

INTERNATIONAL CRANE FOUNDATION

The **Bugle**

Saving cranes and the places where cranes dance!

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Carbon Offsetting for Conservation



*Blue Cranes, South Africa. Pieter Botha/International Crane Foundation.
Blue Crane (bottom). International Crane Foundation.*



Learn about an exciting, innovative project in the Drakensberg of South Africa that epitomizes the way crane conservation can help us raise awareness about, adapt to, and combat climate change.





Field Notes from the President

By Dr. Rich Beilfuss, President & CEO



The Drakensberg region of South Africa is home to Blue Cranes (pictured) as well as Wattled and Grey Crowned Cranes. Photos p. 2 & 3 by Pieter Botha/International Crane Foundation.

As we celebrated our 50th anniversary this past year, I especially enjoyed the opportunity to reflect together on the impact of our first 50 years of conservation action for cranes, people, and wild places, and the most important challenges and opportunities we face in the decades ahead. On top of everyone's list of concerns is the worsening impact of climate change. I believe there are at least three important ways we can continue to make a real difference on climate change for cranes, ourselves and our world.

First, raising awareness about climate change.

Cranes are sentinels—like polar bears on melting glaciers, cranes help us understand how our changing climate will affect life on earth. In Texas, rising sea levels and reduced freshwater inflows threaten the coastal marshes used by Whooping Cranes. Melting polar regions inundate the arctic marshes where Siberian Cranes breed. Retreating glaciers in Asia reduce inflows that sustain the high-altitude wetlands where Black-necked Cranes breed. Even the abundant Sandhill Cranes are vulnerable to more frequent and prolonged droughts, especially in the western U.S. Knock-on effects from fires and the spread of invasive species also loom large in our changing climate.

Second, adapting to climate change. We are committed to helping cranes, and the communities who share their lands with cranes, cope with our changing climate. To manage and secure wetlands facing climate change, we draw lessons from decades of crane conservation—that the needs of cranes, many other species, and people depend on healthy landscapes and watersheds. In East Africa, climate-smart agriculture is one of our most important strategies for securing Grey Crowned Cranes that breed and feed on farmlands. In East Asia, we take a flyway approach to ensure that critical stop-over areas are managed to meet the water and vegetation requirements of cranes and other migratory waterbirds, in years of flood or drought. In Texas, we determine how sea-level rise and freshwater inflows affect future wetland availability for Whooping Cranes,

using this knowledge to guide land purchase and management sufficient for the population to continue their steady recovery.

And third, combatting climate change with nature-based solutions that also benefit society. Across the diverse wetlands that support cranes in Asia, Africa, and here in the U.S., we are strengthening wetland protections from drainage and development, improving livestock management, reducing invasive shrubs, and managing fires to dramatically increase the amount of carbon that is stored in wetland soils. We work to restore coastal wetlands in Texas and drained peatlands in Mongolia. We promote restorative agricultural practices and healthy soils on lands surrounding key wetlands. These practices sequester more carbon from the atmosphere and promote more sustainable land uses for wildlife and people.

In this *Bugle*, you will learn about an exciting, innovative project we are piloting in the Drakensberg of South Africa that epitomizes the way crane conservation can help us raise awareness about, adapt to, and combat climate change. As Damian and Pieter share, we are using carbon offsetting to remove emissions (carbon sequestration), improve livelihoods, and protect nature. Income from credits sold on the market is returned to the landowners, rewarding land management practices that contribute to climate change mitigation, are friendly to cranes and promote greater biodiversity and healthier ecosystems. If we are successful, we will replicate this model in other important crane landscapes from Zambia to Mongolia, increasing our impact as we go.

There are no easy solutions to our climate crisis, and carbon credits are not a panacea—there is so much more work that must be done to make our energy, transportation, buildings, and agriculture more sustainable. But step by step we can work together to make a real difference for cranes, and in doing so help create a better future for ourselves and our world. I am grateful to all of you for joining in this essential work.

Carbon Offsetting for Conservation – Sustainable Financing for a Sustainable Future

Damian Walters, South Africa Regional Manager, and Pieter Botha, Project Specialist - Carbon

The stunning Drakensberg region of KwaZulu-Natal, Mpumalanga, and Eastern Cape provinces in South Africa is home to three species of threatened cranes: Wattled, Blue, and Grey Crowned Cranes.

