

Perfect Attendance

By George Archibald

Mary Wickhem has served as ICF's Chairman of the Board of Directors for 23 years and has never missed a meeting. On January 13, 2001 she was voted Chairman Emeritus and I was elected the new Chairman of the Board. Mary pledges always to remain an active board member and retain her energy, enthusiasm and service to ICF.

In my new position, I have a lot to learn from Mary's example.

I met Mary and her late husband John through their close friends, wildlife artist Owen Gromme and his wife Ann. John was a lawyer in Janesville, Wisconsin, and Mary was his able legal assistant and the mother of their four children. The Wickhems loved wildlife and wilderness, and the Grommes knew that they would enjoy meeting the young co-founders of ICF. In 1973 the Grommes brought the Wickhems to the Sauey farm in Baraboo.

They took a tour and soon embraced ICF's worldwide mission to help the cranes.

For the next five years, ICF grew through the help of volunteers, public visitation and guidance from its Board of Directors. By 1978 we realized that the board needed to be expanded and a meeting was called with about 20 of our major supporters. Mary led that meeting, and the board grew to eighteen with

Mary elected as Chair. Her leadership and dedication have helped ICF through many challenges.

Mary, on behalf of the cranes of the world, our colleagues world-wide, the staff, board, and members of ICF, a huge thanks

for all you have done to make this world a safer place for cranes and all that cranes embody.



ICF photo taken in 1981

Mary Wickhem and George Archibald have worked together as ICF's leaders for over two decades.

Crane Fest 2001

Don't miss the third annual Crane Fest at ICF.

May 12 from 9 a.m. - 5 p.m.

Food, building birdhouses, dancing, migration games and lectures, art, folklore and more!

Check www.savingcranes.org for details.

Last Hope continued from page 3

the Last Hope Pair.

In one sense, Mr. Sharma is correct. However in a greater sense, "given up" is not what we feel. We are watching and feeling a change in the world. It is a sadness about to happen, next year or the year after, an eternal passing.

This central flock will leave its landscapes emptier - as Aldo Leopold wrote in Wisconsin, "The sadness discernible in some marshes arises, perhaps, from their once having harbored cranes. Now they stand humbled, adrift in history." But we are doing what we can to protect this flock's wetlands and other cranes of the flyway, so that one day Siberian Cranes may return. And we are learning elsewhere in Asia and America how to restore crane populations to the wild.

The Wisconsin marshes, fifty years after Leopold, have their Sandhill Cranes back, and we are preparing to reintroduce the Whooping Cranes. The Last Hope Pair reminds us to redouble our efforts for Poyang and a thousand places where there is still time and hope for cranes. Action and hope and a great affection for the crane landscapes unite us and our legion of crane people around the world. Together we pause in our far scattered places to remember and feel for the Last Hope Pair.

