



# THE ICF BUGLE

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World Center for the Study and Preservation of Cranes

## Linking Discovery With Action Through Consensus

by Jeb Barzen, Field Ecology Director

As late as the mid-1980's the Eastern Sarus Crane was one of many birds believed to have disappeared from southeast Asia. War and politics cloaked the region with a dense fog through which conservationists could not see. Over the past twelve years, many people have striven to answer a simple question: what has happened to these magnificent cranes?

The first news to emerge from the fog came in 1986, when Dr. Le Dien Duc of the University of Hanoi wrote George Archibald about the rediscovery of Eastern Sarus Cranes in the Mekong Delta. In 1988, George traveled to what is now the Tram Chim National Reserve and initiated ICF's involvement in the region (*ICF Bugle* May, 1988). By 1992, Tram Chim was becoming a secure home for cranes during the dry, non-breeding season.

Yet without secure breeding areas, a safe dry-season home has little meaning. Not until 1994 were nesting Eastern Sarus Cranes found in Cambodia (*ICF Bugle* August, 1994).

Recent years brought hope for finding additional breeding areas. Largely through the efforts of three ICF members, we have gained evidence that Eastern Sarus Cranes are breeding in Myanmar (formerly called Burma) and Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao PDR).

### Are there cranes in Myanmar?

In 1994, I had seen an Eastern Sarus Crane in the Kunming Zoo. The bird had been captured in 1990 as a flightless chick in northwestern Yunnan, along the

Myanmar border. Could birds reside in Myanmar as well?

ICF members, John and Judy Day, visited Myanmar in early 1995 and found Sarus Cranes in the Yangon (formerly Rangoon) Zoo. Few people could tell the Days anything about the birds but their presence suggested that wild cranes were still living in Myanmar. More importantly, if Eastern Sarus Cranes were in Myanmar, they might represent a new, isolated population of birds. It seemed unlikely that cranes could be migrating, undetected, across Thailand on the long route between Myanmar and Tram Chim (see map).

With evidence mounting, ICF member Eleanor Briggs traveled to Yangon during the summer of 1995 to find out

more. During her trip she met Dr. Muang Chit, who had obtained cranes from the Ayeyarwady Delta for the Yangon Zoo.

Upon our arrival in Myanmar during the summer rainy season of 1996, Eleanor and I were joined by Tin Nwe Latt of the Myanmar Forestry Department, Aye Hlaing of Yangon Zoo, and Tint Lwin Thaug of the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS). Our first day out in the field brought results... of a sort.

In the evening, while nearing our destination of Ein Me, the team spotted a young crane. The bird still had the pale gray head of a juvenile but was capable of flying. It had probably hatched during the rainy season of 1995. The van screeched to a halt and we all piled out



Ma Kyin Shwe (left) and Tin Nwe Latt (right) stand next to the first Eastern Sarus Crane nest in Myanmar known to science in the last quarter century. Of course, Ma Kyin Shwe knew of these nesting birds long before we did! Photo by Jeb Barzen.

to document the first wild Eastern Sarus Crane known from Myanmar in several decades. As shutters snapped, we felt fortunate that the chick did not fly at our approach. Good fortune faded to chagrin as the bird began to walk towards us. Curious onlookers then asked if we would like to meet the bird's owner. With newfound humility, we queried Mr. Nyund Shwe.

The bird had been captured as a flightless chick. Nyund Shwe was very proud of his pet bird. It was not for sale. He offered to take us to the nearby capture place.

Over the next several days we found many cranes in both flocks and pairs. Some of the pairs were already incubating. We were struck by the ease with which the birds and people mingled. The first nest we found was in a rice paddy. Mrs. Ma Kyin Shwe proudly described how her birds had nested on the same mound for the last three years. She and her husband actively protected the nesting birds by keeping people from trespassing. Monks from the local pagoda teach that the Lord Buddha was a crane in a previous life so cranes must be pro-

tected.