The region is under significant threat from mining, infrastructure development, and agricultural transformation on private and communally owned farms, where most cranes live.

For more than 15 years, the International Crane Foundation (ICF), in partnership with the Endangered Wildlife Trust (EWT) has worked in this area, and since 2017 we've been exploring the carbon trading market as another key strategy to further our efforts. Last year ICF and EWT celebrated our first carbon trading contracts: 23 landowners signed agreements covering some 320,000 acres. These landowners are expected to receive ZAR 64 million (US \$3.8 million) over four years, with a further \$6.8 million in expected earnings by 2027.

Jaco Loots is one of these landowners. He owns a farm called Pienaarsbaken and is also a long-standing Blue Crane Custodian. He explained that the carbon offset program helps him get data on the carbon levels in his soil, which lets him learn whether his management practices are improving the land or not. Income from the program supports improvements to his infrastructure, such as improved fences and water resources, and ultimately leads to more sustainable farming.

Carbon offsetting is a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions, or an increase in carbon storage in lieu of greenhouse gas emitted somewhere else. Carbon offsetting is considered a sustainable financing mechanism—a way of investing in or financing activities that reduce or remove emissions (carbon sequestration), improve livelihoods, and protect nature. Income from credits sold on the market is returned to the landowners, rewarding land management practices that contribute to climate change mitigation, are friendly to cranes and promote greater biodiversity and healthier ecosystems.

The Drakensberg project uses nature-based solutions to remove CO2 emissions, thus creating a carbon offset. This project also links carbon offsetting to South Africa's Biodiversity Stewardship Program, which provides a legal mechanism for protecting private land to benefit biodiversity. All the interventions taken to sequester carbon on rangelands are consistent with biodiversity conservation—they lead to healthier, more biodiverse grasslands and wetlands.

Landowners with cranes and other important biodiversity features on their property who wish to commit to protecting their land through the Biodiversity Stewardship Program are invited into a carbon offsetting project. The Drakensberg project's share of the proceeds is then reinvested into these farms through the provision of extension support.

Participating landowners can ensure measurable emissions offsets through land management practices such as the better use of fire and grazing in indigenous rangelands. These improved practices lead to more carbon being sequestered in the soil in the form of soil organic carbon that is measured, quantified and verified through a strictly controlled methodology and managed by a carbon registry. The process results in verified carbon credits registered and traded on the voluntary carbon market. This creates a financial mechanism to incentivize and support improved land management. Buyers of carbon credits can be confident that registries ensure the integrity of carbon credits contributing to climate mitigation.

"I believe it's our duty as custodians of the land," Loots said, "to leave it in a better state for our children than what we found it in. If we look after the land, it will look after us. We don't actually have another choice but to manage our land in such a way that will improve our soils, grazing and ultimately species diversity. This will insure resilience against climate change and difficult economic times."



Mr. Jaco Loots on his farm Pienaarsbaken.



The Art of Saving Cranes

Darcy Love, Cranes of the World Managing Director

Art is a valuable ally for conservation. A well-crafted picture can explain a complex scientific idea quickly and elegantly to a non-scientific audience and imbue us with empathy as well. Throughout our half-century, the International Crane Foundation has encouraged and celebrated the many creations inspired by the world's cranes and their power to unite us across the globe. Visitors to the Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum in Chicago experienced the beauty of cranes in art at "The Art of Saving Cranes: 50 Years of Conservation at the International Crane Foundation," a special exhibition that ended in March. The display included 12 paintings, prints, and work in other mediums, all illustrating the fragility and resilience of the world's 15 species of cranes and the ways people have come together to protect them. Here are the stories of a few of the most important artworks in the ICF collection.



Salute to the Dawn

Owen Gromme, 1972, oil on canvas, 47" x 63"

George Archibald was just eight years old when he learned about Whooping Cranes during a radio dramatization piped into his one-room schoolhouse in Nova Scotia, Canada. At that time, only a handful of North America's tallest birds were alive in the entire world. And no one knew where their breeding and nesting grounds were. The year was 1954, and a nesting pair was discovered by park employees at Wood Buffalo National Park in Alberta, Canada as they searched for wildfires.

