

THE ICF

# BUGLE

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World Center for the Study and Preservation of Cranes

## Wattled Cranes in the Heart of Africa

by Rich Beilfuss  
Africa Program Director



Large flocks of Wattled Cranes grace the Kafue Flats in central Zambia

### *Experience Zambia – the heart of Africa.*

I gazed at the colorful billboard at the end of the runway as our Cessna aircraft slowed to a stop. We had just finished an intensive period of surveys in the wetlands of Zambia, and my mind whirled with images of these astonishing landscapes. Barotse Plain. Kafue Flats. Lukanga Swamp. Liuwa Plain. Bangweulu Swamp. They read like a registry of wetlands of international importance, and leave little doubt that for the endangered Wattled Cranes, people, and wildlife that depend on wetlands for their livelihoods, Zambia is the heart of Africa.

Of the 7,000 or so Wattled Cranes that remain in the wild, Zambia's wetlands are home to more than half. Last year, ICF launched the Zambia Crane and Wetland Conservation Program to better understand why this landlocked country is such a stronghold for cranes, and how we can best insure a future for its wetlands. Zambian biologist Ben Kamweneshe, who has engaged in wetland research and management with his wife Dora for more than 15 years, is our full-time program manager. Staff from the Zambia Wildlife Authority and students from the University of Zambia round out our Zambia team.



Photos by Rich Beilfuss



The great floodplains of the Zambezi River and its tributaries in western Zambia. We conducted more than 40 hours of aerial surveys to better understand the wetlands and Wattled Cranes of Zambia (inset).

Nearly twenty-five years have passed since ICF researcher Paul Konrad last investigated the Wattled Cranes of Zambia, and we had a lot of catching up to do. Our Zambia team was

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bolstered by fellow “craniacs” Carlos Bento from Mozambique, Friday Maozeka from Zimbabwe, Lindy Rodwell and Kerry Morrison from the South Africa Crane Working Group, and ecologist Katie Beilfuss. With generous support from the Disney Wildlife Conservation Fund, we combed the country for Wattled Cranes and assessed their specific needs and threats.

Dave Gunns, who volunteered his plane from South Africa, piloted us through the first-ever systematic surveys of the Barotse and Liuwa Plains of western Zambia. The Barotse Plain, which straddles the mighty Zambezi River, is a hub of human activity—densely settled with farmers, fishers, and others who harvest its abundant resources. Wildlife species are few, with little evidence of the Wattled Cranes or Grey Crowned Cranes that were once common on these plains. The adjacent Liuwa Plain, however, is a relatively undisturbed haven for wildlife. Nearly 700 Wattled Cranes are scattered in pairs and small flocks in the shallow wetland pans of Liuwa National Park, together with the 80,000 Blue Wildebeest that graze the floodplain on their seasonal migration from Angola. Grey Crowned Cranes and Saddlebill Storks are common here also, perhaps their largest concentration in Zambia.

We also surveyed the Lukanga Swamp of central Zambia, which had not been surveyed in decades. Lukanga is a vast drainage basin, dense with papyrus and reeds. Hunting activity is intense in this area, and few wildlife species remain. On the Lukanga River inlet to the swamp, however, we discovered a narrow band of floodplain packed with a wealth of species, including 25 pairs of Wattled Cranes.



Wetlands provide a wealth of resources for local people throughout Zambia, including reeds for constructing homes.

The Bangweulu Swamp is the largest wetland in Zambia, a remote and sparsely settled basin in northern Zambia that forms part of the headwaters of the great Congo River. Ben spent years living here as a community-based resource manager, and led us to the heart of the swamps by boat. Bangweulu teems with millions of birds and the endemic black lechwe antelope. The Wattled Cranes seemed decidedly unconcerned about the scores of migrant fisherman bustling around them. Our close proximity to the cranes here—unlike any-



## Zambia



Map by Dorn Moore

Over the past few decades, the Kafue Flats have suffered from the construction of two large dams, one upstream and one downstream, from heavy poaching, and from the general economic decline of Zambia. Urgent steps are needed to develop management programs that can conserve Wattled Cranes and other wildlife species, while still meeting the needs of those who depend on wetland resources for their livelihood.

