



THE ICF
BUGLE

World Center for the Study and Preservation of Cranes

Counting Beyond Cranes: The Annual Midwest Crane Count

By Brian T. Barch, ICF Education Research Associate

“Why are we still counting cranes?”

After 30 years of the Annual Midwest Crane Count now is an excellent time to reflect on the program, and provide a more complete answer to this question. ICF received a 2004-2005 Wisconsin Environmental Education Board (WEEB) grant. In partnership with the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point (UWSP), we have been working on a project to explore and develop the Crane Count in greater depth.

The Crane Count is a citizen science tradition that takes place every April. It involves close to 3,000 volunteer participants spread through more than 100 counties in Wisconsin, Illinois, Iowa, Michigan, and Minnesota. These crane counters look and listen for both Sandhill and Whooping Cranes. They document their observations for two hours, and these observations are compiled in an ICF database.

As a citizen science program, the Crane Count actively

involves people in gathering scientific data concerning cranes. By doing so, Crane Count provides data and other opportunities unobtainable in any other way.

These data become increasingly useful as the Crane Count continues. They provide a long-term picture of abundance, distribution, and population trends. Linked to specific places, these data are often used by citizens concerned about the impact of development on cranes at a given location. They complement ICF’s crop damage studies, and help to demonstrate the relationship cranes have with their habitats. Crane counters report sightings of color-banded cranes, which is of considerable help to our other regional studies.

These are only some of the scientific benefits that

arise through continuing the Crane Count. But what do the people involved get out of the project? Answering this question is just as important as the scientific elements of the Crane Count.




Each spring close to 3,000 volunteers participate in the Annual Midwest Crane Count. Here, a flock of Sandhills take off over Crex Meadows in northwest Wisconsin. Photo by Richard Anderson

As a part of the WEEB grant project, ICF queried a sample of participants. Most of the respondents have participated in Crane Count more than six times, frequently with friends or family. In addition to seeing cranes, they reported that strong motivations to count included experiencing the natural world, contributing to a conservation organization, and improving understanding of crane populations. For many counters surveyed, Crane Count has become a tradition. Interestingly, counters emphasized both the scientific accomplishments of the program as well as the intangible benefits of the experience - rather than focusing on only one aspect of the survey.

Looking to the future, questionnaire respondents supported a number of program improvements. Directly addressed in this project were the needs to make historic data more available in a readily accessible format, produce a Crane Count brochure, and develop "Crane Count in the Classroom: A Citizen Science Curriculum for Grades 6-8." Dedicated counters emphasized the significance of these data as well as how important the Crane Count experience is. ICF now has important input as it strengthens the project.

Through the generosity of the WEEB, and a productive partnership with the University of Wisconsin - Stevens Point, the Crane Count can better support ICF's mission. ICF's role is to seek and support well-educated decisions by citizens, but not to dictate what those decisions will be.

Jeb Barzen, ICF's Field Ecology Director, in discussing the Crane Count recently commented, "Please understand that data do not make decisions. People do. Good decisions can arise when good data are available for effective input and discussion among people. Our wild resources depend upon both good data and good decisions." Crane counters gather good data. Crane counters can also provide input and discussion to guide those good decisions.

All this helps to explain why cranes, and their counters, still count. 

Get involved with Crane Count!

Volunteers are the most important part of this unique program, and we invite YOU to join over 3,000 other craniacs around the Midwest for the 2006 Crane Count. For more information, please contact the ICF Naturalist staff at 608.356.9462, extension 127 or at naturalists@savingcranes.org.

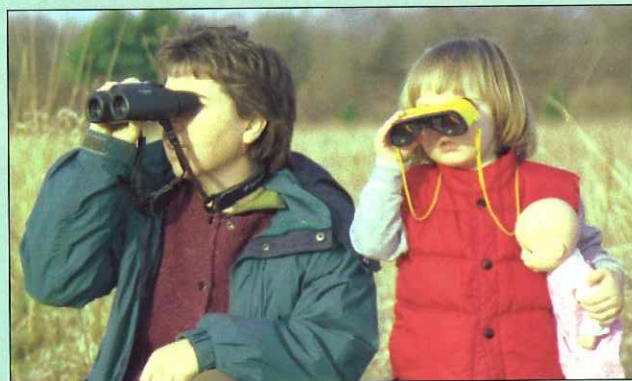


Photo by Bruce Stewart

North American Crane Shirts!



