

Solving African Crane Mysteries

By Rich Beilfuss,
Africa Program Coordinator

The conservation of cranes in a continent as vast as Africa has long presented unique challenges. Understanding threats to cranes and to the ecological communities that serve as crane habitat, for example, often requires detailed information about the migratory movements of cranes between remote and inaccessible breeding, feeding, and wintering grounds. Often, these areas fall across national borders and demand international cooperation and concern.

Recently, more than 20 crane researchers from 12 different African nations

met at the Ninth Pan-African Ornithological Congress in Accra, Ghana to discuss crane conservation and research. Together, we unveiled a plan for solving some of the great crane mysteries of Africa.

In West Africa, the drastic decline of the Black Crowned Crane over the past three decades has puzzled scientists and conservationists. Once widespread across the region and particularly abundant in Nigeria, the cranes are now known to occur in only a few wetland areas and are nearly extirpated from Nigeria. The Nature Conservation Research Center in Ghana, with ICF assistance, is coordinating a massive aerial and ground survey effort to assess the population status of the remaining Black Crowned Cranes and identify areas where protection of their habitats is most critical. The survey will

involve colleagues from sixteen African countries from the Senegal River valley to Lake Chad, and create a new force of conservationists dedicated to the survival of cranes and their wetland and savanna homes.

At the other end of the continent, the status of Wattled Cranes, largest and rarest of the African cranes, has remained a mystery because of the birds' movement among the immense flood plains of southern Africa. Some of these flood plains have been so disturbed by large dams and water diversions that Wattled Cranes may no longer be successfully breeding. Researchers are now attempting to undertake simultaneous aerial surveys over the great wetland systems where Wattled Cranes occur: the Okavango Delta in Botswana; the Moyowosi Flats of western Tanzania; the Kafue Flats, Bangweulu swamps, and Busanga Flats in Zambia; and the Zambezi Delta in Mozambique. We will obtain the first-ever assessment of the overall population of the birds and the number of chicks being produced.

This effort will identify areas where Wattled Cranes are in decline, and provide recommendations for the management of dams and wetlands to ensure their survival. Ultimately, efforts to track the cranes along their elusive migratory paths may well require monitoring from outer space. A regional center for Wattled Cranes research has been proposed for Zimbabwe to study the migratory movement of the cranes between the wetlands using satellite transmitters, as has been effectively done for migratory cranes in Asia and North America. ■



Conservationists hope to understand the mysterious migratory movements of Wattled Cranes among African wetlands. Photo by Sture Traneving

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THE ICF BUGLE

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World Center for the Study and Preservation of Cranes

A Future for China's Cranes

by Jim Harris, Deputy Director

Eleven years ago, I camped beside a thousand Siberian Cranes at Poyang Lake. The tent perched on a bluff overlooking the vast muds of Dahuchi, one of nine lakes within Poyang Lake Nature Reserve. Through the night, the high pitched voices of Siberian Cranes mingled with deeper notes of White-naped Cranes, almost equal in number. I will never forget that ancient sound, an abundance of two endangered cranes to be heard no where else on earth. Behind us slept a village, Bienshan. Rural China felt timeless, changeless.

Since that night, even the remotest of China's villages has been transformed. Today a road leads from the mainland across edges of Dahuchi within the heart of the nature reserve. Electric lines have been constructed. Televisions reveal for everyone the even greater transformations that have made much of eastern China rich.

In the midst of 1.2 billion people, many fragments of wildlands, and their cranes, have survived. Over 30 reserves protect habitats critical for China's nine cranes, more species than any other country. Generally, these nature reserves occur in remote, marginal lands where local people eagerly await development. Conflicts over development are severe, despite the government's commitment to conservation.

For crane lovers, China is critical. The next decade may secure a remarkable array of wild resources, or lose them. Fortunately, cranes have a unique role in Chinese culture. Cranes grace the walls and shelves from the smallest farmhouse to the newest five-star hotel. Universally admired, cranes

can entice people into conservation action.

Beginning in 1979, the International Crane Foundation (ICF) was among the first conservation organizations to work in China. Yet the size of China dwarfs and humbles any organization. Our program focuses on a few model projects that address the threats to cranes, in the context of broader conservation issues.