Tin Nwe Latt subsequently conducted another survey for cranes in the Ayeyarwady Delta and found additional crane breeding areas. Local residents explained that cranes stay in the Delta all year but move among different wetland areas as water conditions change. This evidence supported the hypothesis that Myanmar's Eastern Sarus Cranes probably do not migrate to Vietnam.

#### What does Lao PDR have to do with it?

In 1995, Eleanor Briggs also traveled to Lao PDR to obtain evidence of breeding for Eastern Sarus Cranes. As in Myanmar, she found Eastern Sarus Cranes in the Vientiane Zoo as well as other regional zoos. The bird in the Vientiane Zoo had been captured as a flightless chick along the border between Lao PDR and Cambodia, east of the Mekong River. During the summer rainy season of 1996, Eleanor and I were again working with WCS and local forestry staff to find cranes.

We found one pair of cranes in a small wetland near the border and photographed a captive, flightless chick—evidence of breeding birds. In

addition, locals living along the Cambodian border stressed that recent warfare had reduced crane numbers greatly, but that they were still abundant just across the border.

In Lao PDR, unlike Myanmar, cranes are both hunted and captured for the wildlife trade. Although the cranes are rare in southern Lao, their presence is important because it confirms that the population still breeds in two countries, and not in Cambodia alone. In addition, these birds are close to Thailand, which no longer has cranes. If proper steps are taken, cranes may return to Thailand on their own.

