

THE ICF BUGLE

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World Center for the Study and Preservation of Cranes

Learning to Migrate

by George Archibald, Director of ICF and Jim Lewis, National Whooping Crane Coordinator, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

A successful pair of cranes usually rears one or two chicks each year. The young cranes stay close to their parents from the time they hatch until the following spring when the nesting cycle begins again. Consequently, in migratory species, the juveniles always accompany their parents south in the fall. In contrast, in the spring, although juveniles sometimes accompany their parents back to the breeding grounds before leaving their parents, some juveniles leave their parents on the wintering grounds at the end of winter. Others break away from the family during spring migration. It was always believed, but never proven until recently, that the young cranes learned the migration route from their parents.

Almost 20 years ago in Idaho, an experiment was undertaken by Dr. Rod Drewien. In an effort to establish a new migratory flock of Whooping Cranes in the west, eggs of the endangered Whoopers were substituted into nests of the abundant Sandhill Cranes. Many Whooping Crane chicks were raised by the foster parents. They migrated more than 750 miles south to spend the winter in New Mexico, a journey about a third of the distance traveled by the surviving wild flock of Whooping Cranes that breeds in northern Canada and spends the winter along the Gulf of Mexico.

After leaving their foster parents the next spring, the Whooping Cranes returned to the general vicinity of where they were raised. In subsequent years, they repeated

the migration route taught to them by the Sandhills. Usually they spent winter in the area where they had first overwintered with their foster parents. Unfortunately, the Whooping Cranes did not pair with members of their own species. They were attracted to Sandhill Cranes and the only breeding produced a hybrid "Whoophill." Although the experiment was a disappointment, the research proved that migration routes and species recognition are learned in Whooping Cranes. Likely such learning is characteristic for all species of cranes.

Costume-rearing in Michigan

Since Sandhill Cranes cannot be used to rear Whooping Cranes, perhaps juvenile Whooping Cranes, reared in captivity and imprinted on their own species, and

released in late summer with Sandhill Cranes might learn a migration route by joining the Sandhills. In 1988-90, in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan, Dr. Richard Urbanek costume-reared 38 Sandhills in captivity and released them with the wild cranes in autumn. Costume-rearing involves preventing visual and vocal contact with "normal" humans and rearing the chicks by cloaked keepers wearing a hand puppet resembling the head and neck of a crane. The chicks were also exposed to live adult cranes of their own species kept in an adjacent pen. This costume-rearing and release technique had been developed at ICF by Dr. Rob Horwich in 1985.

The captive-reared birds joined the wild cranes, migrated to Florida, returned, and

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Bob Lishman and Joe Duff have taught geese to follow an ultralight and migrate for hundreds of miles. This technique, now being tested on cranes, could be an important tool for crane reintroduction efforts. Photo by Lishman/Duff.

The Mystery of the Missing Siberians

by George Archibald, Director of ICF and Dr. Yutaka Kanai, Deputy Director, Research Center, Wild Bird Society of Japan

Almost 20 years ago, a small flock of Siberian Cranes were discovered spending the winter on the Caspian lowlands of northern Iran. In the early years as many as 12 were counted but during the past decade there have only been 9-10 including one or two juveniles. Although the population reproduces, it does not increase. Miraculously, it survives. The migration route and the breeding grounds have remained a mystery.

Throughout the winter, the cranes separate as pairs and family groups on flooded rice fields where farmers live-trap wild ducks from October through March. Catches depend on baiting the ducks and encouraging them peacefully to fly into

the traps. By chance, larger birds like cranes were protected by the trappers who keep intruders away. Just before the waterfowl migrate, a "shoot out" disrupts a peace normally punctuated only by the flute-like calls of the Siberian Cranes. Usually, however, the cranes migrate a few days before the shoot out.

The Russians have known for decades that small numbers of Siberian Cranes are occasionally spotted on spring migration west of the Caspian Sea and then on wetlands of the Volga delta on the northwest Caspian. The cranes continued north and disappeared.