New in our web store, ICF is featuring these stunning cotton t-shirts. The front of the shirt depicts a pair of Sandhill Cranes and a lone Whooping Crane screen-printed in full color—inspired by the painting "North American Cranes" by nature artist Jay Jocham. Take advantage of the introductory price of \$16 for the short-sleeved and \$21 for the long-sleeved. Visit our secure web store to purchase – they won't last long!

www.savingcranes.org Click on **SHOP**.

A D.A.R. ing Start

By Marianne Wellington, Chick Rearing Supervisor & Co-chair WCEP Direct Autumn Release

Quietly this autumn, with little fanfare, four young Whooping Cranes successfully executed a daring plan for enhancing the reintroduction of their species to the wild in eastern North America. The plan is known as the Direct Autumn Release (DAR) and was hatched by the human biologists and aviculturists dedicated to introducing a self-sustaining flock of migratory Whooping Cranes – the world's rarest crane – to North America.

In 2005, the Whooping Crane Eastern Partnership (WCEP), a group of non-profit organizations, individuals and state and federal government agencies, expanded their reintroduction techniques to include not only the ultralight-led method but also the DAR method.

From an early age, the DAR cranes are raised in a natural setting. Starting at ICF and later at the Necedah National Wildlife Refuge, strict isolation/costume rearing protocol is followed by the cranes' caretakers. Once the chicks fledge, release is delayed until after the ultralight-led flock has departed - thus eliminating the chance that DAR birds will mingle with the ultralight birds. Release happens in the spectacular natural setting at Necedah. The young cranes go either one at a time or in small groups near roosting sites of older, experienced Whooping Cranes or among large flocks of Sandhills. They learn good foraging, loafing and roosting locations as well as the migration route from the wild cranes.

Through a combination of association with other cranes and their innate sensibility, these young birds migrate southward completing the migration in as little as one to two weeks. Several experimental releases with Sandhill, Siberian, Red-crowned, Wattled and Whooping Cranes have incorporated the same techniques now being used in the 2005 DAR method.

WCEP partners are excited about the promising start for the DAR method. The ultralight method has ensured a strong core group of birds, which will continue. The addition of the DAR method provides extra flexibility for increasing the population and allows us to maximize the number of birds

Necedah with only four adult Whooping Cranes and hundreds of Sandhill Cranes. Weather conditions were perfect for migration on November 24 (Thanksgiving Day) and the older Whooping Cranes left early. Their hasty departure made the ground tracking team anxious. Had the DAR birds



Costume caretaker and #27-05 bonding during a feeding session. ICF photo


released to the wild. Given the slightly later hatching period of most DAR chicks versus ultralight chicks, it allows birds producing eggs later in the season to contribute more readily to the flock, thus expanding the gene diversity, an important goal for WCEP.

Last summer, ICF's Crane Conservation Department worked closely with Dr. Richard Urbanek and three U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service interns on the DAR method. The chicks hatched from eggs produced at Patuxent Wildlife Research Center in Maryland and ICF. These chicks were the first to be raised in ICF's new Felburn-Leidigh Chick Rearing Facility. In mid-July, five cranes (aged 4-6 weeks) were transferred to Necedah National Wildlife Refuge. Four of the five cranes survived. Once they fledged, they were marked with color bands and radio/satellite transmitters prior to being released in late October to early November.

By November 22nd, most of the older Whooping Cranes had already migrated but the DAR chicks remained at

missed their cue to leave? No, by mid-morning the DAR birds circled overhead and began their migration south! They quickly outdistanced the tracking team. In just one day, #27-05 was found in Clark County, Indiana, 455 miles from Necedah. By the second day of migration, the three other Whooping Cranes #28, 32 and 33-05 roosted at Hiwassee Wildlife Refuge in Tennessee, more than halfway to Florida.