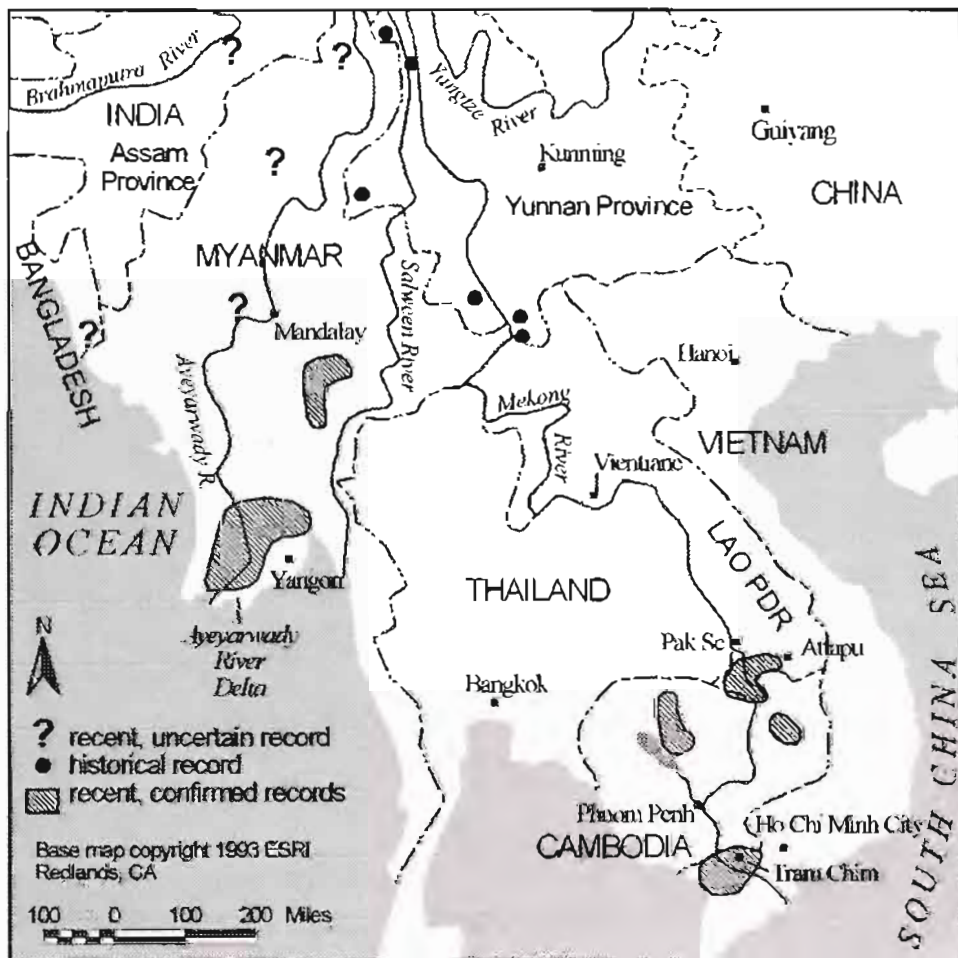
#### Seeking consensus

In recent years the status of Eastern Sarus Cranes has become clearer. Yet information alone is insufficient. While past work has been productive, the birds remain threatened.

With support from the Keidanren Nature Conservation Fund and in cooperation with the Thai Royal Forest Department, the Zoological Park Organization of Thailand, and the Conservation Breeding Specialists Group, people from all of the range countries of the Eastern Sarus Crane met for the first time ever in January. To share information and identify high priority actions, we undertook a Population Habitat Viability Analysis (PHVA), a process designed to translate information into effective, efficient, and coordinated action for conservation.

We reviewed and discussed our recent discoveries, and concluded that while the Lao/Cambodia/Vietnam population is threatened by hunting and the capturing of chicks, the Myanmar/China population is threatened most by habitat loss. We also compared goals of the different range countries. For example, at the beginning of the PHVA each country proposed to establish a captive breeding center that would produce birds for reintroductions and education. Through the PHVA, these captive management goals were placed in perspective with the needs of the wild birds. By the close of the PHVA, delegates had decided to suspend further work on reintroductions until zoos already holding cranes improve their management. As a next step, Rob Nelson (ICF's former Education Program Assistant) will travel to Thailand in May to initiate a training program.

Can we save these magnificent birds and the native ecosystems upon which they depend? Hope lies in the unanimity with which the people, such as those at the PHVA, answer: We must! ■



The current distribution of Eastern Sarus Cranes in Asia reflects twelve years of change and discovery. What will the next decade bring? Map by Erik Sandin, GIS Associate.

# Distribution and Conservation of Cranes in North Korea

by Professor Jong-Ryol Chong,  
Korean University, Tokyo, Japan

As in other nations, North Korea faces the challenge of protecting natural areas and wildlife including the habitat at important stopover sites and wintering grounds for migratory White-naped Cranes, Hooded Cranes and Red-crowned Cranes. These cranes breed in China and Russia and migrate through Korea.

It is our duty to pass on to the next generation these treasured national resources, especially the rare fauna and flora we enjoy today. Thus North Korea is undertaking a study of the conservation needs of important natural areas and hopes to increase the number and the size of nature reserves. Close collaboration with the Wild Bird Society of Japan has helped determine critical areas for cranes.

## Red-crowned Cranes' winter home

For many years, the wintering areas for Red-crowned Cranes were known to be in the Choelwon Basin of the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ), and along the tidal mud flats of the southwest coast.

In the Choelwon Basin the cranes often roost at night in the DMZ then fly into South Korea to feed. While along the west coast they roost and feed on tidal mud flats, and in nearby paddy fields in a huge area measuring about 25 km X 29 km.

The Choelwon Basin and tidal mud flats are vital to large concentrations of geese, swans, ducks and shorebirds.

Because of the importance placed on the Red-crowned Cranes, 3000 hectares of coastal habitat is considered as State Natural Monument Number 412. Today, the North Korean Government is examining the possibility of strengthening the protection of these critical wetlands to assure the future of Red-crowned Cranes and other wetland birds.

## Crane migration resting areas

Satellite data, gathered by attaching tiny radio transmitters to Hooded Cranes and White-naped Cranes on their win-



Important areas for cranes in North Korea.  
# Migration resting areas

Map by Rose Blada  
/// Wintering areas for Red-crowned Cranes

tering grounds in Japan, has shown the importance of the DMZ, and the estuaries along the Chongchon River (west coast) and Songjon Bay (east coast) as resting areas of migrating cranes.