In recent years, Japanese researchers have attached a small Platform Transmitter Terminal (PTT) weighing less than 100 grams to endangered cranes in east Asia. Data from the NOAA satellite is revealed and processed at the Data Acquisition Stations in France and the USA revealing

the migration routes, resting areas, breeding and wintering grounds for various populations—information vital to conservation.

ICF has been involved in Sibe conservation for many years, but satellite tracking only became possible when the Wild Bird Society of Japan (WBSJ) joined the effort. Through support of NEC Corporation and Nippon Telegraph and Telephone Corporation (NTT), WBSJ provided four satellite radios for attachment to Siberian Cranes in Iran. There were two big challenges—getting researchers to Iran and catching the cranes without disrupting the duck trapping.

During the winter of 1994-95, the Iran Department of the Environment invited George Archibald to Iran to release two captive-produced Siberians with the wild cranes and to capture two wild cranes. Satellite radios would be attached to all four birds. Unfortunately, a delayed visa invitation forced the two cranes and George to remain in Baraboo. Then the US Government placed a ban on the export of all materials, except human body parts needed for medical reasons. Siberian Cranes did not qualify.

Through the assistance of the secretariat of the Bonn Convention on Migratory Species, headquartered in Germany, a new plan was implemented the following winter. Communication with Iran would be from Germany, and a Russian crane researcher, Dr. Yuri Markin, would release captive-reared cranes in Iran and capture and mark the wild cranes. Through the fine efforts of the office of Wisconsin's Senator Herbert Kohl, the US government granted an exemption for the export of the live Siberian Cranes. Lufthansa German Airlines provided complimentary passage for the precious cargo from Chicago to Tehran. A grant from the National Wildlife Federation allowed Yuri Markin to join both the ICF cranes and the wild cranes in Iran and to begin the work.

The duck trappers would not allow Yuri and his Iranian colleague, Mr. Bahrami Nasab of the Department of the Environment, to work inside the duck trapping area where the wild Siberian Cranes spent most of their time. Consequently, just outside the hunting area, but still on wide open expanses of rice fields, Yuri constructed two small netted pens—one for each of the two captive cranes.



Migration route of satellite-tracked Siberian Crane, March-May, 1996. Map by Milford Muskett.

He planned to introduce these birds gradually to their new surrounding. The calls of the captive cranes were heard by the wild cranes. One wild family, including a pair and their juvenile, flew near the cage of a captive crane. The wild male crane tried to attack the captive bird. By modifying the cage, Yuri was able to trap a territorial and aggressive wild male. Color bands and a satellite radio were attached and the bird was soon released.

Unfortunately, Yuri did not have time or opportunity to capture another wild crane. Satellite radios were attached to the two captive cranes, and the birds were released.

The satellite radios allowed researchers to follow the two ICF Siberian Cranes and the marked wild crane. Unfortunately, the ICF cranes failed either to join the wild cranes or to migrate. One was captured and

placed in the Pardisan Park in Tehran. The captive cranes had proved vital in the capture of the wild crane, and may be used to lure wild cranes into traps in the future.

The wild crane carrying the PTT migrated west across the Caspian lowlands, across Azerbaijan, Chechnya, and then to the delta of the Volga where it rested for 17 days before continuing northwest to a presumed breeding area just east of the Ural Mountains and northwest of the city of Tyumen.

From a helicopter, researchers Alexander Sorokin and Yuri Markin searched the wetlands for white cranes. Although the high expense of helicopter work limited surveys to just hours, a family of breeding Siberian Cranes was located. They had a chick! The female, moulting and flightless, was captured and color-banded. Unfortunately,

the color-banded male that carried the satellite radio from Iran was not located. The satellite informs us that he summured in that region — we hope with his mate and a new chick.