In this painting by Wisconsin wildlife artist Owen Gromme, a Whooping Crane pair with a chick guard an egg that has just begun to hatch. George wrote of the piece, "Completed in 1972, *Salute to the Dawn* announced both the birth of ICF and the Whooper's tenacity for survival." ICF gave limited edition prints to early donors, which allowed the fledgling organization to keep lights on and the cranes fed for our first five years.

In 1987, ICF lost Co-founder Ron Sauey after he suffered a cerebral hemorrhage. In 1992, Ron's parents and twin brother Don built an ornithological library at our Baraboo headquarters to commemorate Ron. Cleveland, Ohio wildlife artist David Rankin painted all 15 crane species for the opening of the Ron Sauey Memorial Library. On his way to deliver the six-foot-long painting to Baraboo, David was caught in a downpour with a few cranes poking out of the back end of his station wagon. He had to sit out the storm under a bypass until he finally made it to the dedication of one of the world's premiere ornithological libraries!



Biodiversity

David Rankin, 1991, watercolor, 36" x 69"



Evolutionary Tree of Cranes

Arthur Singer, 1978, gouache, 20" x 16"

Best known for illustrating "Birds of North America: A Guide to Field Identification," Arthur Singer painted this *Evolutionary Tree of Cranes* for a 1970s *Audubon Magazine* article. It is based on the doctoral thesis of ICF's Co-founder, George Archibald, which posited the relationships between crane species by comparing their unison calls.

Several years later, evolutionary biologist Cary Krajewski projected an almost identical scheme of the crane's evolution, with one exception: a separate branch on the evolutionary tree for the Siberian Crane as a new genus—*Leucogeranos*—above the Crowned Cranes.

Siberian Cranes and Tundra Swans at Poyang Lake
Photo by International Crane Foundation



A Forty-Year Journey in China

By Crawford Prentice, Vice President, Asia Programs

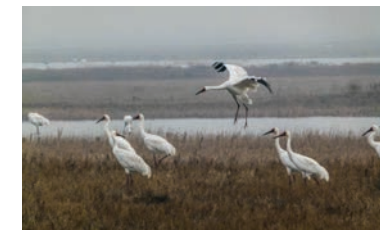
Friends from China's nature reserves, universities and government agencies joined us to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the International Crane Foundation in Beijing in December. We launched the Chinese translation of George Archibald's book "My Life with Cranes," which relates stories from ICF's first steps in this huge land that hosts eight crane species. We also told the story of how ICF's work in China has evolved from those early pioneering days over some 40 years—a period in which China itself has developed dramatically.

In 1979, George made his first visit to China. He asked Professor Zheng Zuoxin and colleagues at the Institute of Zoology, where in China did the Siberian Crane survive? Through earnest searches, Chinese colleagues finally located about 100 Siberian Cranes at Poyang Lake in Jiangxi Province. In 1985, a group from ICF counted 1,350. Later counts confirmed some 3,000 birds. Such was the charisma of the cranes that Chinese authorities declared the sub-lakes used by the cranes as Poyang Lake Nature Reserve (PLNR). Under the late Jim Harris's leadership, ICF supported PLNR to establish an ecological monitoring system in the 1990s that is still running today. A community trust fund and livelihood diversification project at a Black-necked Crane wintering site at Cao Hai in Guizhou Province was also initiated in 1993 and still continues.



Cao Hai National Nature Reserve

Siberian Crane conservation took another giant step with the completion of the ambitious 7-year Siberian Crane Wetland Project in 2009, which aimed to advance a network of 16 wetlands spanning two flyways across Asia. In China, the project strengthened protection of the network of nature reserves at Poyang Lake and helped secure water supplies for wetland restoration at four staging areas in the north-east. Then in 2017 we achieved a key milestone with the official registration of ICF in China and the establishment of our Beijing office.



Siberian Cranes in Jilin Province
Photo by Crawford Prentice/
International Crane Foundation.

Attention on the Siberian Crane continued with the Disney Conservation Program in 2015—a 10-year effort characterised by its adaptive management approach. At Poyang, a series of extreme high water levels and a record drought seriously affected natural plant food stocks, sending Siberian Cranes out of wetlands to feed in lotus ponds and ricefields. In response, ICF has adapted by working with local governments, communities and schools in the ricefield area to protect the cranes. Meanwhile, we continue collaboration with PLNR and other partners on pilot projects in sub-lakes to ensure the cranes have more natural food to eat.