The Han and Injim rivers join near Panmonjam creating an extensive estuary along the western part in the DMZ. This Han River estuary and the Choelwon Basin in the central highlands provide the most important resting areas for the White-naped Cranes. Many of the cranes tracked spent seven to 30 days along the DMZ, whereas they only spent a few days at other resting areas.

Approximately 3000 hectares of estuarine wetlands and adjoining agricultural fields at the mouth of the Chongchun river, were designated as Mundok Wetland Reserve. All three endangered species of cranes, Hooded, White-naped, and Red-crowned, as well as Eurasian Cranes stop here. Cranes can be observed over a 50 day period from late February through early April, and in fall from late September through mid November. The reserve is also important to three species of geese, as well as Ruddy and Common Shelducks and snipe.

Across the peninsula along the northeast coast, are 2000 hectares of wetlands near Sanjon Bay. Again based

on satellite data, Kumya Wetland Reserve was established, although the area had previously been designated as State National Monument No. 275. The extensive reed beds in the estuaries of two rivers that spill into Sonjan Bay provide habitat for White-naped and Red-crowned Cranes in both spring and autumn as well as for 70 species of other birds, especially ducks and coots.

The North Korean Government is considering specific management and protection plans for both Mundok and Kumya Wetland Reserves.

## Role of public participation

Outside of the DMZ, farmers and fishermen live beside and in the areas designated as nature reserves for cranes. The survival of these critical habitats for birds depends on these local people. Public education and sustainable use of wetland resources are vital.

The Government wishes to establish a national network of centers at each nature reserve where specialists will both study natural history and educate the local people about the importance of conservation. Then the heritage for the next generation of Koreans will not be diminished. Cranes will continue to announce the return of spring and autumn and the Red-crowned Cranes will grace our countryside throughout the winter. ■

# The Story of the Prodigal Crane

by George Archibald, Director

High in the Cloud Kingdom of Bhutan, several hundred Black-necked Cranes spend the winter in sparsely-populated valleys where wetlands and solitude blend to create sanctuary for these visitors from China. In mid-November of 1996, I had the privilege of visiting these cranes. Something quite remarkable happened.

Coming along a grassy hillside that led from a broad valley into a narrower valley, we noticed a lone juvenile crane feeding near a flock of seven adults. Every few moments the chick emitted a plaintive high-pitched call that the adults ignored. It seemed to have lost its parents which was unusual because a juvenile crane remains close to and is fed by its protective parents throughout its first winter.

Further up the narrow valley, a family of cranes including two adults and one juvenile were peacefully feeding. The seven birds in the flock, nervous by our presence, started walking up the valley towards the family. The lone chick remained behind. I expressed concern about its survival because it apparently had lost its parents.

The family had no intention of sharing their space. Some pairs of Black-necked Cranes rigorously defend large feeding territories in winter. The pair at the end of the valley were no exception. The family flew toward the approaching seven cranes and with exaggerated threat postures and loud calling, they influenced the intruders to leave.

The seven cranes flew down the valley towards us and just over the lost juvenile. To our surprise and delight, the juvenile joined the group of seven and flew with them to the other side of the big valley. Then they began climbing in spiral flight that carried them higher and higher in the sky.

Having displaced the seven intruders, the crane family relaxed. However, after the flock began its spiral flight, the male crane of the family, leaving his mate and juvenile, flew diagonally toward the spiraling flock in the distance. All the while, he and his mate called repeatedly to each other. He joined the flock, found the lost juvenile crane and returned with it to his family. The lone chick was a member of the territorial

family and had strayed away and then joined a flock of non breeding cranes.

My Bhutanese colleagues and I were deeply moved by the manner in which the crane family was restored. The female waiting with the one juvenile while the male brought back the prodigal, indicated levels of intelligence in solving a serious problem.

