring research and management at Kakadu National Park, Australia. Here, Dr. Max Finlayson (center) describes water level variations in a waterlily billabong bordered by *Melaleuca* swamp forest. Photo by Rich Beilfuss.

both teacher and student, was to bridge the two peoples and point out comparisons between the two ecosystems.

Our first week was spent with Roger Jaensch of the Asian Wetland Bureau (AWB) and his colleagues in the Conservation Commission of the Northern Territory. ICF and AWB have cooperated on a number of projects in southeast Asia, but this was our first opportunity to work together with the new AWB-Oceania office in Australia. One very important management technique they demonstrated was how to control the invasive shrub *Mimosa*, which has destroyed thousands of acres of wetland habitat for Brolgas, geese, and countless other plant and animal species. *Mimosa* has recently infested Tram Chim as well, but can still be controlled if reserve managers act quickly.

During the second and fourth weeks of our visit, we worked with Dr. Max Finlayson, one of Australia's top wetland experts, and his staff at the Environmental Research Institute of the Supervising Scientist (ERISS). Through lectures, lab tours, and fieldwork, we learned a variety of research techniques that will help the Vietnamese better understand the wetlands they are managing. Scientists at ERISS use fish and small invertebrates to monitor water quality as an overall measure of the health of wetlands. We learned to set and trigger pop-nets to catch fish from wetlands and to set up laboratory experiments to study how changes in water quality affect animal populations. We also learned methods for studying acid wetland soils, revegetating disturbed areas, and using computer Geographic Information Systems to manage tropical wetlands.

During the third week, we worked with the Australian Nature Conservation Agency staff. Dr. Jeremy Russell-Smith and his crew gave us a taste of day-to-day park management as we participated in wildlife monitoring, problem species control, and other ongoing activities. The Vietnamese assisted in Kakadu's fire management program to learn more about the safe use of fire to protect fire-sensitive communities. More than half of Kakadu goes up in flames every year due to fires set by park managers, lightning strikes, and aboriginal Australians.

During evenings and weekends, we visited some of the more spectacular tourist areas in and around the park to learn about ecotourism and education programs appropriate to tropical wetland conservation. We were lucky to be among the first guests of the new "Window on the Wetland" visitor center. Sitting atop a hill above floodplains stretching to the horizon, the center features an upswept roof designed to symbolize the wings of the dancing Brolga. Inside, many hands-on exhibits teach children and adults of all ages about wildlife ecology, aboriginal history, and the seasonal changes in billabongs (the aboriginal word for permanent wetlands formed in old river channels).

Field research took on a frightening new dimension at Kakadu, thanks to the menacing jaws of salt-water crocodiles ("salties") that seemed to lurk in each and every billabong we studied. Spanning up to 20 feet in length, salties are the largest reptiles in the world and have a reputation for dining on unwary tourists. The Vietnamese joked about reintroducing salties, now extirpated from the Mekong Delta, to help protect against poachers. But after having a few close encounters, everyone agreed it was best to focus on restoring only cranes to Tram Chim for the time being!

Throughout our training program, the Vietnamese recognized more and more similarities between Tram Chim and Kakadu. Familiar plants were collected during the day's fieldtrips and cooked in Vietnamese recipes for dinner each night. The Vietnamese discussed with obvious pleasure the familiar birds they had seen that day, now absent from Tram Chim. Black crows are especially missed at Tram Chim—a crow at the doorstep in Vietnam means a friend will soon come to visit.

Perhaps the most important similarities between Kakadu and Tram Chim were the ecological effects of different water levels in the wetlands. Because the water levels at Tram Chim are managed with dikes and water gates, the biologically-rich wetlands of Kakadu provide a model for restoring water levels at Tram Chim. Many of the vegetation communities in tropical Australian floodplains, including *Eleocharis* sedgeland, *Malaleuca* woodland, lotus swamp, and wild rice grasslands, also occur at Tram Chim. The maintenance of these communities requires the natural drawdown of water levels during the dry season. Each year, the water levels in the floodplain at the end of the dry season depend on the depth and extent of flooding during the wet season. Periodic drought years result in parched floodplains early in the dry season. In years of extreme flooding, which Australians call "the Big Wet," roads through Kakadu are submerged and the immersed floodplains remain much wetter during the dry season than in other years. Under this range of natural water level variations, *Eleocharis* and wild rice floodplains at Kakadu, that are of similar size to Tram Chim, can support hundreds of thousands of feeding waterbirds as they slowly dry out each year. Without these water level fluctuations, the productivity, diversity, and beauty of the wetlands will be lost.