This year we are launching a comprehensive program of field research to assess the breeding and feeding biology of Wattled Cranes in relation to hydrological and ecological conditions on the Flats. We are simulating the operation of the dams to assess the potential for improved water management by better mimicking natural flood patterns. Using maps, airphotos, and satellite imagery, we will examine long-term changes in the vegetation and how food resources have changed with development. Our outreach programs will raise awareness about the need to protect Wattled Cranes and other species among local communities.

Ultimately, this effort is modeled on our long-term work in Mozambique, where ICF has taken a leadership role in the rehabilitation of the Zambezi Delta for the benefit of people and wildlife. To this end, we have formed strong partnerships with the Zambia Wildlife Authority, the WWF- Partners for Wetlands Project, the South Africa Crane Working Group, and others equally concerned with the fate of the Flats. We hope that the Wattled Crane, with its close links to water, wetlands, and human welfare, can serve as a flagship species for conservation in the heart of Africa.



Ben Kamweneshe starts a new day at our office in the capital, Lusaka.

where else in Africa—reminded me of the way Sarus Cranes in India and Black-necked Cranes in Bhutan live harmoniously with farmers.

If there is one wetland that embodies the heart of Africa, however, it is the Kafue Flats. Perhaps it is how this lush, green floodplain contrasts so brilliantly with the dry surrounding savanna, or how the wetland pulses with activity as local people ingeniously struggle for their daily sustenance, or how the Spurwing Geese and other waterbirds flush in the tens of thousands as we pass overhead. We counted nearly 1000 Wattled Cranes here—including a single flock of 460 birds—all in close association with endemic Kafue lechwe antelopes that number more than 40,000. It is a magical place, and a place worth fighting to save.

# Friendship

By Jim Harris, President

Cranes, birds of goodwill, bring friendship. It seemed so, in the early years when we visited villages by the great crane wetlands in China. I remember particularly the fishing village beside Dahu Chi, the remarkable wetland within Poyang Lake Nature Reserve that often held over a thousand White-necked Cranes during those winters, and sometimes even more of the great white cranes, the Siberians. In a sense, the cranes were there because of the people. Fishermen drained the lake waters through a sluice gate, catching all the fish, and the birds foraged in the exposed mudflats and shallows.

I had brought a team of ICF members to meet the villagers. We set up a battery-operated slide projector and showed dim pictures of cranes and Americans on the wall of the largest room in the village. We talked of the beauty of the cranes, valued by all the world, and of friendship through the cranes. Afterwards, we all stood outside the front doors of their homes while the fisher people took turns peering through our spotting scopes at the cranes on the edge of the lake. We Americans will never forget the intense looks and the smiles on their faces, from the chubbiest three year olds, all dressed in red and white, to their gray grandfathers. We left feeling that our goodwill had helped the cranes.

We all went home to America, except for one volunteer who stayed to continue bird surveys. Less than two weeks later, he discovered illegal bird nets right in front of the same doorsteps where we had set up our scopes and tripods. The nets, erected exactly where the cranes had been, were mainly intended to catch ducks and geese (not cranes), but nevertheless were illegal, and in defiance of the nature reserve.

Not long after, I was asked to give a lecture at the University of Wisconsin, about how conservationists persuade people in distant places to do what we want. Not a successful topic for me. The lesson I gradually learned was that a one-day, or even one-month visit of friendship, by someone who might as well have come from the moon as from Wisconsin, and with an agenda just as foreign, cannot touch the lives of people struggling to live on

the land, cannot change basic attitudes of people toward their own resources.

Successful conservation is more like true friendship between people. Friendship takes time. One must be willing to come out of oneself – not only lay aside one's own needs, but listen to and embrace the needs of one's friend. The best friendships bond people who have found common ground, common good, people who know that helping one another leads to more than either can have alone. Ultimately, it isn't "helping" in a deliberate, artificial sense. The caring – the shared fate of

conservation become effective. Our work begins to address the human needs.