Watershed and people at Cao Hai

Standing atop the headquarters of Cao Hai Nature Reserve (CNR), you can see and hear Black-necked and Eurasian Cranes. But the flocks—elegant in silhouette against the distant water—do not dominate the view. Most obvious are a hundred small fields, and the farmers at work on their land.

For the crane watcher, cranes are the

heart of this landscape, but for everyone else cranes are wisps of wildness in a battered landscape. Recent decades of population growth, deforestation, and erosion threaten the wetland and its inhabitants. Despite Cao Hai's protected status, impoverished farmers in the late 1980s began reclaiming the wetlands.

It became obvious that people must be at the center of effective conservation. Beginning in 1992, ICF has worked with CNR and local communities to create alternative types of land-use. ICF has partnered with the Trickle Up Program (TUP) of New York, an organization specializing in poverty alleviation, while Guizhou Province Environmental Protection Bureau has coordinated our efforts.

Through TUP, our project is distribut-



Most of the world's Red-crowned Cranes nest or winter in China. The future for this crane, and China's eight other species, depend on conservation action during the next decade. Otherwise, cranes and their wetlands will not survive this region's rapid development. Photo by Sture Traneving.

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ICF's Annual Meeting
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ing over 400 \$100 grants to small groups of villagers that support business activities compatible with conservation at Cao Hai. Villagers are finding that small businesses, such as buying from one market and selling goods elsewhere, can be more lucrative than farming marginal lands. A diversity of enterprises serve as models for other families—profit does not need to damage their resource base.

We are also setting up revolving loan funds to support small business once TUP grants are completed. The entire process emphasizes the farmers' participation in decisions about development and in resolution of resource conflicts.

As the people learn to trust and cooperate with nature reserve staff, they see good reason to protect Cao Hai's watershed, its waters, and other resources. The process is slow, but bridges the conflict between rural development and conservation.

Mud and water plants at Poyang Lake

The bluff at Bienshan Village near Poyang Lake is 20 feet tall yet the view can be breathtaking. On occasion, almost the entire world population of Siberian Cranes shines below. Other times, the waters are empty of birds, or dry mud stretches to the horizon.

Wetlands by nature are changeable, with the rise and fall of waters driving the cycles of plants and fishes. Poyang's wetlands used to be vast and the cranes responded to changing conditions by shifting from place to place. They had boundless choices. Only a small part of the lake (22,400 hectares) has been protected as Poyang Lake Nature Reserve (PLNR). The reserve has great

attraction for cranes, but at any one moment, most cranes may be outside PLNR.

PLNR lies within the vast Yangtze River Basin and reserve management cannot possibly influence human activity across the entire watershed. But current changes cannot be ignored. The immense Three Gorges Dam, upriver from PLNR, is the most well-known of many projects. The changing watershed will change the waters, food plants, and cranes of PLNR.

ICF is now working with PLNR, Jiangxi Nature Reserve Management Office, and the Ministry of Forestry to develop a study of the connections that link cranes and their food plants with water levels. Without this understanding, we cannot predict the impacts of changes occurring to Poyang Lake and its watershed, nor can reserve managers ensure that good habitat will remain for the future. In addition, our analysis can be applied to the lake as a whole. We can determine what other areas are crucial for cranes, and what areas may be most critical during drought or following other environmental changes.

In September ICF hopes to join PLNR staff and Chinese specialists to design the monitoring needed for our study. These data, collected year by year, will help guide PLNR's management. If successful, we hope to develop a waterbird conservation plan for the entire Poyang Basin.

Farms and wetlands in Sanjiang

In the vast Sanjiang Plain of northeast China, the Red-crowned and White-naped Cranes remain only in the largest wetlands. But in northern Japan, where Red-crowned Cranes are lovingly protected, birds frequent

many small wetlands and pasture lands. If similar harmony could return to Sanjiang Plain, cranes might greatly expand their presence.

Sanjiang Plain formerly held the largest wetlands in all China, but most have been converted to grain production by large-scale state farms. Without immediate action, the last wetlands, with their numerous wild-life, will be lost.

In China, as in other regions, most wetlands occur in farming or livestock areas. Thus the Ministry of Agriculture (MOA) and its many programs have tremendous influence on wetlands and the wildlife they support. ICF has been working with MOA since 1993. Aside from our Tibet project (see photo caption), discussions have mainly concerned Sanjiang Plain.