Joining forces for conservation

One exciting outcome of the visit is the new relationship forged between Australian and Vietnamese colleagues. In 1995, Finlayson and his team will travel to Tram Chim to study water quality and help train the Vietnamese in their methods. A second

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group of wetland managers, this time from Laos, Cambodia, Thailand, and Vietnam, will travel to northern Australia for training next year as well. In the future, Kakadu may become the site of a permanent wetland training center for our Southeast Asian colleagues.

For all the similarities between the wetlands of Kakadu and Vietnam, striking differences do exist. The remote wilderness of Kakadu stands in stark contrast to Vietnam's Mekong Delta, the most densely populated rural area in the world. Whereas Australia has the economic resources to make conservation a high priority, Vietnam must struggle to feed and clothe its impoverished people by tapping every resource available. Clearly, the futures of Tram Chim and other wetlands in Vietnam depend as much on wise resource management (including people) as they do on wise ecological management.

The declaration this spring of Tram Chim as a National Reserve—the first wetland National Reserve in the Mekong Delta and the first protected area for cranes in Vietnam—is an exciting step towards recognizing the importance of wetlands for the survival of people and wildlife. Education and training, however, are still desperately needed to help Vietnam manage Tram Chim and its resources wisely.

Through the time together with our colleagues at Kakadu, weighing fish samples in billabongs or eluding salties, we gained a mutual understanding of the management challenges ahead for all of us at Tram Chim. With new skills and perspectives from Australia for managing water levels, water quality, and wildlife habitat, we will join together to restore a wetland paradise for people and wildlife at Tram Chim.

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

Field Trips to the Platte River

"30,000 cranes . . . it was awesome!"

According to Paul Johnsgard in *Crane Music*, "The Platte Valley and the adjoining shallow marshes of the 'Rainwater Basin' . . . host . . . one of the most spectacular concentrations of migratory birds to be found anywhere in the world." Esther Caporelli, who went on last spring's trip, said: "It was an incredible experience to be in a blind at dusk to hear and see an estimated 30,000 cranes come in to their roosting site, and also to realize that this phenomenon happens no where else on earth . . . . It was awesome!"

This is a special trip for people who want to experience the cranes and observe other birds in surrounding areas in a relaxed atmosphere. The trip includes two dawn/dusk visits to the best blind in the Rowe Sanctuary, one seldom available to the public. Between visits to the blind, you can go birding at your own pace, using background materials and maps we supply.

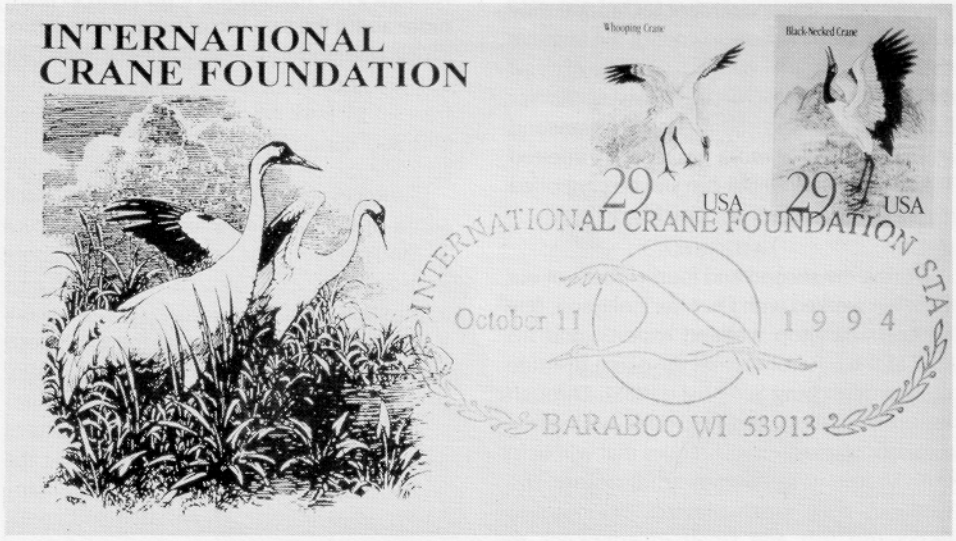
Your guide will be ICF volunteer Jim Rogers, veteran of five seasons on the Platte. Jim has also assisted ICF on field trips to China and Tibet, where he studied the rare Black-necked Crane. Jim serves as your guide to the blinds and leads an orientation session, introducing a first-rate packet of maps and background materials.