Within Poyang Lake Nature Reserve, ICF established its first "Crane School" at Wucheng Elementary School in 2021. It is now being replicated at other schools at Poyang. Our intention is to roll this model out across more crane flyway sites in coming years. At an event at Wucheng School in December, George showed photos of Wucheng town some 40 years ago, including a crowd of children fascinated by the visiting foreigners. Among them, as a small boy in his mother's arms, was the current head of Yongxiu Forestry Bureau Mr. Su Lixin, who graciously officiated the event. How far we have come in that time!

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Platinum Transparency 2024
Candid.

The Bugle is the triannual newsletter of the International Crane Foundation. The organization was founded in 1973 by Ronald Sauey, Ph.D. (1948 - 1987) and George Archibald, Ph.D.

Editor: Angela Woodward

Bugle comments or questions? Please email Bugle@savingcranes.org or send mail to P.O. Box 447, Baraboo, WI 53913. To become a sponsor of this publication, please contact the editor.

Memberships make our work possible. Please join or give a gift membership. Email membership@savingcranes.org if you have questions about your membership.

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MEMBER SPOTLIGHTS



Terry and Rick Endo
San Carlos, CA
Members for 4 years

Rick (left) and Terry Endo (right) with George Archibald in Bhutan in 2022.

Being of Japanese heritage, we know that Red-crowned Cranes are revered. In California, we've attended the Lodi Crane Festival since 2012. We became "Craniacs" from the first sighting! In 2019, I [Terry] met the International Crane Foundation gift shop manager Rose Boyajian. We started volunteering at the ICF tables at crane festivals in Lodi, Bosque del Apache, Aransas and at the ICF soft opening. I've donated photo cards and reusable bags with my images. These are our ways of helping. Hearing ICF's CEO Rich Beilfuss lecture on ICF and its global reach was so inspiring. ICF gives us hope that the shared love of cranes unites people around the world.



Diane Dahl
New Auburn, WI and Naples, FL
Member for 20+ years

I first met George Archibald when he gave a lecture on the conservation of cranes. Because of that lecture, I became both interested and educated—which led to joining the International Crane Foundation. One year I joined a small group traveling to Bhutan. I learned first-hand how that country invested in conserving crane habitat. When I retired, I dedicated a portion of my Required Minimum Distribution to ICF. Meeting George also drew my attention to the local Sandhill Cranes near my summer home in Western Wisconsin. We are so fortunate to have had nesting pairs of Sandhill Cranes near this property for the past 40 years.

Give a gift from your IRA

Diane's husband, Tom Dunkel, is also a friend of the International Crane Foundation and shares his generosity by supporting crane conservation alongside Diane through his Required Minimum Distribution. You can give a gift through your Individual Retirement Account directly to the International Crane Foundation. Starting at the age of 70 1/2 you can donate Qualified Charitable Distributions (QCD). Starting at the age of 73 you can donate a portion or all of your Required Minimum Distributions.

When You Save Cranes, You Save Crane Neighbors Too

The Texas coast is an extremely important landscape for Whooping Cranes. The last remnant wild population of federally endangered Whooping Cranes winter within and around the Guadalupe-San Antonio Estuary and surrounding areas. It's critical that the estuary has enough freshwater inflow and nearby freshwater wetlands to support Whooping Cranes when they reach the area each fall.

Cranes aren't the only ones who need water. The human population in Texas is expected to double over the next three decades, creating a rising demand for municipal water. Texas cities and industries can advocate for the water they need. But rural areas, small farmers and protectors of wild lands may be left out of the conversation. That's why the International Crane Foundation stepped up in Texas.

To help Whooping Cranes, the environment, and wildlife in the state's rivers and bays, the International Crane Foundation joined an initiative aimed at forging voluntary water transactions—Texas Water Market Makers. In partnership with Texas Water Trade, the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, and the Guadalupe-Blanco River Authority, ICF secured more than 65 million gallons of water for the Guadalupe Delta Wildlife Management Area each year for three years.

Whooping Cranes benefited right away. And so did at least 17 other species of waterbirds documented using these wetlands. Innovative, collaborative projects like this wouldn't be possible without your support. We are so grateful.