International Crane Foundation Quarterly Newsletter

THE ICF

BUGLE

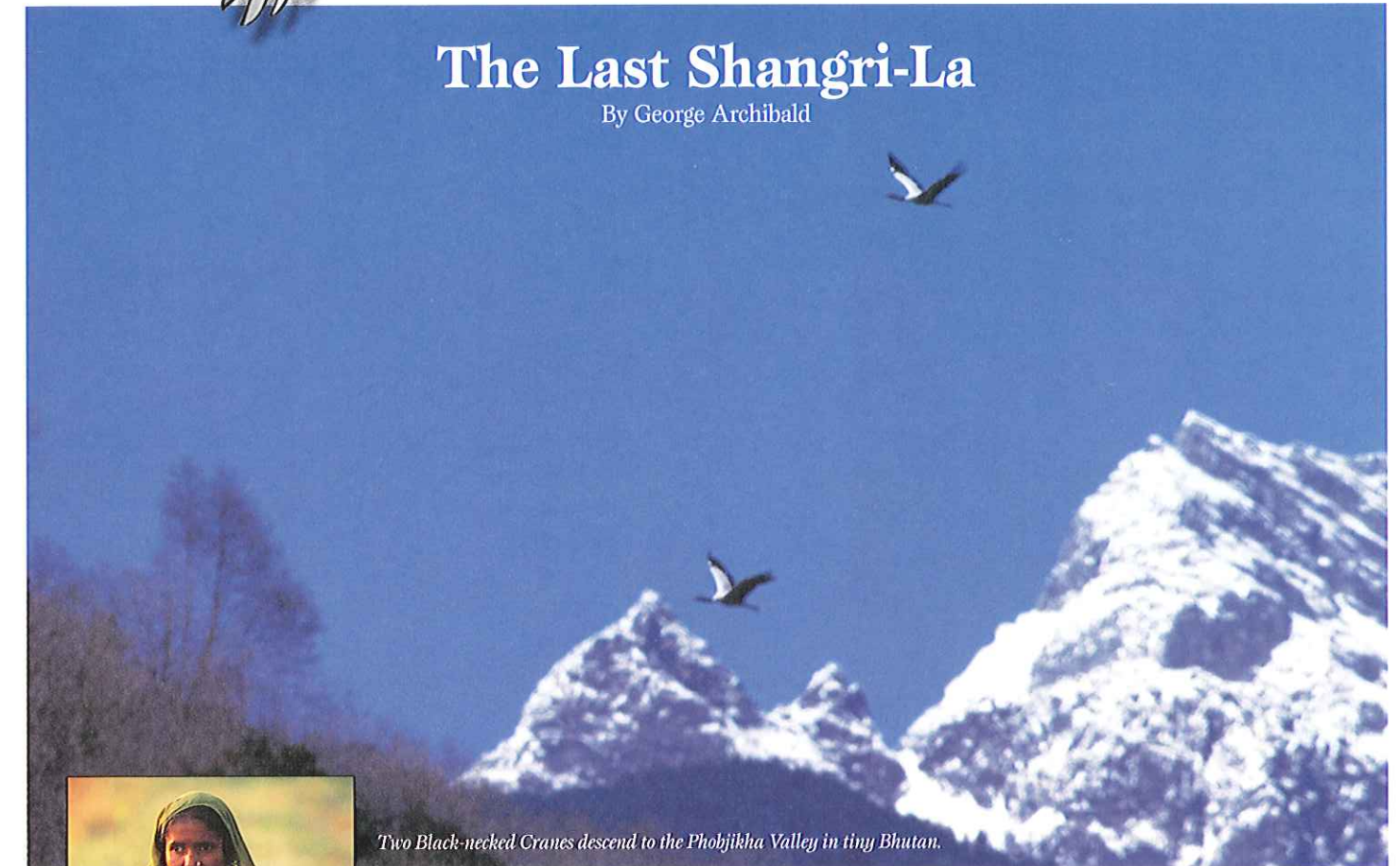
Volume 27, Number 1

February 2001

World Center for the Study and Preservation of Cranes

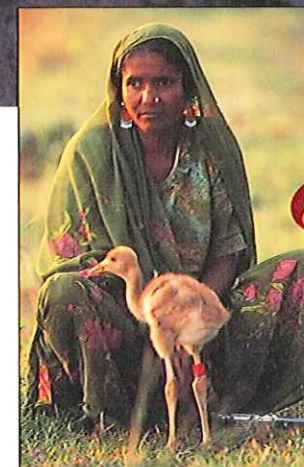
The Last Shangri-La

By George Archibald



Two Black-necked Cranes descend to the Phobjikha Valley in tiny Bhutan.

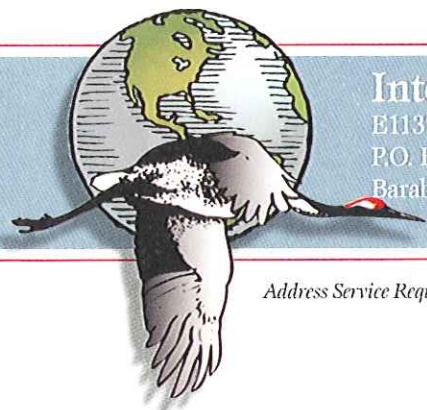
Photo by George Archibald



A Sarus Crane chick is cared for at the Lumbini Crane Sanctuary in Nepal.