The word for Siberian Crane in Russian is "sterkh." A mountain near the wetland where the cranes are breeding is called Sterkh Mountain, and several of the local people living in that region have the surname "Sterkh." These people, however, were unaware of the Siberian Cranes. Perhaps conservation of the last few Siberian Cranes on the breeding grounds, along their newly-charted migration route, as well as in Iran, will result in the slow recovery of this remnant flock. A scientific report on the satellite tracking of the Iranian Siberian Crane is under preparation for publication by WBSJ. ■

1997 ICF FIELD TRIPS

Aransas National Wildlife Refuge—The Whooping Crane is the embodiment of North American wildlife conservation. Its haunting call has echoed through the ages. Thanks to decades of heroic effort, it appears that future generations will be able to share in this enchantment. During the week of March 11th-14th and over the weekend of March 14th-17th, 1997, Jim Rogers will escort two groups of twelve ICF members for viewing the Whoopers in and around Aransas National Wildlife Refuge near Corpus Christi, Texas. Jim is an ICF volunteer who has led our Platte River trips for six seasons. Participants will watch the Whoopers close-up from the best available birding boat, get a good overview of their winter home from an observation tower, hear presentations about their ecology from nationally recognized authorities, and visit Matagorda Island, the unspoiled barrier island offshore from the Aransas Refuge. There will be great shorebirding and wildlife watching as well. Participation will be limited to the first dozen accepted applicants for each trip. Charges of \$395 per person (add \$70 for single occupancy) will pay for lodging in Rockport/Fulton, Texas, full breakfasts, two boat trips, educational presentations at Aransas N.W.R. and Matagorda Island, orientation materials, and a tax-deductible contribution to ICF. Auto transportation is not included, nor are lunches and dinners.

Platte River Field Trips—Each spring, the Platte River in Nebraska witnesses one of Earth's most spectacular wildlife concentrations, the gathering of migrating Sandhill Cranes. Hundreds of thousands of cranes swarm from their roosts each dawn; they are everywhere as you drive through the valley during the day; and as dusk deepens, flock after deafening flock streams back again to the river. On the weekend of March 28th-30th, and during the week on March 31st-April 3rd, 1997, two groups of lucky ICF members will view this spectacle under the best possible circumstances. Escorted by ICF volunteers Joel and Joyce Hanes, and accompanied by local crane conservationists, each group will enjoy dawn and dusk viewings of the cranes from the best blinds on the river. A visit to a pedestrian bridge will afford a different perspective of the cranes going to roost. Excellent daytime crane watching (and waterfowl on the adjacent Rainwater Basin) will be facilitated by thorough orientation materials and briefings on current conditions, enabling participants to "hit the ground running" on their own. Participation will be limited to the first dozen accepted applicants for each trip. Charges of \$300 per person (add \$50 for single occupancy) for the two-night weekend trip, or \$356 per person (add \$70 for single occupancy) for the three-night weekday trip, will cover lodging in Kearney, Nebraska, full breakfasts, blind space, orientation materials, and a tax-deductible contribution to ICF. Transportation is not included, nor are lunches and dinners.

For more information on either of these great trips, please contact Rose Blada at ICF (608) 356-9462. Or to reserve your place, send to Rose a \$75 non-refundable deposit check payable to the International Crane Foundation.

ICF wishes to credit the following persons for helping to conserve the western flock of Siberian Cranes. Mohammed Ali Ashtiani and colleagues at the Iran Department of the Environment for the discovery of the cranes in 1978, and for continued efforts on behalf of the flock. Ellen Tavakoli and her colleagues for monitoring the crane and for their efforts in public education with the duck trappers. The Wild Bird Society of Japan for providing the satellite radios and for purchasing the resulting data. Dr. Mini Nagendran for receiving and distributing the satellite data. Mr. Douglas Hykle of the Bonn Convention for Migratory Species and Dr. Mehran Rouzbehani, Head of International Affairs, Department of the Environment, Islamic Republic of Iran, for coordinating the program. Dr. Juhani Rinne and his colleagues from Finland for helping Yuri Markin in the field in Iran. Mr. Bahrami Nasab of the Iran Department of the Environment and Dr. Yuri Markin for the field work in Iran. Dr. Hiroyoshi Higuchi of Tokyo University for his invaluable technical advice. And finally to Dr. Alexander Sorokin and Dr. Yuri Markin for the discovery of the breeding grounds of Siberian Cranes. Financial and logistical support was provided by the National Wildlife Federation, Amoco Corporation, Lufthansa German Airlines, NEC Corporation and NTT.