The trip fee includes two visits to the blind with Jim Rogers, lodging (with hot breakfast included) at the best motel close to the cranes, briefings by Rogers on road conditions and current hot-spots, a packet of background materials and maps, and a tax-deductible donation to ICF. The fee does not include transportation to/from the Platte River, transportation within the Platte area, or other meals. This plan provides maximum flexibility for each person. Take advantage of this trip now—it may not be offered in 1996.

March 20-23, 1995 (3 nights—weekdays): Avoid the crowds at birding spots and have more time for birding on your own. Orientation, evening of the 20th. Visit the blind at dawn on the 21st and at dusk on the 22nd. Return home on the 23rd. $295 ($60 surcharge for single occupancy).

March 24-26, 1995 (2 nights—weekend): If you can't come in the middle of the week, or need a ride by van from Madison, this trip is for you. Orientation, evening of the 24th. Visit blinds at dawn and dusk on the 25th, with birding on your own in between. Return home on the 26th. $269 ($40 surcharge for single occupancy, additional charge for van).

For more information, or to reserve your place with a $50 non-refundable deposit, contact Rose at ICF at (608) 356-9462.



The first joint stamp issue between the United States and the People's Republic of China featured the Whooping Crane and the Black-necked Crane. The joint issue reflects close cooperation between the two countries for wildlife conservation, much of which has revolved around cranes. The first day of issue was October 9, 1994, and on October 11, ICF hosted special events for stamp collectors. A special pictoral cancellation (above), designed by Russian wildlife artist Victor Bakhtin, is available from ICF. For each envelope with two stamps, please send $1.50 and a self-addressed, stamped envelope to Teresa Searock at ICF.

1994 Bird-A-Thon

by Bob Hallam
Development Coordinator

ICF's sixth-annual Bird-a-thon raised over $11,000 for the Ron Sauey Conservation Fund and for ICF operations. Income from the Sauey Fund supports the Ron Sauey Memorial Library for Bird Conservation. Over the past six years, a total of over $93,000 has been raised. We wish to thank all who participated.

First place went to Judith Bautch, followed by Michael Putnam, second, and Michael John Jaeger, third. All three received a signed and framed, limited edition print by Rockne Knuth entitled "Autumn Oak—Bluebirds."

The other top-scoring teams were Steve Brick (4th), Viola White (5th), Al Schmidt (6th), Cathryn Steuer (7th), Randy Tiedt (8th), David & Geri Vander Leest (9th), and Mary Roestel (10th). Each team received a signed, limited print by Michael Jones Riddet entitled "Waiting Game." All who counted birds and raised money also received a print by Owen Gromme entitled "Shoveler Ducks."

Once again, we wish to thank ICF Trustee Mark Lefebvre and Stanton & Lee of Madison, WI, for donating the prizes.

Your Special Gift

Over the past several years, the "special gift" envelope has allowed each member a chance to donate to a particular ICF program of personal interest. Your donation will allow ICF's staff greater opportunities in 1995.

For example, the Crane Conservation Department (formerly Aviculture) will use your year-end gift to help incubate and raise Siberian Cranes for release in Russia. Site Management needs a two-way radio for the Cudahy Visitor Center. The Sauey Library needs additional funds to assist with disseminating crane literature to our foreign colleagues. Education needs support for printing additional curriculum packets to provide for increases in visits by classes to ICF. Finally, the Field Ecology Department needs support for restoring ICF's savanna.