Each autumn and spring as freezing winds sweep around the peaks of the Himalayas, about 400 Black-necked Cranes cross a formidable mountain range that separates enormous China from tiny Bhutan. The majority of these cranes descend to the Phobjikha Valley, the floor of which is carpeted by dwarf bamboo bordered by agricultural fields and the scattered homes of farmers. Dense virgin coniferous forests act as a refuge for deer, wild boar, leopards and tigers. In the Phobjikha Valley as in the rest of this "kingdom in the clouds", the people and wildlife live in harmony. Bhutan is one of the world's last Shangri-La's where the King believes that Gross National Happiness is more important than Gross Domestic Product. In keeping with this philosophy, the government has been pursuing the "Middle Path" of development where both the Kingdom's unique culture and pristine environment are well protected for long-term benefits.

But Bhutan is modernizing and its population of 660,000 souls is increasing at a rate of four



International Crane Foundation

E11376 Shady Lane Rd.
P.O. Box 447
Baraboo, WI 53913-0447

Address Service Requested

Nonprofit Org
U.S. Postage
PAID
Baraboo, WI
Permit No. 179

percent per year. In 1999, television came to Bhutan. And as health centers throughout the Kingdom reduce infant mortality, there are more people to share the bounties of nature. The Bhutanese are painfully aware of the effects of overpopulation on the nearby deforested slopes of neighboring nations. To protect Bhutan's bountiful riches, a law was passed that sixty percent of the Kingdom must remain forested. And a non-government organization, the Royal Society for the Protection of Nature (RSPN) was established to promote the continued involvement of local people in conservation.

During the past five years, ICF has worked with RSPN to study and protect the Black-necked Cranes and their habitats in Bhutan. Phobjikha Valley, just east of the capital Thimphu, provides a home in winter for approximately 260 cranes and for approximately 4125 Bhutanese farmers and students. There is no electricity and consequently there are no power lines with which the cranes might collide and perish. But eventually modernization will

arrive, and with it will come new challenges.

RSPN is proactively initiating local industries such as weaving and sponsoring an annual

Crane Festival where these goods are marketed. The Crane Festival is always held on the King's birthday, November 11, after most of the cranes have arrived. Approximately 5000 people, some from neighboring valleys, walk into the large



In January of 2002, a group of ICF members hope to travel to Hokkaido, Japan to see the Red-crowned Cranes, here accompanied by a White-tail Eagle.

open field that separates the Phobjikha Primary School from the wetlands. With the cranes nearby, the local people sing, dance, and compete in the national sport, archery.

In the Phobjikha Valley as in the rest of this "kingdom in the clouds", the people and wildlife live in harmony.

Just over the Himalayas in southern Tibet, an autonomous region of China, about 4000 Black-necked Cranes spend the winter along several wide valleys where

they also benefit from the protection of the local people. Traditionally Tibetan farmers produced barley every summer. In winter, the cranes found waste grain in the harvested fields. But new farming practices in Tibet, whereby harvested

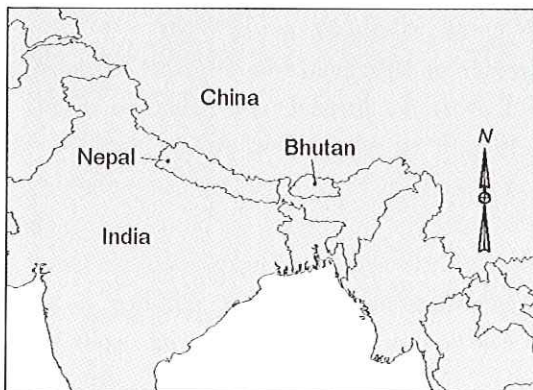
barley fields are plowed, or are planted into winter wheat, have reduced the amount of food available for cranes. Perhaps if some economic benefit to the local people can be provided by helping the cranes, more barley fields will remain unplowed. Perhaps Tibet needs Crane Festivals with some income from eco-tourism directed toward community development.

The Worldwide Fund for Nature and ICF supported three conservation leaders from Tibet to visit several important sites, including Nepal and the Phobjikha Valley in Bhutan. ICF and our colleagues in Hokkaido, Japan, are proposing that groups of Americans and Japanese travel to Tibet in January of 2002.