eventually reproduced in the wild near the release area in Michigan. The survival rate of cranes reared and released in this manner was outstanding. Perhaps someday wild Sandhill Cranes can be used to teach costume-reared Whooping Cranes a new migration route. Such a technique has not been fully tested. Three juvenile Whooping Cranes were, however, reared in a pen with wild-captured Whooping Crane foster parents and released in August in Idaho with wild Sandhill Cranes. The young Whoopers formed their own social unit and did not migrate with the Sandhill Cranes or their foster parents.

Ultralights in Ontario

In 1988, Bill Lishman, a Canadian artist/inventor from Ontario, Canada, came up with the idea of teaching captive-reared Canada Geese to follow an ultralight aircraft. Like young cranes, goslings follow their parents south in autumn at flight speeds of 30 to 35 miles per hour. Fortunately, Lishman's ultralight can fly that slowly. Through a laborious training process, the pre-fledged goslings followed Lishman and his ultralight on the field that was also the runway. Then, as they developed flight, the juvenile geese followed Lishman and his machine into the sky. From 1993-1995, Lishman with his partner Joe Duff led a total of 86 young Canada Geese from Ontario to the southeastern United States, 400 to 820 miles. Of 56 led by ultralight aircraft, 46 returned

on their own to Ontario the following spring. Among 30 transported by truck around Lake Ontario, and then led south by the ultralights, only 15 returned to Ontario the following spring.

Lishman's remarkable achievement was the inspiration for the popular feature film *Fly Away Home* filmed in southern Ontario with the assistance of Lishman and Duff in 1995. While rearing and flying 80 Canadian Geese for the film, Lishman and his team also costume-reared 3 Sandhill Cranes. They were delighted that the juvenile cranes followed the ultralight just as well as the young geese. A migration with cranes was not attempted.

Ultralights in Idaho

As early as 1983, Kent Clegg, a rancher-biologist in Idaho, began training small numbers of Sandhill Cranes to follow all terrain vehicles and automobiles. One bird followed his pickup truck for 38 miles. In 1994, Kent taught six Sandhill Cranes to follow his ultralight aircraft for local flights in Idaho. In 1995, he led 11 Sandhills on a 750-mile migration over the Rocky Mountains to the middle Rio Grande Valley of New Mexico.

It took 11 days to complete the migration. A colleague in a second ultralight scouted ahead for unfavorable weather conditions and landing sites for the unusual flock. A ground team followed along in trucks to set up camps that included a predator-proof enclosure for the cranes.

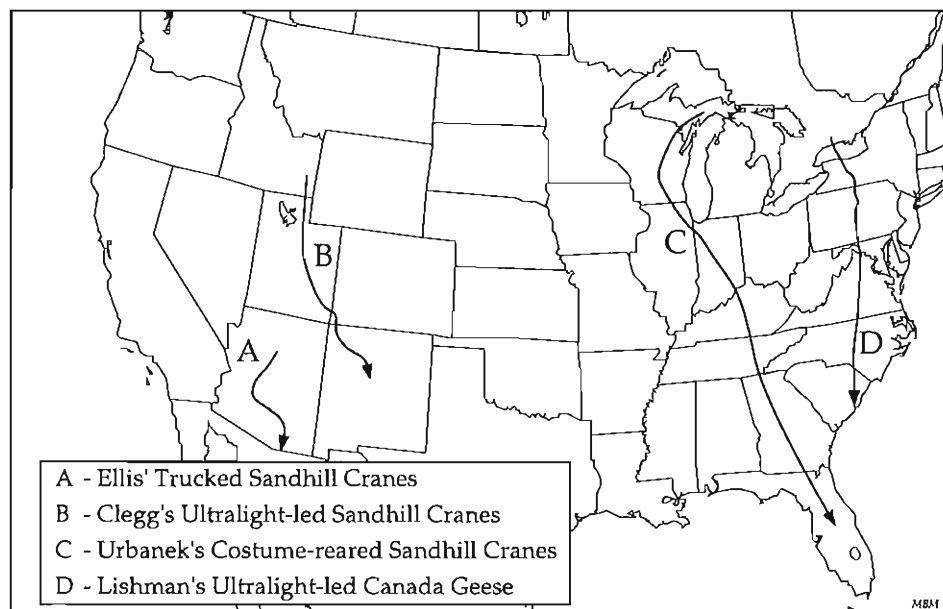
Danger was ever-present. Golden Eagles attacked the cranes as they followed the ultra-light. Two cranes were killed. One crane abandoned the migration and migrated back north to Kent's ranch. Two became sick and were transported by truck during part of the journey. Soon after their arrival at the destination for the winter, the Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge, two cranes were shot by hunters when they flew with wild cranes to feed on private ranchland. Coyotes killed two others. The survivors readily joined the large flocks of wild cranes. Although the hand-raised cranes were tame and easily managed during the migration, their behavior changed quickly as soon as they joined the wild cranes. Their fear of people appeared to equal that of the wild cranes.