At the end of January 2006, two of the DAR birds remain at Hiwassee and two are in Florida at separate locations.

All four are at major wintering areas for wild cranes. Given their southern locations, biologists feel that the DAR birds have successfully completed their first fall migration. Their progress will be closely monitored this winter and during the spring migration. 

Flock Updates

With the conclusion of this year's fall migration, there are now 64 Whooping Cranes in the wild in eastern North America. If you would like to receive email updates about the status of the DAR birds and other Whooping Cranes in the eastern flock, send your email address to the ICF Web Editor at aburke@savingcranes.org.

A LONG-TIME COLLEAGUE

By *Kerryn Morrison*



For 13 years Rich Beilfuss has built ICF's Africa work into a comprehensive crane conservation program – so much so that it was

spun off as an independent program during our recent planning process. As part of that plan, we hoped to pass day to day leadership to staff based in Africa. Our timing couldn't be better as Rich himself has chosen to accept an offer from the Carr Foundation to serve as their Head of Scientific Research. Rich and his family will be moving to Mozambique to help rebuild the ecological infrastructure of Gorongosa National Park. Stepping into his shoes is long time colleague and crane conservationist Kerryn Morrison of South Africa. ICF is partnering with the Endangered Wildlife Trust of South Africa and Kerryn will be based in their Johannesburg offices while pursuing the ICF mission throughout Africa. She will focus on trade issues, Wattled and Grey Crowned Cranes. We will be forever grateful to Rich, and look forward to his continued involvement with cranes, wetlands, and conservation.



ICF's newest staff member, Kerryn Morrison, gets to know one of her co-workers, a Grey Crowned Crane named Pula. Photo by Ann Burke

I entered the world of cranes when I joined the Endangered Wildlife Trust's (EWT) Highlands Crane Group in 1995 around the town of Dullstroom in the Mpumalanga Province of South Africa. I was there to do my Masters thesis on the breeding biology and habitat use of Blue, Grey Crowned, and Wattled Cranes on the

Stenkampsberg Plateau. Over the next three years, my fascination for cranes as flagships and indicators for ecosystem conservation developed and tattooed itself on my life. Following my Masters degree, I stayed on to work towards solving some of the conservation issues that threatened cranes and other biodiversity in the area.

In 2000, I moved away from cranes for a few months to work with farmers on raptor and poisoning issues in the Thabazimbi area in the Limpopo Province of South Africa. Cranes, however, were too strong a pull, and I rejoined the crane world soon after as the Networking Coordinator for the EWT's South African Crane Working Group (SACWG).

Over the next four years, I coordinated and supported field projects in five key crane regions within South Africa, developed partners, oversaw the education and awareness portfolio, and supervised the Wattled Crane Recovery Programme. In addition, I became particularly involved with the trade in cranes, both legal and illegal. This involvement culminated in Guidelines for the Trade and Keeping of Cranes in Captivity in South Africa, which was accepted as policy in five of South Africa's Provinces.

During my time with SACWG, I became interested in international crane conservation. I assisted with aerial surveys in Zambia, visited Zimbabwe for a review of their Wattled Crane programme in light of the land resettlement programme, and assisted BirdLife Botswana with Wattled Crane nest assessments in the Okavango Delta. In August 2004, I shifted my


LEAGUE JOINS THE ICF TEAM

Program Manager for African Cranes, Wetlands and Communities

focus entirely to international work and became the EWT representative for the African Wattled Crane Programme (AWAC). AWAC was launched by ICF's Rich Beilfuss and EWT's Lindy Rodwell in 2001 to conserve Wattled Cranes and their habitats by promoting cooperation in and among African nations in partnership with people who depend on these same habitats.

Over the past year with AWAC, I have been awed by the accomplishments of the dedicated and passionate people in each of the eleven countries where Wattled Cranes live. Despite horrendous poverty and political unrest, our colleagues are working tirelessly for cranes and their threatened habitats. With this in mind, I look forward to the next stage in the process – supporting the AWAC network, understanding the regional situation with the ecosystems that Wattled Cranes depend on, and encouraging regional collaboration. We will start with a project to address the impact of trade in cranes, and focus on communities whose livelihoods are interwoven with those of cranes.