The Bhutanese are concerned about the preservation of their culture; tourism to Bhutan is restricted to just 3000 people every year. ICF has permission to bring a small group of our members to Bhutan in November to experience the Crane Festival and other treasures. In addition to a week in Bhutan, the group will visit two outstanding wildlife areas in Nepal, the Royal Chitwan National Park (rhinos guaranteed) and the Lumbini Crane Sanctuary.

In addition, if approvals are received, in January of 2002, I hope to bring a group of ICF members to Hokkaido, Japan to see the Red-crowned Cranes, and to join with Japanese colleagues in continuing on to Tibet for cranes and festivals.

If you are interested in joining me, contact Susan at 608-356-9462 ext. 118, or sfinn@savingcranes.org



Map by Rachel Jepson Wolf

ICF Celebrates Volunteering... And So Should YOU!

The United Nations General Assembly has declared 2001 the International Year of the Volunteer. Never before has there been such a widespread celebration of the contributions that volunteers make in our world. Termed The Year that Changes the World, 2001 not only

celebrates the world's millions of volunteers, but offers YOU the perfect opportunity to get involved. What a better way for you to celebrate the global presence of ICF than to get involved with volunteer programs right here at home? Share in the fun and excitement and join ICF for our 2001 season.

We always need help...

- Assisting in managing ICF's 100 acres of restored prairie
- Helping to maintain ICF's site by a variety of maintenance and repair tasks.
- Seed collecting from our prairie restoration areas.
- Feeding and watering our captive flock.
- Assisting with on-site special events for the public.

Your 2001 ICF Volunteer Opportunities

The year 2000 Midwest Sandhill Crane Count, one of the world's largest single species wildlife surveys, reported over 13,000 sandhill cranes in the state of Wisconsin alone. This year enjoy an early rise with the cranes on April 21; counting takes place from 5:30 a.m. to 7:30 a.m. New and veteran counters are encouraged to contact their county coordinator for details and site assignment. Please call ICF's Outreach Coordinator at 608.356.9462, ext. 142 for more information.



Wearing a hat and a smile, Trudi Theisen, a Madison, WI artist, helps families paint pictures at Crane Fest 2000.

Being a Volunteer Naturalist (tour guide) can be a resume builder, a complement to any field of study, or simply an afternoon adventure. Volunteer Naturalists lay the cornerstone for our education programs by spreading the story of ICF and crane conservation. Join in the fun and watch our visitors glow after seeing the cranes for the first time.

Chick Parents help our captive breeding program by protecting, teaching, and exercising chicks while sharing the ICF experience with visitors. Watch our chicks grow from four-inch hatchlings to four-foot juveniles before your eyes. You'll be amazed!

Volunteering in the Ron Sauey Memorial Library introduces you to one of the world's largest collections of crane related literature, photographs, videos and periodicals. The library serves as a global clearinghouse for crane information that needs to be organized and archived. Learn more about the library by visiting www.savingcranes.org/library/default.asp

Official Volunteer Training

March 24th, 31st, and April 7th, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. at ICF's Ron Sauey Memorial Library at ICF. Refreshments provided. These three volunteer training sessions will build on one another. If unable to attend one or all, don't fret, the Education Department is willing to work with you one-on-one.

Special presentations, "behind-the-scene" tours, and an end of the year picnic are also planned for this year's exciting ICF volunteer experience. For more information on volunteer opportunities or training, please call 608.356.9462, ext. 127 or email korie@savingcranes.org

By Korie Klink, Visitor Programs Coordinator

Special Events 2001

APRIL 21
Crane Count 5:30 am - 7:30 am
Welcome the dawn and join hundreds of dedicated volunteers from throughout Wisconsin and our neighboring states in the 27th Annual Sandhill Crane Count. The Crane Count is a wonderful opportunity to meet fellow "craniacs" in your area and contribute to ICF's sandhill crane research!

MAY 12
Crane Fest '01 9:00 am - 5:00 pm
Join the flock and fly to ICF for our 3rd annual Crane Fest! Celebrate International Migratory Bird Day with special tours, speakers, activities and great food! Go "CRANEY" at CRANE FEST! For information on accommodations call the Chamber of Commerce at 1-800-BARABOO.