From 1995-97, ICF has collaborated with the Wild Bird Society of Japan, who has worked under contract with the Overseas Economic Cooperation Fund (OECF), Japan's major international aid agency. We provided conservation assessments for two large development loans, one assisting 40 state farms to improve farming practices within Sanjiang Plain and the other creating a dam upriver from the best Red-crowned Crane habitat.

We have recommended monitoring of wetlands so that on-going impacts can be determined and development modified. The operation of the dam, for example, will be adjusted to allow discharge of water that maintains down river wetland functions. In addition, we have outlined a mitigation program to safeguard valuable wetlands within the state farm areas. Chinese authorities have agreed to implement both programs, an important precedent for China for integrating biodiversity conservation with agriculture. Other wetlands in Sanjiang are being protected by Heilongjiang Forest Bureau.

ICF also works to expand action for cranes through diverse networks of scientists and conservationists. Efforts of the Ministry of Forestry and the China Crane Conservation Committee are highly important, as is the new Northeast Asia Crane Network that includes four Chinese sites. ICF is supporting a crane newsletter for the Crane Working Group under the China Ornithological Society, in an effort to promote research. Finally, our library exchanges materials with the Northeast Forestry University and we have hired Dr. Li Fengshan for our China programs (see pg. 7).

For millennia, Chinese culture has revered cranes, but tradition did not express the dependence of cranes on the dynamic landscape. Cranes cannot be saved atop pine trees or upon the snowy mountains

ICF's Crane Ambassador Camp—Every kid counts!

By Marshal Case, Deputy Director

Entering new territory is not new to ICF. Working with young people on a one-to-one basis, however, is a new experience for many staff this summer. When you match up 20 young Chicago inner city youth with veteran scientists, educators, site maintenance and other staff, new opportunities can produce quick results.

Getting sucked into the mud of a wetland can be as great an experience as helping with a vet check on a Siberian Crane, especially if you are from the inner city of Chicago. Educational and fun experiences can happen at the same time when the mix and match occurs in the mentoring portion of the crane ambassador camp.

Chicago Youth Centers and Camp Gray (10 minutes from ICF) are partners in the new program. The goal is to help awaken an interest in nature and spark some responsibility for cranes and crane habitat while assisting youth from economically disadvantaged neighborhoods to become responsible individuals able to live productively in society.

Thanks to the financial support of the Baraboo Rotary Club and the Gaylord and Dorothy Donnelley Foundation of Chicago, twenty Chicago youth, as well as ICF staff and volunteers, will be better prepared to meet new challenges with protection of cranes and crane habitat. And, since the crane ambassadors will be presenting slide shows back home about ICF and the summer camp experience, the extension from Baraboo to Chicago will result in ripple education to thousands of other urban youth and their families. ■

WP&L Drives ICF Programs

Our thanks to Wisconsin Power & Light Company (WP&L). WP&L has just donated a 1987 Chevrolet 3/4 ton van to ICF. We are already using the van for our Sandhill Crane studies and ecosystem restoration program. WP&L and ICF have often collaborated on ecosystems and restoration efforts, and we look forward to future cooperation. Thank you, WP&L.

Recent Graduates Help Assure a Future for Cranes

By Rich Beilfuss and Jeb Barzen, Field Ecology Department

One of the most effective and lasting ways to promote conservation is to empower motivated students through university graduate training. ICF strives to advise and assist students who engage with important crane-related conservation problems in their home countries. In doing so, students also gain the skills necessary to become future leaders in conservation. ICF-sponsored graduates of 1997 highlight how students can make a difference. Li Fengshen completed his Ph.D. at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, and is now working as an ICF research associate in China. Dr. Li is now working on wetland projects at Poyang Lake, Cao Hai Nature Reserve, and the Sanjiang Plain. Nguyen Huu Thien completed his M.S. degree in Conservation Biology and Sustainable Development at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. His thesis, Winning Support for Conservation from Local Communities, has prepared Thien to help managers and researchers secure a future for wetlands in densely-populated Vietnam. Bjorn Larsen's M.S. work at the University of Minnesota has taught us how water management at the Tram Chim Reserve influences the distribution and abundance of many wetland bird species. These graduate studies were made possible through support from the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, Liz Claiborne and Art Ortenberg Foundation, and private donations. If you wish to support this program, frequent flyer miles or monetary gifts are urgently needed for our current international students. Contact Jeb Barzen at ICF. ■

ICF's Annual Meeting

Saturday, September 20, 1997

ICF members and their guests are invited to attend the annual meeting and dinner. Reservations are required, so please use the form provided below. Be sure to respond by September 15, since space is limited.