Four cranes spent the winter in New Mexico. Two of these cranes had been transported by truck for part of the migration south, and the other two cranes had followed the ultralight throughout the migration. The following spring, the two birds that had followed the ultralight for the entire migration accompanied Sandhill Cranes to Colorado, and then returned to Idaho. They spent the summer just over a mountain from the Clegg ranch. The other two cranes were not observed after they migrated into northern Colorado.

This year, Kent is repeating his experiment with another group of hand-reared Sandhills, and in 1997, he hopes to test the technique on Whooping Cranes. A success in Idaho may lead to applying the technique to establish a new migratory flock of Whooping Cranes that breed on the prairies of southern Canada and winter in southeastern USA.

Trucking in Arizona

If cranes learn a migration route by following their parents or an ultralight, is it possible they might do the same by flying along behind a south-bound truck, called the "cranemobile," that they had been conditioned to follow since hatching? Dr. David Ellis tested that technique in 1995 in an area where there are no wild cranes. His team reared 10 Sandhills at the Patuxent Environmental Science Center in Maryland and conditioned them to follow, and even walk up a platform to board, a truck. Then the cranes were transported to a forested area in northern Arizona where the researchers camped with the cranes and continued the truck training through the fledging period. Finally, after the cranes were strong fliers, they had



Routes used in experiments to teach cranes about migration. Map by Milford Muskett.



them fly behind the truck along back roads south to Buenos Aires National Wildlife Refuge near the border with Mexico. The wintering site had no wild cranes to join. To remain safe from predators, the cranes lived in pens but were allowed to fly free weekly during the winter. In spring, however, after they were repeatedly released, they failed to migrate. The young cranes probably needed other cranes to show them when to go north. Two trucking experiments are being conducted in 1996. One will closely mimic the 1995 experiment but the young cranes will be given a longer time to migrate north. They may also be "jump-started" by having the cranemobile start them north and abandon them to see if they will continue on their own and if they know the route. A second group will winter with wild Sandhill Cranes but the research team will try to separate out the captive-reared cranes in the spring. The researchers will then return them to northern Arizona to see if they will migrate south along their learned route in the fall.

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Top: Kent Clegg banks for a landing with five of his eight Sandhill Cranes trailing his plane at his farm southeast of Grace, Idaho.

Photo by Doug Lindley/Idaho State Journal.

Middle: Costumed parent leading isolation-reared Sandhill Cranes, Seney National Wildlife Refuge, Michigan. Photo by Richard Urbanek.



Bottom: Trucking cranes wing their way south with the Cranemobile, 1995.

Photo by David Ellis.

What have we learned?

Costume-reared Sandhills can be conditioned to join wild Sandhills. They learn the migration route of the wild cranes and they return to successfully breed in the vicinity where they were reared. Both costume-reared Sandhills (Lishman birds) and hand-reared Sandhills (Clegg birds) can be taught to fly behind an ultralight aircraft. Hand-reared Sandhills successfully completed a migration by following an ultralight, and the two birds that had experienced the entire migration behind the ultralight, returned to where they had fledged.