JUNE 9
Gone Birdin' - An Intro to Bird Watching 10:00 am - Noon
ICF is home to more than just cranes! Join ICF Naturalists for a morning hike at ICF and learn about our many resident bird species. Both novice and experienced birders are welcome to participate in the workshop.

JULY 7
Take a Walk on the Wildflower Side 10:00 am - Noon
Puzzled about prairie clover? Curious about cone flowers? Join ICF Naturalists for an introduction to native plant identification, while learning about our onsite habitat restoration work.

JULY 15
Neighbor Appreciation Day 9:00 am - 5:00 pm
We appreciate YOU! If you are a resident or employee in Sauk County, just bring in a photo ID or paycheck and your admission is free! Come take a closer look at your own backyard and learn from local organizations how YOU can become an active member of your community.

AUGUST 4
Landscape Links... 10:00 am - Noon
Explore the Stedman Landscape Trail and be there for the unveiling of our new interpretive trail signs. Learn to read the landscape for clues to the human and natural history of our site.

AUGUST 11
Family Fun Day 9:00 am - 5:00 pm
What do a paper crane and a dragonfly larvae have in common? They are both found at ICF's Family Fun Day! Enjoy a day full of fun activities for everyone in your family. Kids 11 and under get in free.

SEPTEMBER 15
Annual Meeting at the Kalahari Resort 9:00 am - 5:00 pm
Special On-site Programming 6:00 pm - 9:00 pm
Dinner and Program
Join us for special events that highlight the past year's accomplishments!

OCTOBER 13
Fall Into Nature 9:00 am - 5:00 pm
Join regional conservation organizations and celebrate the changing seasons with hands-on fun and discovery!

Events are subject to change. Please call ahead 608-356-9462 ext. 127 (Korie) or ext. 147 (Kate)

Contributions

October 2000 - December 2000

GRANTS

Dr. Betty Bamforth,
Robert Bateman,
Wolf Creek Charitable
Foundation,
William W. & Patricia L.
Wessinger Fund,
Meadowood Foundation,
Arthur J. Donald Family
Foundation,
Strachan Donnelly,
The Donnelly Foundation-
Thomas E. II & Barbara C.
Donnelly Family Fund,
The Buchanan Family
Foundation,
The Elizabeth Wakeman
Henderson Charitable
Foundation,
Mead Witter Foundation,
Joseph Johnson Charitable
Trust,
Mrs. James Getz,
Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation,
Nina Griswold,
Haffner Foundation,
Bradley Fund for the
Environment-Sand County
Foundation,
Dr. Thomas Hirsch,
Oak Lodge Foundation,
Milwaukee Foundation-Lois &
Don Cottrell Fund B,
Mr. and Mrs. Samuel Johnson,
Krause Family Foundation,
Menasha Corporation
Foundation,
Phoelbe R. & John D. Lewis
Foundation,
Helen Mackensen,
Mr. and Mrs. Peter Manigault,
Antonia Foundation,
Phyllis & Walter Malzahn
Charitable Foundation,
Knox Family Foundation,
Spitz - Nebenzahl Foundation,
Constance Otis,
Dr. and Mrs. Layton Ridders,
Janice Price Sampson,
Chauncey & Marion Deering
McCormick Family Foundation,
Silverman Family Foundation,
Sara L. Simmonds,
Walter Alexander Foundation,
Ms. Joanna Sturm,
Magnolia Charitable Trust,
The Nathan Cummings
Foundation,

Vilter Foundation, Inc.,
Marshall & Ilsley Foundation.

PATRONS

Margaret Brandt,
Dr. & Mrs. John Buesseler,
Catherine Cleary,
Mr. & Mrs. Frederick Dohmen,
Mr. & Mrs. Woodson Duncan,
Mr. & Mrs. Douglas Haag,
Josephine Kixmiller,
Mr. & Mrs. D. McKeithan Jr.,
Qual Line Fence Corp.,
Donna Strong,
Eleanor Sullivan,
Dr. Rosalind Tough,
Russell Train.