SCHEDULE

Regular tours: 10:00 a.m., 1:00 & 3:00 p.m.

Special Events for members & guests:

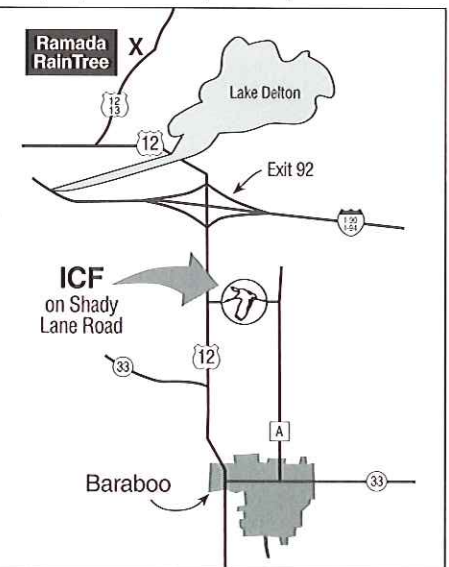
1:00-4:30 p.m.: "Into Their Eyes," paintings by Jay Jocham. Lower level of Ron Sauey Memorial Library for Bird Conservation.

1:30 p.m.: Crane City Tour—a rare opportunity to see ICF's breeding facility. Or, Restoration Tour—see ICF's prairie, oak, savanna, and wetland restorations.

5:30 p.m.: Hospitality Hour (cash bar) at Ramada Rain Tree.

6:30 p.m.: Annual Meeting Program at Ramada Rain Tree starts with dinner followed by a slide presentation by George Archibald, focusing on highlights of 1997.

For hotel reservations at the Ramada Rain Tree call 1-888-253-4386.



Please clip or copy, and mail to : ICF, P.O. Box 447, Baraboo, WI 53913-0447. Reservation deadline: September 15.

Please make dinner/program reservations for ____ people.
My check for \$18.00 each is enclosed.
 This will be my first time attending an ICF annual meeting.
 I cannot attend the meeting, but please send me a copy of the annual report.

Name: _____
Address: _____



Changing water levels at Poyang Lake are critical to the growth of aquatic plants on which Siberian and White-naped Cranes feed. Research on these dynamics is urgently needed, so that conservation authorities can respond to the many human impacts on Poyang Lake's waters. Photo by Jim Harris.

Contributions

Received May through August, 1997



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ICF's Official Airline

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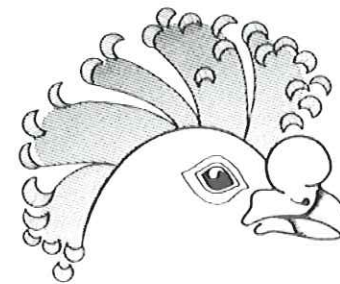
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where tradition placed them. As ICF addresses the needs of living cranes, our projects demonstrate solutions to some of the greatest problems facing China's biodiversity.

Support for ICF's China programs has come from Liz Claiborne and Art Ortenberg Foundation, John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, the Brehm Fund, the National Wildlife Federation, the U.S. Department of State, World Wide Fund for Nature—US and WWF—Germany, and ICF member donations. ■

Cracids & Cranes Unite

by Claire Mirande,
Director, Conservation Services



Who would have thought that a shy forest bird living in one of the few regions devoid of cranes would inspire strong cooperation for their brethren cranes...

An unexpected fire struck the crane breeding pens of the Oka Rare Crane Bird Breeding Center in Russia. Staff worked valiantly to control the fire and move the birds to temporary havens. Few birds were lost, but the costs of rebuilding were daunting in the changing Russian economy. ICF worried about how to help our colleagues. Building materials and labor were available, but not funds. With tentative hopes I made a call to Geer Scheres, an aviculturist/conservationist I had recently met who had expressed an interest in cranes. And so began our partnership.

Another challenge Oka faced was to obtain the specialized diet required by rapidly growing crane chicks. Staff concocted a diet of cheese curd, grain, and vitamin powder each day. ICF sent a few bags of our starter diet, but crane chicks eat a lot and the amount needed was more than we could send. Oka was having great success producing and hatching the highly endangered Siberian Crane and without the proper nutrition, these endangered chicks were in trouble. Once again Geer stepped forward—he would donate a ton of food each year.