What's next?

Next year, Bill Lishman hopes to lead a group of Sandhills south from the Canadian prairies along a route that Whooping Cranes may eventually take to the southern USA. Concurrently, Kent Clegg may determine how Whooping Cranes respond to an ultralight migration from Idaho to New Mexico. In the future, results of research in North America may be applied in Japan to reestablish a migratory flock of Red-crowned Cranes. And in western Asia, the research may be used to bolster the remnant flocks of Siberian Cranes or to establish new flocks in safer places.

A video documentary of Bill Lishman's early flights with geese, entitled C'mon Geese, is available by calling in the USA 1-800-843-3612 or in Canada 1-800-575-9226. ■

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

Editors: Debbie Carley
Marshal Case

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Are You Considering a Year End Gift to ICF?

Gifts of cash are the most popular way to support ICF. The actual out-of-pocket cost is less than the dollar amount of the gift because of the allowable income tax deduction. The limit on deductibility of cash gifts in most cases is 50% of the contributor's adjusted gross income.

Another popular way of giving to ICF is donation of appreciated securities. Gifts of long-term appreciated securities are often more advantageous to the contributor than outright gifts of cash. Gifts of appreciated stocks or bonds entitle a contributor to two benefits: there is no capital gains tax payable, and the contributor may use the fair market value of the securities on the date of the gift to compute the income tax charitable deduction.

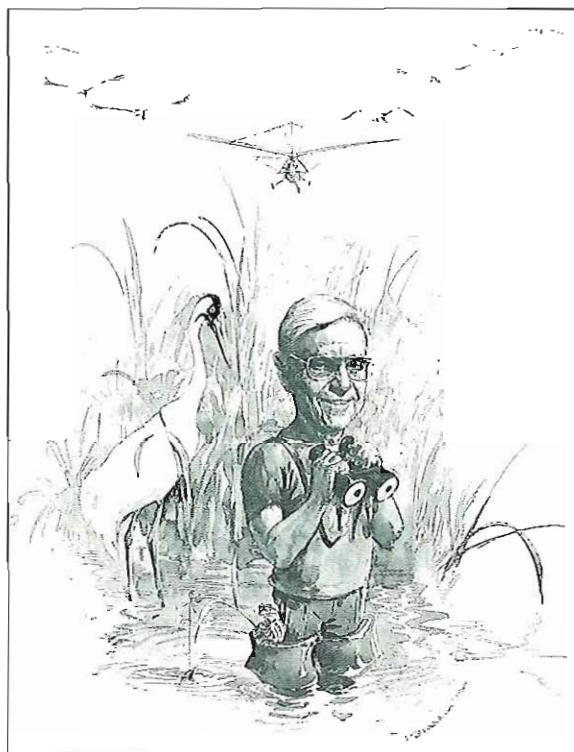
Contributors who give appreciated securities may claim a charitable deduction of up to 30% of their adjusted gross income in the gift year, with carry-over of any excess deduction for up to five succeeding tax years.

If you have any questions regarding donating appreciated securities, please contact your broker or Terry Brooks, Financial Manager, at ICF. ■

1996 Bird-A-Thon

ICF's eighth annual Bird-a-thon raised over \$17,000 for the Ron Sauey Conservation Fund and ICF operations. Income from the Sauey Fund supports the Ron Sauey Memorial Library for Bird Conservation. Over the past eight years, a total of over \$130,000 has been raised. We wish to thank all who participated this year.

First place and grand prize went to Judith Bautch. Judy won a day trip for two flying and driving around central Wisconsin surveying Sandhill Cranes with ICF staff. We wish to thank Dick Wagner of Lyons, Wisconsin for donating the flying time. Second place went to Becky Garrison, with Viola White taking third. All top three finishers received a framed print by Owen Gromme entitled "Ghost in the Barn."