Now, when I get to know a crane place and its conservation challenges, I am looking for the alignments, the possibilities for alliance. Sometimes the time is not right, or I am not right for that situation. Patience may be best, waiting for another visit, or for a better time. At Zhalong, another of China's great crane reserves, the government recently made a remarkable commitment to providing more water to the wetland, that has long suffered as its waters were diverted to other uses. With

more water, the local people have the chance to reverse the long decline in their harvests of reeds and fish. By working with the people at this special time, we can help enhance these harvests while ensuring that human activities do not disrupt nesting cranes and other birds. The water makes it possible to benefit both people and birds.

Looking back on my China travels, I feel that eventually our cranes did indeed become birds of friendship. We all need true friends in a difficult (and dangerous) world. Through the cranes, through ICF, we can gain better understanding – and better friendships. Since the work of friendship and change happens best one-on-one, we are grateful to all our members who spread the spirit of caring and action, together the greatest strengths of any organization.

Friendship matters, whether close to home or around the world.


**Editor's note:** On March 6, 2002 in Beijing, Jim Harris received the Friendship Award from the State Administration of Foreign Experts Affairs, People's Republic of China. The award recognizes foreign experts for their contributions and dedication to the training of Chinese personnel, as well as promoting cooperation and friendship between the two countries. 



Photo by Jim Harris

Young and old, they gathered around my spotting scope for a first close-up look, ever, of the cranes that wintered by their home.

friendship – takes over.

These days, cranes by necessity almost always share their wetlands with people, often with many people. As outsiders we can only be effective if we build real alliances with the local communities. When we align our interests with those of these communities – and this is usually possible, since our work is to safeguard natural resources for the long term, and people also need to sustain their resources for the long-term – strategies for

## Summer Lecture Series

Tired of watching re-runs on cable? You are cordially invited to ICF for a pleasant evening of food for thought and food for the stomach! One evening each month we will present an informal talk on a highly interesting topic. The mood will be relaxed and informal. Enjoy wine & cheese al fresco, engage in conversation, listen to interesting speakers, stretch your legs and take a walk on the prairie... now, doesn't that beat watching television? Please join us and bring a friend.

**Cost:** \$4.00 for members, \$6.00 for non-members (or become a member and enjoy the lecture as our welcome gift!) Please let us know that you're coming - call Susan Finn at 608-356-9462 ext. 118, but pre-registration is not required.

### Thursday, June 20, 2002

6:00 pm social hour, 7:00 pm presentation at Cudahy Theatre

Join Alice Lindsay Price, author of *Cranes the Noblest Flyers: in Natural History & Cultural Lore*, for a slide presentation on the cranes' influence in art.

### Thursday, July 18, 2002

6:00 pm social hour, 7:00 pm presentation at the Whooping Crane Exhibit

On *Top of the World with Cranes* with Dr. George Archibald. The Black-necked Cranes, the last of the 15 species to be described for science, until recently remained little-known across its scattered range on the vast Tibetan Plateau. Since 1990, ICF researchers have studied and helped these mysterious cranes in Bhutan and China. George Archibald will highlight ICF's work with the Black-necked Cranes and the colorful people who share a remarkable landscape with them. He will also outline plans for Tibet's first Black-necked Crane Festival, an event that ICF members are invited to attend in Tibet in March of 2003.

### Thursday, August 8, 2002

6:00 pm social hour, 7:00 pm presentation at the Whooping Crane Exhibit

Join Dr. Rich Beilfuss as he talks about ICF's prairie restoration efforts. Walk with Rich as he points out remnant and restored prairies at ICF. Listen to Nina Leopold Bradley as she reads passages from Aldo Leopold's *A Sand County Almanac*. A charming evening - not to be missed!

# NEW REASONS TO VISIT

As if the cranes aren't enough reason to visit ICF — our naturalists have been working on our site. The new guide features full color photos of all the plants you might see along

## Prairie: ICF

by Alyssa Rod, ICF Naturalist • Br

Have you ever been curious about a certain flower on the prairie only to go home wondering what it could be? Or maybe you have taken pictures of every blooming plant only to get home and not know if they are black-eyed susans, compass plants, or a type of milkweed. When you visit the restored prairie at ICF you won't have this problem, because we've prepared a new guide to the common wildflowers and grasses.