In late October, Tibetan farmers thresh their yellow barley into the air to separate the chaff. Each winter, almost 4,000 of the world population of less than 6,000 Black-necked Cranes gather in the valleys of south-central Tibet where they depend primarily on waste grain. Here is the best example in China of a rare and spectacular wildlife species living among people. ICF is working with the Tibetan Agriculture and Forestry Bureaus to evolve strategies protecting cranes in farm areas. As Tibetan agriculture changes, we hope to maintain the mix of activities necessary so that cranes can find waste grain through the winter. The Cracid Breeding and Conservation Center is now joining ICF efforts on behalf of Black-necked and other cranes of China. Photo by Jim Harris.

At dawn, in the pleasant town of Lanaken, Belgium, the soft coos and clicks of the turkey-like cracids now mingle with the trumpets of cranes. The Cracid Breeding and Conservation Center (CBCC) was formed through the combined efforts of three creative men—Geer Scheres, a former special education teacher; Ernest Mourmans, a furniture designer; and Harry Geurts, a radio DJ. These men all share a devotion to cracids—shy forest birds of South and Central America.

As the cracid conservation goals took shape, Geer and his colleagues thought of ways to expand their mission. In 1992, Geer and aviculturist Frank Lehman attended a crane conservation planning workshop in Canada. A cracid workshop followed and the magic of cranes began its work on these men. Geer and Frank have established El Retiro, a bird conservation park in southern Spain, which also strives to help the cranes.

Our initial work with CBCC focused on insuring consistent scientific management of the captive flocks. CBCC helped to sponsor a series of workshops. They brought Vladimir Panchenko, the international studbook keeper (crane pedigree) from Oka, Rob Belterman from the Rotterdam Zoo, and me to Europe to develop strategies for captive Siberian Cranes.

A detailed plan evolved and it paid off. We now have 95 Siberian Cranes in 17

breeding centers worldwide. CBCC has built state-of-the-art breeding pens and acquired valuable cranes. Imagine our delight when an older, arthritic female, moved from the cold Oka winters to the warmer climate at CBCC, laid her first egg while in quarantine!

CBCC also sponsored Rob and me to travel to meet with the Chinese Association of Zoological Gardens to improve management of captive Red-crowned Cranes. Our efforts have promoted scientific management and close cooperation involving many institutions. Cranes have become a model in China for starting zoo conservation programs.

Together CBCC and ICF have made great strides in captive breeding, but it is all too clear that the future of cranes and cracids lies in our ability to insure their survival in the wild. Today, CBCC and ICF are focusing our efforts on critical field projects for the Asian cranes.

Geer and Ernest began a novel effort to educate private aviculturists and enlist their support for field conservation. As a first step, Ernest is providing \$5,000 per year for Black-necked Crane conservation. Similar commitments are expected to provide core funding for ICF-CBCC efforts in China for the next several years. ■

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:

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



Eyes on ICF

by Marshal Case, Deputy Director

The past ten months at ICF have been fertile ground for select film crews from around the world including representation from Japan, Germany, Great Britain, Russia and former Soviet Republics, and, of course, the United States.

Japan has been represented by several film crews with Mr. Hata of "Mutsugoro & Pals" being the most widely known personality. FUJI television network produces this show viewed by millions of Japanese and Mr. Hata is admired far and wide as a jockey, businessman and television personality. He and his crew spent several days in Baraboo and incorporated the cranes and story of ICF with a travel series televised early in 1997.

Russia has always had pride in producing the biggest and best. As ICF friend Nikolai Drozdov—university professor, chief scientist and presenter of the Russian Public Television show, "World of Animals,"—recently told me—"Russia also has the biggest dwarfs and biggest microchips." Nikolai has probably produced the biggest and most positive results for the former Soviet Union, and now Russia, during the past 28 years. Two hundred million viewers watch the wildlife program he presents every Saturday, prime time. Joined by the director of the film series and the chief videographer, Nikolai spent ten days on the road with me as they filmed enough material for 13 programs in a new serial. ICF is featured in two of the programs, one has already been produced and broadcast in Russia and CIS. The serial highlights Russians and Americans working together to protect nature.