ICF has provided a strong inspiration for my work. The interaction with ICF staff and with their projects and networks around the world has provided insights to many a challenge. Most important has been working with Rich Beilfuss, especially during the last year when we co-chaired AWAC and stayed in very close contact. His insights into working with people of diverse cultures and his guidance have provided me with a solid foundation and created a smooth transition into my new role as ICF's Program Manager for African Cranes, Wetlands and Communities, as part of the newly established ICF / EWT Partnership. I am really looking forward to my future with ICF and to strengthening relationships with the global crane family!

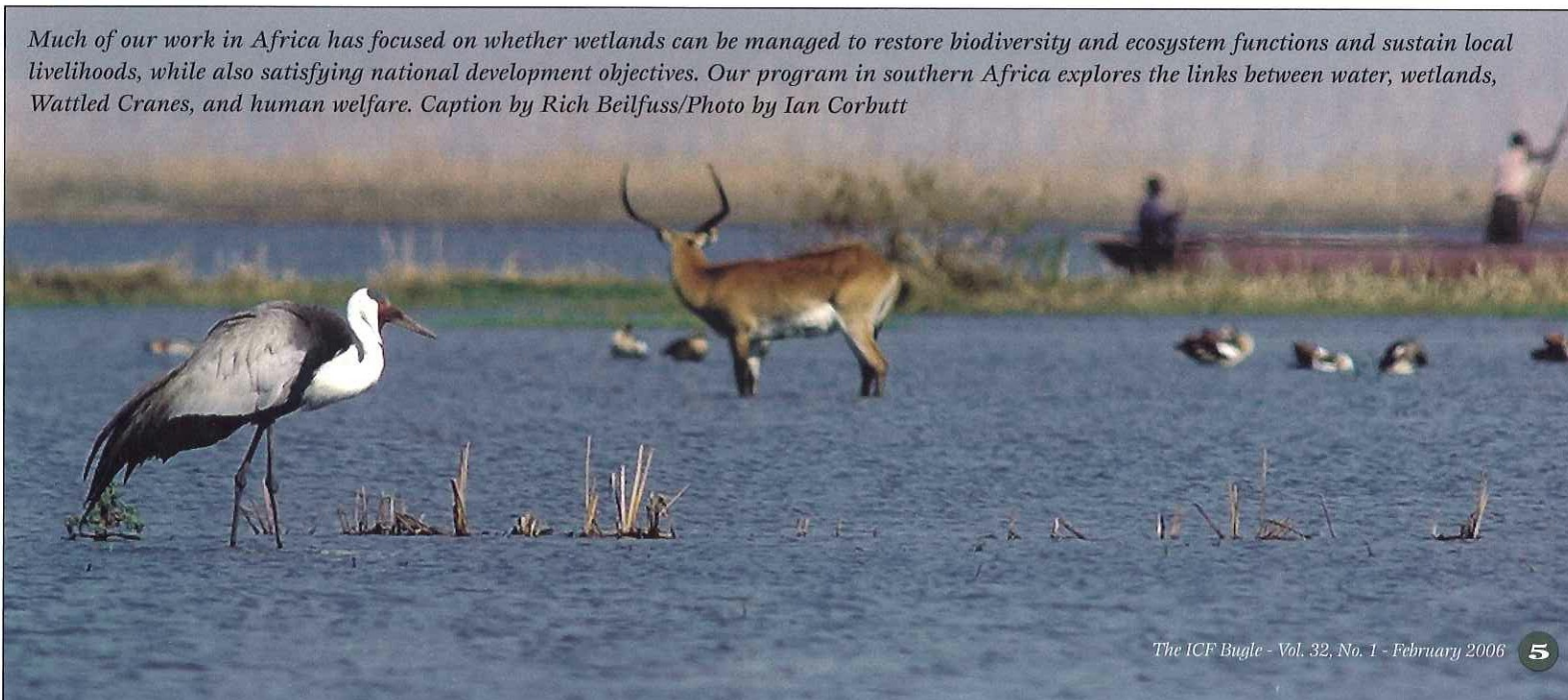
Our thanks to Deutsche Lufthansa AG for providing round trip transportation for Kerry's travel to ICF from South Africa. 