In February of 1998, I hope to return to Bhutan to attach radio transmitters to several cranes. Through radio signals received and transmitted by a satellite, we can learn more about the migration routes and the location of breeding areas in China for these beautiful Black-necked Cranes of the Cloud Kingdom. ■



Black-necked Cranes in early morning at their roost in Phobjikha Valley, Bhutan. ICF photo.



Wisconsin and Bhutanese fourth grade students created beautiful works of art. Amy Palmer, 10 and Jon Swan, 9 represent Westside with their depictions of Whooping Cranes (at left, top and bottom). The artists from Bhutan were not identified but represent their class with their drawings of Black-necked Cranes.



## Cranes Connect Children in Wisconsin and Bhutan

by Kate Fitzwilliams, Director of Public Relations

Debby Rosholt, Reedsburg Westside Elementary School fourth-grade teacher, knew participating in an art exchange with Bhutan's Phobjikha Primary School would open a new world to her students. When Marshal Case, ICF Deputy Director, spoke to her class about the differences between Headmaster Jambay Dorji's Bhutanese school and Westside, her students were very surprised. How could all of the

students walk to school so early in the morning from great distances, only to enter a school that had no electricity? Rosholt's class completed a unit on pioneers focusing on Laura Ingalls Wilder's *Little House on the Prairie*. They thought the unit was history and could not believe children their age still lived like pioneers.

After the students realized they could not introduce themselves to their

new friends via Email, they decided to put together a photo album that would give Bhutanese students a good idea of what life in Wisconsin was like. Both schools created art featuring cranes native to their country. Reedsburg students drew Sandhill Cranes and Whooping Cranes and Phobjikha students drew the Black-necked Crane. Both classes produced beautiful gifts from their hearts that will always be treasured. ■

# Contributions

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ICF's Official Airline

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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:** Kate Fitzwilliams  
Marshal Case

ICF offers memberships at the following annual rates:

<b>Student or Senior Citizen</b>	<b>\$20</b>		
<b>Individual</b>	<b>\$25</b>	<b>Foreign</b>	<b>\$30</b>
<b>Family</b>	<b>\$35</b>	<b>Sponsor</b>	<b>\$500</b>
<b>Associate</b>	<b>\$100</b>	<b>Patron</b>	<b>\$1,000</b>

## WHAT COMMITMENT!

*In 1996, volunteers donated about 28,000 hours of time at ICF. Their contributions included participating in the annual Sandhill Crane count, collecting prairie seeds, guiding tours, and rearing chicks.*

## A Bugle Salute

by Kate Fitzwilliams,  
Director of Public Relations

What do cranes eat? How many Whooping Cranes are there? Why are they dropping their wing? Are cranes the cousins to storks?

These are a few examples of questions ICF seasonal naturalists and volunteer tour leaders must field for seven months during ICF's open season when more than 35,000 people are expected to visit. The three naturalists will train volunteers and help lead ICF tours throughout the spring, summer and fall.

Joan Garland, 25, is ICF's veteran seasonal naturalist. She loved ICF so much in 1996 she came back this year. Garland grew up in Minneapolis, Minnesota. She graduated from the University of Wisconsin-Madison in 1993 with a Journalism and Environmental Studies degree. Garland feels it's very important that people leave ICF with not only a knowledge of cranes but with the whole picture of cranes and the community in which they must live to survive in the wild.

Korie Harder, 23, graduated from Northland College in Ashland, Wisconsin with a biology major and writing minor. She is a native of Bemidji, Minnesota and has a passion for ornithology. Harder hopes to touch a life this summer through her educational tours of ICF.

Heather Flanagan, also a Northland College alumnus, graduated in 1992 with a BS in Biology. For the last five years, she has been pursuing her passion for wildlife in Florida, California and New Mexico. As an ICF seasonal naturalist, Flanagan will be brought back home to her native state Wisconsin. Growing up in Adams-Friendship, she was familiar with ICF and its work. Flanagan looks forward to meeting new people and sharing her new knowledge about ICF and its cranes. ■

### Thank You

*ICF thanks Mrs. John Stedman who donated a 1988 Mazda four door Sedan and Nina Griswold (trustee) who donated a 1988 Ford Aerostar. These gracious donations have enabled ICF to accommodate visits by our many special guests and the daily needs of our staff. Thank you both for giving such important additions to ICF. ■*



From left, Heather Flanagan, Korie Harder and Joan Garland are this year's seasonal naturalists. Photo by Kate Fitzwilliams.