Since last summer, I have been collecting bits and pieces, working to make the best guide for members and guests to identify the more common species of flowers and grasses in the prairies on our site. You may ask, why do we want a booklet about plants — after all, don't most people go to ICF to visit the



# SIT ICF THIS SUMMER

ing overtime on a much anticipated illustrated plant guide designed especially for  
our scenic walking trails.

## ICF Debuts New Plant Guide for Visitors

### ICF's Frontier

ature Design by Jay Jocham, Loose Animals

cranes? Well, to understand cranes it's helpful to understand where they live. Along with wetlands, grasslands are also a major habitat for cranes.

While visiting ICF a guest asks, "What is that small blue flower along the trail?" It could be anything from a bird's-foot violet to blue-eyed grass or maybe even a bottle gentian. Ten minutes later we have an answer...it's harebell! As naturalists, we want to be sure that you are able to identify or learn more about the attributes of plants when you visit us. We look forward to your visit this summer, and don't forget to stop by and pick up your own copy of the prairie plant guide.

### Wisconsin Prairie Flower Guide



*Prairie Smoke*

### Wildflowers in Remnant and Restored Prairie at the International Crane Foundation



**AUGUST**  
Yellow Cornflower

## In Celebration of A Thousand Cranes

A new exhibition, A Thousand Cranes, showcasing photographs by Taipei naturalist Wu Shao-Tung, opens at the International Crane Foundation on July 1, 2002. The collection of fifty astonishing photographs will be on display through Oct. 31, 2002. Mr. Wu donated the collection to ICF after its exhibition at the California Academy of Sciences last year.



Wu Shao-Tung is a retired photojournalist who has spent the past eight years traveling the world to photograph and observe cranes. His photographs convey a deep respect and appreciation of these graceful birds. By raising awareness of the cranes through his photographs, Mr. Wu hopes to stimulate efforts to conserve their habitats.



# Contributions

January 2002 - March 2002

## GRANTS AND AWARDS

Abraham Foundation,  
Alma Doten Trust,  
Arthur W. Strelow Charitable Trust,  
Aylward Family Foundation,  
Chapman Foundation,  
Christopher Reynolds Foundation,  
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Christopher Wilson.



**Lufthansa**

## WISH LIST

Help! The computers in our Education Dept. are terribly outdated—they are so old we are told they are beyond upgrading. If you have a slightly used or new laptop to donate – please contact Korie Klink at 608-356-9462 ext. 127.

Computers are used on a daily basis for crane count data, off-site presentations at schools, curriculum development, and for our group tour database, just to name a few. The specifications we're looking for are listed below:

**Desktop:** 500 MHz (or better) processor, 10 GB Hard Drive, 128 MB Ram, CD Rom Drive

**Laptop:** 128 MB Ram, 20 GB Hard Drive, DVD Rom, Pentium 3 or equivalent, Modem.

Thank you to David Leclair of Madison for the gift of a TV-VCR for the Education Department.

## George Archibald to Lecture at Chautauqua Institution

Freda Pyles, Lecture Coordinator

Who wouldn't want to be at Chautauqua Institution, Chautauqua, New York, during the week of August 11-17, 2002? George Archibald will share with thousands of Chautauquans his love of cranes and his concern about their preservation and protection during a theme week of "Nature: All Creatures Great and Small." He will round out the week of lectures including: Roger S. Payne, president of The Ocean Alliance & Whales Conservation Institute; Dr. Merlin Tuttle, president and founder of Bat Conservation International; Dr. John Hadidian, director of the Urban Wildlife Program for The Humane Society of the United States; and Professor Peter Singer, founding president of the International Association of Bioethics.

For more information go to [www.ciweb.org](http://www.ciweb.org)

### Mark Your Calendar!

Sat. Sept. 21, 2002

### ICF Annual Meeting

Kalahari Resort Lake Delton, WI

Check our website for program details.

## Whoopers return to Wisconsin

The flock of whooping cranes raised at the Necedah Wildlife Refuge last year, and led south to Florida by ultralight airplane, are back in Wisconsin! The "Florida Five" initiated spring migration on their own on April 9th. They returned to Wisconsin after 10 days on migration. By April 19th four of the five cranes returned to the Necedah National Wildlife Refuge, where they fledged last summer. For more information, visit ICF's website at [www.savingcranes.org](http://www.savingcranes.org).