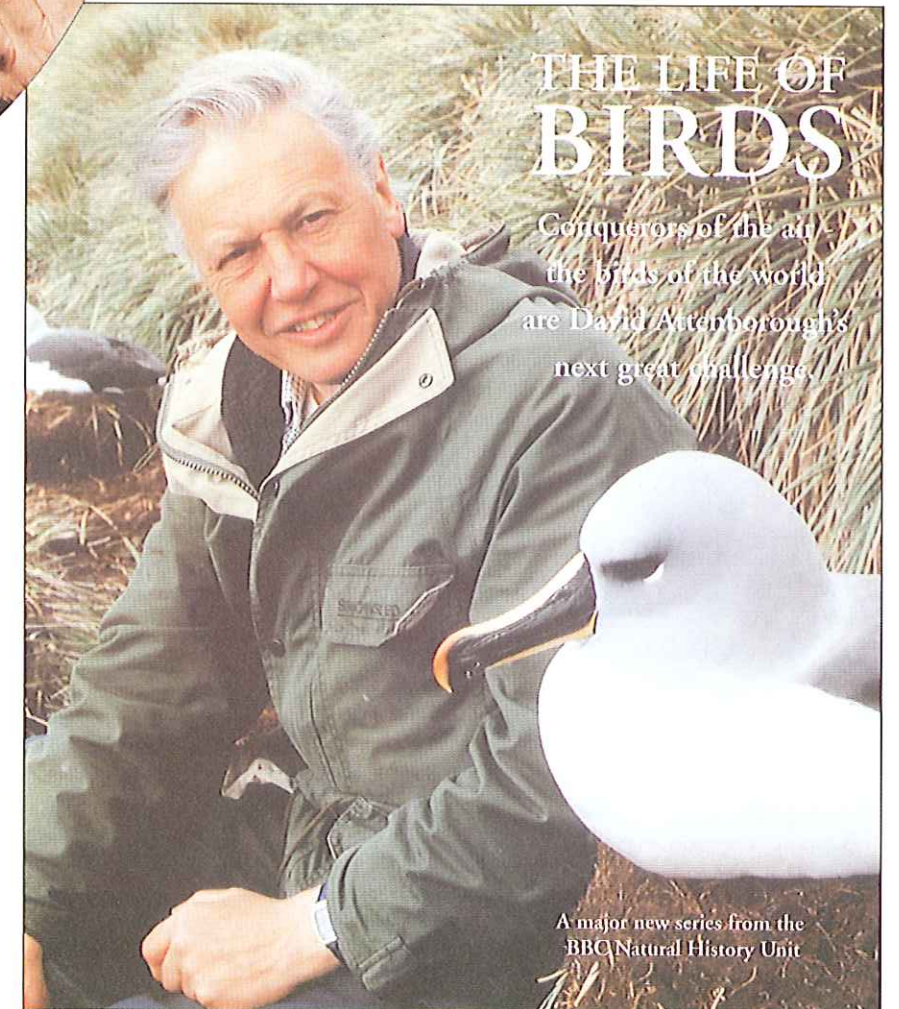
A routine vet check at Crane City with Marianne Wellington, chick rearing supervisor, and Julie Langenberg, veterinarian, turned into an interesting segment for Mr. Hata's serial on ICF. Mr. Hata looks on, lower right.



The famous smile of Dr. Drozdov, who is beloved by Russians and citizens of other Commonwealth of Independent States. Here, he holds the world's first test tube baby gorilla at Omaha's Henry Doorly Zoo.

Sir David Attenborough, of BBC fame, truly has a worldwide audience. Sir David and his crew of four spent the better part of a week at ICF in June. The mission was to produce a program about ICF as part of a new series from the BBC Natural History Unit—"The Life of Birds." Cranes will be the focus of one of 10 programs in which the secrets of birds' great success will come to light. One of the biggest challenges at ICF was the strict control in working around endangered birds. Sir David's crew was not exempt from being in crane costume and putting the birds first in concern. Through great cooperation among ICF staff and the BBC crew, one more special film will be produced and eventually viewed by more millions of people!

Eyes on ICF indeed! A noble cause nurtures a noble following and, as a result, hundreds of millions of people around the world will get the message about cranes and crane habitat protection in 1997. ■



Sir David Attenborough, world famous naturalist and film personality, will be presenting a major new ten part series on birds. One segment features cranes.

A major new series from the BBC Natural History Unit