To better understand the needs and aspirations of community members living along the lower Zambezi River, our teams collected more than 800 hours of oral history. These interviews reveal the deep dependence of people on natural river flows for their livelihoods.

Photo and caption by Rich Beilfuss

Much of our work in Africa has focused on whether wetlands can be managed to restore biodiversity and ecosystem functions and sustain local livelihoods, while also satisfying national development objectives. Our program in southern Africa explores the links between water, wetlands, Wattled Cranes, and human welfare. Caption by Rich Beilfuss/Photo by Ian Corbutt



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Lufthansa

ICF members...mark your calendars!

In addition to the special events at our headquarters, we are teaming up with other organizations around the country to spread the word about crane conservation. **Remember**, conservation can only be successful with your active involvement. For detailed information about ICF-sponsored events, visit the ICF website: www.savingcranes.org and click on "What's New" or "Upcoming Events" or phone Ann Burke at 608-356-9462 ext. 147.

February:

Feb. 24-26 • 10th Annual Celebration of Whooping Cranes and Other Birds. Presentation and boat tours by George Archibald. Visit ICF's Crane Booth. Port Aransas, TX. www.portaransas.org

March:

March 11 – 12 • Eckert Crane Days. "Whooping Crane Reintroduction," lecture by Joan Garland. Eckert, CO. www.eckertcranedays.com

Monday, March 13 • Crane Meadows Spring Migration Program. Dinner with lecture by George Archibald. Grand Island, NE (advanced reservations required). www.cranemeadows.org

Sunday, March 19 • Crane Meadows Spring Migration Program. "Cranes, Bird Flu and Siberia," lecture by Claire Mirande. 10 a.m. Grand Island, NE. www.cranemeadows.org

March 24-26 • Othello Sandhill Crane Festival. "Whooping Crane Reintroduction," lecture by Joan Garland. Othello, WA. www.othellosandhillcranefestival.org

Saturday, March 25
First Volunteer Training Session. Want to be an ICF Volunteer? No biological experience is necessary! For volunteer info please attend at least one of the three 2006 training sessions. 9 a.m. – 1 p.m. Cudahy Visitor Center at ICF.

April:

Saturday, April 1 • Second Volunteer Training Session. 9 a.m. – 1 p.m. ICF Library.

Saturday, April 8 • Third Volunteer Training Session. 9 a.m. – 1 p.m. ICF Library.

April 15 – May 31
Participate in **ICF's Bird-A-Thon!** See page 8 for details.

Saturday, April 22 • Annual Midwest Crane Count. Join thousands of volunteers spanning Wisconsin and portions of Illinois, Iowa, Michigan, and Minnesota in the effort to count cranes. 5:30 - 7:30 a.m., Central Daylight Time.

Saturday, April 22 • Wisconsin Conservation Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony. George Archibald joins former inductees Aldo Leopold & John Muir in the Hall of Fame. 10 a.m. Sentry Theatre, Stevens Point, WI. www.wchf.org

May:

May 6-7 • Smith Nature Symposium. Part of the 2006 "Year of the Crane" Celebration. "Cranes of the World," lecture by Joan Garland. Ryerson Woods, Deerfield, IL. www.ryersonwoods.org

May 20 • International Migratory Bird Day Festival. Milwaukee County Zoo. Visit ICF's Crane Booth. Milwaukee, WI. www.milwaukeezoo.org

May 20 • Faire on the Square. Visit ICF's Gift Shop Booth. Downtown Baraboo, WI. 9 a.m. – 4 p.m. www.faireonthesquare.com

June:

Saturday, June 3 • "Cranes and Us" Celebration. Join us as we unveil ICF's new Gaylord and Dorothy Donnelley Family Education Center! The center's exhibits will focus on the relationship between cranes and humans and how ICF works with partners around the world to address conservation challenges. Featuring French Photographer Vincent Munier's "Hokkaido" exhibit. 9 a.m. – 5 p.m. ICF headquarters.