## Recognition Banquet

On the evening of September 5 at the Pfister Hotel in Milwaukee, ICF will hold a banquet in honor of the Johnsons and the Hammerstroms. For many years, Mr. and Mrs. S.C. Johnson of Racine, Wisconsin, have been major supporters of ICF and many other environmental organizations. The Sam and Gene Johnson Pod, where 12 species of cranes are on exhibit at ICF, is a testimony and a tribute to their commitment to the environment. Dr. Frances Hammerstrom is one of Wisconsin's great treasures. Having devoted a lifetime to the study of raptors and prairie chickens in central Wisconsin, and to communicating effectively with both scientists and laymen, Dr. Hammerstrom and her late husband, Dr. Fredrick Hammerstrom, continued a legacy started by their teacher, Aldo Leopold. If you wish to be added to the invitation list, please contact Rose Blada at ICF. ■

## Inside ICF

ICF welcomes Tom Voight, new full-time Site Management Assistant. For the summer, Stephanie Finch, Aviculture Associate, will be working with the volunteer chick parents and handreared chicks. Stephanie was a chick parent before joining us as an intern in the fall of '96. Lisa Murphy, Research Associate, will be assisting with the rearing of the Whooping Cranes for release. Lisa comes to us from Northern Prairie Science Center, Jamestown, ND. ■

## Mark Your Calendar

SUNDAY AND MONDAY, JUNE 15, 16 : Free Days for Sauk County and Wisconsin Dells residents. Site is open 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. with hourly tours 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

TUESDAY JULY 1: Jay Jocham, wildlife artist extraordinaire, will open his display of art in our gallery under the exhibit, "Into Their Eyes," which shows a closer look at animal life as seen through the eyes of Jocham. Jocham is an award-winning artist and former Art Director for the Zoological Society of Milwaukee at the Milwaukee County Zoo. He has helped fund programs to conserve wildlife and protect their habitats through the sale of original art and limited-edition prints. Come see through the eyes of Jocham and find out why Zeke the Zebra is so special (through September 30th).

SUNDAY, AUGUST 17: Family Day 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Children 11 and under admitted free.

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 13: Learn how to capture nature on film at our wildlife photography workshop. More details to come in our August BUGLE or, contact Gordon Dietzman at ICF for a preview of the workshop.

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 20: ICF's 23rd Annual meeting. Dinner program will be at the Ramada Inn-Raintree Resort in Wisconsin Dells. For room reservations please call 888-253-4386. August BUGLE will have details about special events and dinner registration forms. ■

# Whooping It Up!

by Marshal Case, Deputy Director

"Gee Whiz"—the cover bird for TEXAS, Houston Chronicle magazine of February 23, 1997—almost didn't survive in 1982. "Whiz's" mom, "Tex," was killed by raccoons three weeks after he hatched at ICF.

Now, fifteen years later he has helped produce, through artificial insemination, nine Whooping Crane offspring—all critical to the endangered species project to ensure the future for the birds.

Unlike other whoopers in captivity, "Whiz" greets school children and more than 35,000 other visitors to ICF during

the public season from May 1 through October. He and his mate, "Oobleck," have special quarters at the AMOCO Whooping Crane Exhibit. A wonderful wetland area enticed the couple to construct two nests in 1996; 1997 just might be the year for the first natural "Gee Whiz" II.

Houston Chronicle photographer, Paul S. Howell (shown here in costume with ICF intern, Helena Wilkinson, from South Africa) shot the cover photo of "Gee Whiz." All visitors have the opportunity to take their own photographs—up close and personal. ■



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