This image captured by a trail camera shows the abundance of waterbirds that use these 100 acres of wetlands.

Mark Your Calendar

APR 13	Midwest Crane Count <i>(Wisconsin/Upper Midwest)</i>	 <p>Come join us for these special events in 2024 at the International Crane Foundation in Baraboo, Wisconsin.</p>	SEPT 21	Member Appreciation Day
MAY 1	Cranes of the World Opening Day		OCT 26	Good Neighbor Day
JUN 22	An Evening with the Cranes <i>(site closed until event begins at 4 p.m.)</i>		OCT 31	Cranes of the World Closing Day
AUG 10	Cranes of the World Celebration		NOV 8-9	Great Midwest Crane Fest <i>(co-sponsored by Aldo Leopold Foundation)</i>

Visit www.savingcranes.org/events to learn more about these events and others we've got in the works!

Why I Love Crane Festivals



Nancy Merrill
Photo courtesy of Nancy Merrill

by Nancy Merrill, Emeritus ICF Board Member, co-founder, Colorado Crane Conservation Coalition

Before 2012, I had never attended a crane festival. Suddenly and unexpectedly, that year I became the co-organizer of the Yampa Valley Crane Festival. After working to defeat a proposal to hunt Sandhill Cranes in northwest Colorado, I was eager to find a way to help others appreciate and celebrate this iconic species. A festival focusing on cranes and habitat conservation seemed like a much better "use" of cranes than a hunt.

Our first festival, with ICF Co-Founder George Archibald as our keynote speaker, was a big success. It sparked my desire to learn more about crane festivals. Over the years I have attended crane festivals in Mongolia, Bhutan, China, Monte Vista, Colorado and Baraboo, Wisconsin. While each festival has its own unique flavor, they all offer the opportunity to deepen one's knowledge and understanding of cranes, wildlife, and the environment of the area. And they all succeed in bringing together people from different socioeconomic, cultural, and geographic backgrounds in an enhanced appreciation of nature in general and cranes in particular.

Get a First Glimpse of Our New Crane License Plate

Ryan Michalesko, Landowner Engagement Specialist



Artwork by Jay Jocham

If you live in Wisconsin, get ready to see cranes on the road! We're thrilled to announce that later this year, Wisconsin drivers will be able to order the International Crane Foundation's new Cranes of Wisconsin license plate.

Revenues from license plate sales will directly support our work in Wisconsin, particularly our efforts to resolve the issue of crop depredation by Sandhill Cranes. ICF will receive an annual donation of \$25 for each license plate registered.

Artist Jay Jocham, whose murals are an integral part of ICF's outdoor crane exhibits, designed the license plate. It features both the Sandhill and Whooping Crane, as well as the state's native landscape.

We're in the final stages of the design process with the Department of Transportation, and will share more information as applications become available later this year. This project was made possible by the generosity of the Patti and Jack McKeithan Northwoods Fund.

WAYS TO GIVE

Please send your donation in the enclosed envelope or visit savingcranes.org/donate to make your gift today.

Whooping Cranes at Aransas National Wildlife Refuge
Photo by Ciming Mei



International Crane Foundation

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Support Team Craniac!

Support International Crane Foundation Co-Founder George Archibald and President and CEO Rich Beilfuss and their Bird-a-thon team *The Craniacs* as they set off with binoculars in tow to see how many bird species they can spot in 24 hours!

Pledge a specific dollar amount per species or make a fixed gift before the team heads out for our annual Bird-a-thon in May. Funds raised support efforts to save cranes and the places they dance around the world. Gifts of \$40 or more are eligible for a one-year membership to the International Crane Foundation. Questions? Contact Jennifer Fiene at 608-356-9462 ext. 151 or email info@savingcranes.org.

To donate, visit savingcranes.org/bird-a-thon.

SAVE THE DATE

An Evening with the Cranes June 22

Enjoy a magical evening at the headquarters of the International Crane Foundation and appreciate the beauty of cranes while sampling local food, craft beer, and wine at An Evening with the Cranes on Saturday, June 22 from 4 p.m. to 7 p.m. Purchase your tickets now at www.savingcranes.org/ewtc or call 608-356-9462 ext. 807. (Note we'll be closed June 22 until the event begins at 4 p.m.)

Photo by Tran Triet/International Crane Foundation