SPONSORS

Claire Box,
Dr. John Constable,
Barbara Crass,
Diane Curtis,
Mary Ann Damm,
Mr. & Mrs. Joseph Dionne,
Ewens Family Trust,
Kennedy Gilchrist & Heidi
Wilde,
Ray Grieshaber,
Ms. Lynn Grissom,
Heather Henson,
Mr. & Mrs. Harry Hill,
Shirley Johnson,
Ruth Kearl,
Warren & Barry King,
Mr. & Mrs. Larry Klapmeier,
Col. & Mrs. Edward Kurdziel,
Anthony Lapham,
Clairon Metals Corp.,
Mr. & Mrs. Arthur Lloyd,
Mrs. Glen Lloyd,
Walter R. & Susan Lovejoy
Charitable Foundation,
Mr. & Mrs. James McKenna,
Mr. & Mrs. Tom Neuman,
Robert Rasmus,
Mr. & Mrs. Albert Ritchie,
Mr. & Mrs. Norman Rubash,
Mrs. Don & Dorothy Schultz,
Split Rail Foundation,
Mr. & Mrs. Bruce Warning,
Mr. & Mrs. Wayne Weiss.

SUSTAINING

Milwaukee Audubon Society,
Inc.,

Dr. Eva Bourne,
Mr. & Mrs. Bruce Bumstead,
Mr. & Mrs. Charles Carpenter,
Mr. & Mrs. Willard Clark,
Mr. & Mrs. J. Reed Coleman,
William Cox, Jr.,
Mr. & Mrs. E. David Cronon,
Don Davidson,
Eliz Fine,
Mrs. Gaylord Freeman,
Germantown High School,
Geoffrey Hornbeck,
Mr. & Mrs. David Houghton,
Mr. & Mrs. S. Husseini,
Dr. & Mrs. Andrew Major,
Ruth Mead,
Mr. & Mrs. James Nelson,
Mr. & Mrs. Raymond Reister,
Lynne Scheer,
Mr. & Mrs. Len Taylor,
Mr. & Mrs. R. F. Teerlink,
R. Roberta Throne,
Mr. & Mrs. Martin Voss,
Katherine Wenban,
Mr. & Mrs. Jeff Wick,
Tighe Zimmers.

NEW ASSOCIATES

Mr. & Mrs. G. Woodrow
Adkins,
David & Carol Anderson
Family Foundation,
Arthur Bettauer,
Dana Bruden,
Mr. & Mrs. Timothy A. Carr,
Mr. & Mrs. Andrew Clarkson,
Mr. & Mrs. James D. Culea,
Kerri Kachel,
Jack Kaskel,
Mr. & Mrs. Warren Kreunen,
Mr. & Mrs. Leslie Muma,
Robert L. Oylar,
Mary Panzer,
Mr. & Mrs. Donald E. Peters,
Mr. & Mrs. George E. Prescott
Dr. & Mrs. Paul Schwalbe,
Donald Scribner,
Dr. Richard Steeves,
Mr. & Mrs. James Ziemer
Debra Zwicky

 **Lufthansa**

News from the Flock

ICF's Bird-a-Thon

Last year's Bird-A-Thon raised over \$26,000 for the Ron Sauey Conservation Fund and for ICF operations here in Baraboo. Since 1989, the Bird-A-Thon has raised over \$231,000. Please help the cranes by joining in the 2001 Bird-A-Thon. In March, ICF will mail you information about ICF's Thirteenth Annual Bird-A-Thon and how you can help.

Free Admission to AZA Zoos and Aquariums

Your ICF membership grants you free admission to over 150 other zoos and aquariums! ICF participates in the American Zoo and Aquarium Association (AZA) reciprocity agreement, which means you can get into other AZA participating institutions for free! The AZA Reciprocity Program applies only to admission to the main facility on normal days of operation and may exclude exhibits or events requiring a fee. Before visiting a participating zoo or aquarium, please call ahead for details and clarification. The current participant list is available on AZA's website at www.aza.org/programs

The ICF Bugle is the quarterly newsletter for members of the International Crane Foundation (ICF). Bugle comments or questions? Please write me at kate@savingcranes.org or P.O. Box 447, Baraboo, WI 53913