At our recent Annual Meeting in September, ICF recognized Jim Lewis and Terry and Mary Kohler for their contributions to the recovery of the Whooping Crane. Jim is the National Whooping Crane Coordinator for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The Kohlers, using their corporate jet, have transported Whooping Crane eggs to ICF and the Patuxent Wildlife Research Center in Maryland, and they have carried juvenile cranes from the captive sites for release in the Kissimmee Prairie in Florida. ICF's Artist-in-Residence, Victor Bakhtin, prepared these delightful sketches for these special people.



The other top-scoring teams were Cathryn Steuer (4th), Tom Schmidt (5th), Steve Petznick (6th), Michael John Jaeger (7th), Carla & Dale Oestreich (8th), Al Schmidt (9th), and David & Geri Vander Leest (10th). Each of these teams received a signed limited print by Owen Gromme entitled "Ghost in the Barn." All who counted birds and raised money also received a print by Owen Gromme entitled "Christmas Morning Cranes."

Once again we wish to thank ICF Trustee Mark Lefebvre and Chuck Brei of Meuer Art of Madison, Wisconsin for donating the prints. ■

ICF is on the Internet

We now have a homepage on the World Wide Web. Our website address is: <http://www.baraboo.com/bus/icf/whowhat.htm>. Comments or ideas are welcome from *Bugle* readers.

Transport Needed

ICF is looking for a passenger car or van for crane field studies and local staff travel. Please contact ICF if you have a vehicle available that might suit our needs!

Chick Success at ICF

by Debbie Carley, Bugle Co-Editor and Marianne Wellington, Lead Aviculturist

After four attempts, Laily and Majmu have really done it. They are raising a chick! The pair of Indian Sarus Cranes are one of the many success stories in chick rearing at ICF this year.

Laily and Majmu, their names taken from a romantic Indian folktale of two lovers, have always been a strong pair. When they first arrived at ICF, they were housed at Crane City. In spite of construction work that was going on at the time, they nested. Caretakers at ICF could see they were a determined pair. It was that strong bond that helped the two to be selected as potential birds to parent-rear young.

Now housed at the pod, the pair and their offspring, Suyra, are a favorite of ICF visitors. The young family on display gives the public the opportunity to see the natural physical and behavioral development of the young. This is the first Indian Sarus Crane to be raised successfully at the pod, but in the past, Eurasian, Demoiselle, and Siberian chicks also have been parent-reared on public display.

A number of other chicks were parent-reared this year out in Crane City: four Whooping Cranes and two Siberian Cranes. The Whoopers are part of the release program in Florida and will be introduced to the wild later this year.

Eleven additional Whooping Cranes were raised in isolation this summer. Isolation-rearing is very labor intensive.



A pair of Indian Sarus Cranes rearing their offspring in the Johnson Exhibit Pod at ICF, gives visitors a chance to see how cranes raise and teach their young. Photo by Debbie Carley.

Caretakers dress up in a costume and become the chicks' parents, taking on responsibilities of teaching and feeding the young birds. We believe hand puppets enable the birds to learn the natural color cues of their parent so they imprint on their own species and not on their human parents. Tape recorded calls of Whooping Cranes teaches them appropriate vocal cues. An adult Whooping Crane is also housed next to the chicks' exercise area.

This technique of chick rearing attempts to combine the best aspects of parent-rearing with the added benefit of controlling the environment. It also allows for

greater numbers of birds to be raised.

Of the eleven isolation-reared Whoopers, six will be released in the wild in November. The other five chicks were from eggs collected at Wood Buffalo Nat'l Park in Canada. These birds will remain in captivity because of their high genetic value.

In addition to these cranes, seven birds were hand-reared at ICF. Two Hooded Cranes, two Black-necked Cranes, two Brolgas, and one Wattle Crane all grew up in the ICF chick yard. The chick yard is an educational tool used to teach visitors about crane behavior and to give the public an opportunity to see a variety of species of young cranes. ■

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International Crane Foundation

E11376 Shady Lane Rd.
P.O. Box 447
Baraboo, Wisconsin 53913-0447

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Fax: 356-9465
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