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

VCR, TVs Needed

Several used (or new!) VCR playback machines and video monitors are needed in the Library and Training Center for previewing videos, training, and presentations to staff. We can make your lonely old machine happy (if it works).

Work Trip to China

The International Crane Foundation (ICF) is organizing an expedition to Cao Hai Nature Reserve in southwestern China, from February 24 to March 14, 1995. Volunteers are needed to assist with observations of behavior and habitat use by the endangered Black-necked Crane, and to visit local schools and villages to give slide talks about cranes and conservation. Cranes are more tame at Cao Hai than anywhere else in China, yet it is necessary to integrate conservation with farming and other economic activities.

No prior research experience is necessary, only a willingness to learn. Cost for the expedition is $2,450 plus air fare (these expenses can be a tax-deductible contribution). For more information, contact Jeb Barzen at ICF, E-11376 Shady Lane Road, Baraboo, Wisconsin 53913 (608/356-9462). This trip is a great chance to learn more about China and international bird conservation, and to assist one of China's outstanding nature reserves.

Contributions

Received July through September, 1994

Lufthansa

ICF's Official Airline

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Patience is a Virtue with Cranes

by Kelly Drengler,
Aviculturist

When I began to train a year-old Brolga Crane for ICF's new Flight Demonstration, I thought my experience training dogs would help. But I soon discovered that training a bird is very different from working with dogs, because of a bird's independence.

I first started flying the Brolga named "Razz" in April, 1994. George Archibald showed me how, explaining the sound I needed to make to get Razz ready to fly, which was a single high-pitched note.

When the day came for Razz to fly without George, I was very excited as I walked to Crane City. Razz actually led me out of Crane City toward the prairie where he takes off. After a great flight, instead of walking back to Crane City in a business-like manner, Razz stopped to observe all the fun things in the sky, in the prairie, or on the road. Since Razz and I did the Demonstration every day, taking an extra 20 minutes returning to Crane City was a frustrating addition to my already busy day.

One day during our return after the flight, Razz was following unusually closely behind me. Hoping to get him back quickly, I increased my pace. But when I turned around, Razz was nowhere in sight. My heart jumped to my throat. I looked at the sky—nothing. I called him with a purr, but there was no response. Then I noticed some tall prairie plants moving oddly. Suddenly, his head popped out of the prairie—I saw a grasshopper in his beak. Snack time!

One day when I went to his pen, he started bobbing his head and acting very excited to see me. After I let him out of his pen, he started pulling at the grass and jumping around. This reminded me of how my dog greets me. Then it hit me—the first rule in dog training—*be patient*. I wondered whether Razz could sense my impatience.

For the 1994 tour season, ICF introduced a new "Flight Demonstration," during which our year-old Brolga Crane named Razz entertained 30-50 visitors a day. The demonstration was planned to replace last year's Chick Walk. Photo by David Thompson.

After a great flight show, we headed back to Crane City with my new attitude. If Razz wanted to investigate something, I stopped with him and tried to see what he was playing with. After he was finished, I walked away and, surprisingly, he came with me! So I decided to play the game by his rules.

When I no longer worried about the time, I started to notice some very interesting behaviors. For example, I noticed a low bow Razz did at the end of his flight. I found out this is a behavior some birds do when they land, to show other members of the flock that this is their space and others should keep their distance.

I also began to notice details of the pre-flight position, which involves much more than just stretching the neck. He would become very aerodynamic, with head down, neck straightened, and with all his feathers slicked back against his body. Razz responded well to my new attitude. He procrastinated less and, if he started to lollygag, all I needed to do was give a quick purr and he would follow.

People often ask me if I have been successful in training Razz to be a good performer. One day, it occurred to me that Razz had really trained me! Once I realized that the relationship went both ways—and changed my attitude and behavior—Razz began to respond better and follow more closely. When training any animal, the relationship is crucial. But sometimes, as with people, you have to change your own behavior to improve the relationship. And I learned that birds are more demanding of change—and patience. Although birds aren't quite like dogs, the principle is the same—patience is a virtue.

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