*The ICF Bugle is the quarterly newsletter for members of the International Crane Foundation. ICF was founded in 1973 by Ronald Saucy, Ph.D (1948 - 1987) and George Archibald, Ph.D. Bugle comments or questions? Please write or call Betsy at [betsy@savingcranes.org](mailto:betsy@savingcranes.org) or P.O. Box 447, Baraboo, WI, 53913 1-608-356-9462, ext. 147.*

Editor: Betsy Didrickson

Memberships are vital to ICF. Please join or give a membership to a friend at the following annual rates:

Student or Senior Citizen .. \$20	Family .....	\$35	Sponsor .....	\$500
Individual .....	\$25	Associate .....	\$100	Patron .....
Foreign .....	\$30	Sustaining .....	\$250	Benefactor ..
				\$2,000

# Wasta Dam: A New Link to Saving Migrating Cranes in Pakistan

By Ahmad Khan

Ahmad Khan has worked for WWF-Pakistan on crane issues. He is now enrolled in graduate studies at the Institute of Environmental Studies at the University of Wisconsin - Madison with support from ICF.

The decline of the central population of Siberian Crane, now reduced to a single known pair, opened doors for me to visit Lake Ab-i-Estada in eastern Afghanistan in 1999 and 2000, becoming one of the few people to visit this wetland haven after two decades of war. The lake is famous for a breeding colony of up to 10,000 Greater Flamingos and as a retreat and staging area for cranes. Relying on information from local elders, I guessed that there should be another wetland near the border in Afghanistan or across it in Pakistan. During abnormal situations like high or low water levels at Ab-i-Estada or severe drought conditions, it would serve as an alternate migration resting area.

With that in mind, I began searching for information on my imaginary wetland and I learned, based on a few hearsay reports, that Qamar Din Karez is an important wetland for cranes that migrate through the Zhob River Valley. My colleague Baz Mir Khan of WWF-Zhob confirmed the presence of a lake near Qamar Din, where large numbers of Demoiselle Cranes stop during migration.

On a stormy night in March 2001, I reached the mysterious

wetland along with Baz Mir, Rehmat Ullah and Mir Qabaz of Pakistan's Northwest Frontier Province (NWFP) Wildlife Department. The rain showers were the first to quench the thirsty soil after a severe four-year drought in the region. The dam site itself was 35 km south of Qamar Din Karez village, where we were told that Hafiz Anwar Ul Haq could be found at the lake. As soon as we reached the lakeshore, we settled down in his hut. Hafiz Anwar Ul Haq spends a month each spring and fall at the lake, writing poetry and training his three nephews and a grandson. The discipline of the young men under his mentoring was inspiring.

Each spring, flocks of cranes fly over during early morning, with only a few landing in the lake area. Mostly they pass on to hasten their journey north. These flocks are comparatively large and some form a long line in the sky during the day. Flocks that arrive in the evening are usually small and appear stressed, judging by their short and high-pitched calls. My theory is that the cranes are sharing flocking calls to regroup after being forced to divide into small flocks by hunters in Zhob and Loralai to the south.

The hunters who practice their tradition of live-capturing cranes in Kurram and Lakki District find it easy to reach Zhob, Loralai and other parts of Baluchistan Province by automobile. They bring with them thousands of captive decoy cranes and camping gear. Their traditional method of capture involves tossing a soya (lead weight on rope) into the air and entangling migrating birds that fly low in response to the calls of decoy captive cranes. This trapping is not legal in Baluchistan, as all crane species are declared protected by the Baluchistan Wildlife Act. Yet the Forest Department, responsible for implementation of the Wildlife Act, is helpless to enforce the law because the hunters have the support of local politicians.