July:

Saturday, July 15 • Pure Prairie! Free guided hikes, informal dinner, inspirational program at sunset in the scenic Whooping Crane Exhibit. 4 – 8 p.m. ICF Headquarters.

August:

Tuesday, August 2 • Eco-Explorers Day Camp. Interactive workshop by Korie Klink. Heckrodt Wetland Reserve, Menasha, WI. 9 a.m.–3 p.m. (Advanced registration required). www.heckrodtwetland.com

September:

Tuesday & Wednesday, August 29 & 30 • Token Creek Chamber Music Festival. Acclaimed composer, John Harbison, will premiere his piece entitled "Crane Sightings". St Andrews Episcopal Church, Regent Street, Madison, WI. 8 p.m. www.tokencreek-festival.org

Saturday, September 9 • ICF Annual Members Meeting. Please join us for this special day dedicated to YOU! 9 a.m. – 5 p.m. ICF headquarters. Evening Banquet begins at 5:30 p.m. Chula Vista Resort, Wisconsin Dells (advanced reservations required for the evening banquet only). www.chulavistaresort.com

Saturday, September 16
Necedah Whooping Crane Festival. Presentation by Kerry Morrison, ICF African Manager. Visit ICF's Crane Booth. 7 a.m. – 9 p.m. Necedah, WI. www.whooping-crane-festival.com

Travel With George

From August 7 – 20, 2006, Dr. George Archibald will lead you on an experience of a lifetime through the Canada wilderness. You will enjoy an exciting and rarely granted fly-over of the Whooping Crane nesting area and then venture past the tree-line and onto the tundra -- to the remote Thelon Wildlife Sanctuary. For a complete travel itinerary, check out the ICF website at: www.savingcranes.org/about/get_involved/travel.cfm

New Bird-a-thon Challenge for 2006

By Bob Lange, Development Director



Please consider doing your own Bird-a-thon this year. No birding skills needed. As you collect pledges, you are introducing new people to ICF. All who donate \$25 or more receive a one-year membership. Your Bird-a-thon is one of the best ways to help ICF grow! *Killdeer photographed by Jeb Barzen.*

I have a confession to make. Unlike many of you, I cannot tell the difference between a Hooded Merganser and a Wood Duck. As the Development Director at ICF I was hired for other skills. I do have great respect and admiration for those who can identify birds by the subtle variation in their songs or a quick glance at a blur in flight. For this reason Bird-a-thons have always been a bit intimidating and, I felt, the venue for the truly knowledgeable. Perhaps I was wrong.

George Archibald, co-founder and Jim Harris, president are birders extraordinaire. Their ability to identify over 100 species, in one day, places

them in an elite group, the air of which I will never breathe. For years these two denizens of the prairies, forests and waterways have enjoyed the great outdoors while garnering support for cranes from many of you. Sounds like fun! I thought perhaps this year I could join them.

The Bird-a-thon is an ICF tradition that has raised more than \$400,000 since 1989. The Bird-a-thon has supported field conservation and allowed ICF to assemble its outstanding collection of books, periodicals and research papers in the Ron Sauey Library. As a result of the Bird-a-thon in 2005, ICF has 119 new members whose awareness of our mission and vision to protect cranes and their ecosystems worldwide has been enhanced. Perhaps I could help.

This year, as in years past, George and Jim will each collect pledges and challenge each other to see who can identify the most species and raise more money. We hope you will support their Bird-a-thons. However, this year there is a new kid on the block. After lengthy conversations with the rest of the development team (who are equally inept at birding) we have decided to throw down the gauntlet. We will form the third birding team to challenge the BIG TWO. We can do this!

So the development team, and anyone we can persuade to join us, will take a sunny day in May and head outdoors to do our first Bird-a-thon. We need your help.

Attached to the very *ICF Bugle* that you now hold in your hands is an envelope for sending a contribution to support our efforts for the ICF mission and vision. **Please pledge an amount per species or make an outright contribution to one of the three Bird-a-thons listed on the envelope.** Look for the results in an up coming issue of the *Bugle* and root for the development team!



International Crane Foundation

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