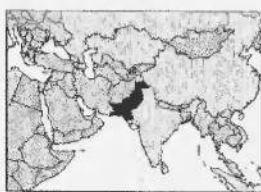
Evidence suggests that a dam was constructed almost 400 years ago that formed the 40 sq. km. lake now known as Wasta Dam (Wasta Zawar). During a good rainy



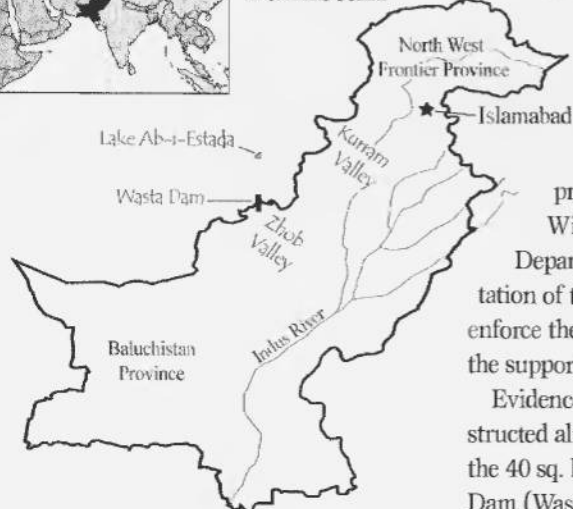
Photo by Ahmad Khan  
Hafiz Anwar Ul Haq mentors his nephews and grandson in the ethics of respectful and sustainable hunting of cranes and the value of protecting and nurturing wetlands.

year, the water can reach 3 to 4 feet deep, with huge areas covered by marshes suitable for cranes. Although no previous research is available, one can guess that cranes would be attracted to the vast marshland around the lake. Some 30,000 to 40,000 Demoiselle Cranes pass through this area and the majority may stop to rest and feed during fall and spring seasons. The lake and its surrounding areas are well protected by Hafiz Anwar Ul Haq, a member of the Mardanzai tribe that owns the lake. Though a hunter himself, Hafiz has his own rules and ethics for hunting. Hafiz is against live trapping of cranes and favors occasional sport shooting of a bird for securing meat - a requirement in this arid and extremely remote area. According to estimates by Hafiz and others, no more than fifty cranes are shot in the entire area within a single season - only 1.25% of the 4,000 or so cranes that are captured or shot in Zhob, Loralai and other parts of Baluchistan Province.

Wasta Dam offers a valuable opportunity for scientists, particularly from Baluchistan University, to conduct avifauna research. The site has the potential to involve local communities in crane and protected areas management, and to design a sustainable protection strategy. Valuable lessons may be learned from local traditions and values in relation to conservation and development with a specific focus on cranes. The Wasta Dam area should be studied and protected as an important migration area to complement Lake Ab-i-Estada in Afghanistan in times of drought.



## Pakistan



# South Slope of the Himalayas



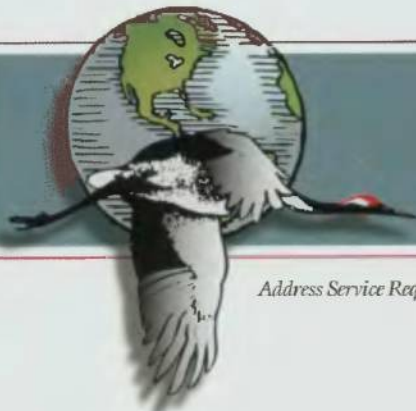
This fall, ICF members have a final opportunity to experience an intact traditional culture and the pristine nature of the Kingdom of Bhutan with ICF co-founder Dr. George Archibald. Two trips are planned to the Cloud Kingdom (Oct. 24 - Nov. 10 & Nov. 7 - Nov. 24). They will be George's last tours to Bhutan as his focus shifts to Tibet and Zambia in 2003. George will be assisted by ICF veteran tour leader, Jim Rogers, and by the charismatic leader of Bhutan Heritage Tours, Hishey Tshering.

The November weather, at altitudes between 10,000 and 12,000 feet, is pleasing with cool nights and warm sunny days. The expedition features golden-roofed fortresses cresting prominent peaks, clean mountain streams with rare white-bellied herons and ibisbills, ancient unchanged villages, vast virgin forest with tigers and leopards, and black-necked cranes spiraling down at dusk to dance and then sleep on a wetland near the guest house.

For more information, please contact Susan Finn at ICF, E11376 Shady Lane Rd., Baraboo, WI 53913, 608-356-9462, ext. 118, [sfinn@savingcranes.org](mailto:sfinn@savingcranes.org).



*The Guest House in Phubjikha.*



## International Crane Foundation

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