Editor: Kate Fitzwilliams

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\$1,000
Foreign\$30	Sustaining\$250	Benefactor \$2,000

ICF, with the Convention on Conservation of Migratory Species (CMS) and the State Forestry Administration of China, recently organized a meeting in Nanchang, a city two hours by boat from Poyang Lake Nature Reserve. We are working with the governments of China, Iran, Kazakhstan, and Russia to prepare a Full Project Proposal to the Global Environment Facility (GEF), for conservation of critical wetlands along the eastern and western flyways of the Siberian Crane.

The boat dropped us at the old town of Wucheng, where two rivers meet by Poyang Lake. Climbing an old style tower, we looked east across one river toward one of the nature reserve's nine lakes, Zhong Hu Chi, where in the morning we had seen thousands of swans on the water, and three cranes passing in flight over dikes and houses damaged by the 1998 floods. The government has spent billions of yuan moving these and

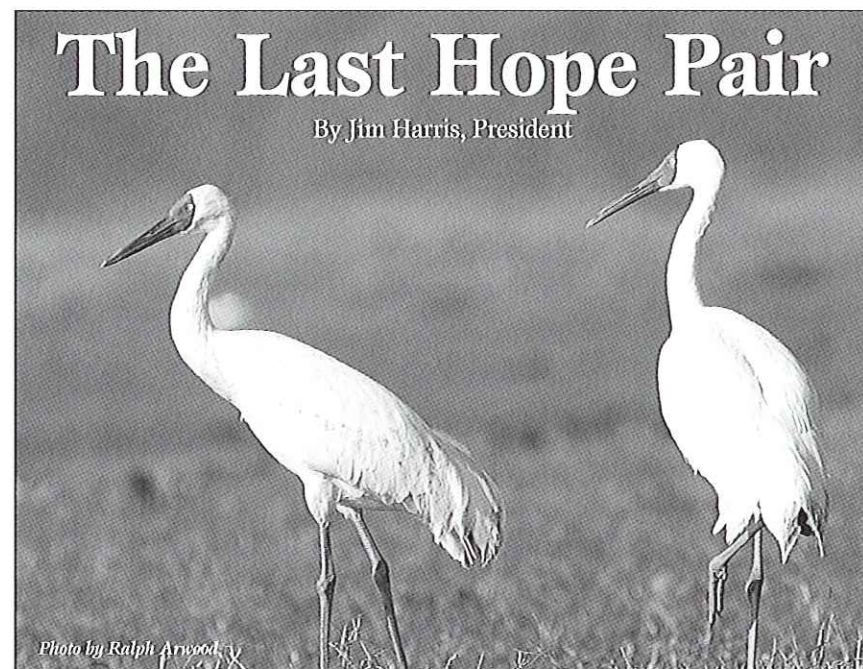
other lowland communities to higher ground, so that their flood-prone croplands could be restored to wetland. This strategy of removing the people most at risk, and expanding the wetlands to absorb high waters of summer, was combined with redoubled efforts to reforest upper parts of the Yangtze River watershed.

The tower looked west across the second river, toward another of the nine lakes, Bang Hu, and distant hills beneath the hazy blue-gray horizon. In past years, I have seen a thousand white cranes on Bang Hu, but today fishing nets occupied most of the lake. Only the far northern stretches of Bang Hu were free of nets,

where binoculars revealed dark shapes that might have been White-naped or Hooded Cranes.

Our workshop discussions in Nanchang offered much hope that conservation challenges for Poyang could be solved, not by eliminating the human presence, but by enabling cranes and people to share the landscape.

I had climbed the tower with friends from Russia and Kazakhstan to look for



And then there were only two. For decades, bird lovers from around the world have visited Keoladeo National Park to see the last wintering flock of Siberian Cranes in India. But poaching, warfare, and human tragedy in Afghanistan and other parts of the central Asian flyway have doomed this flock that has grown smaller each year. This spring, only one pair will make the long journey north to Russia.

fresh water dolphins – not the critically endangered Yangtze River Dolphin but a lesser known species with a blunt snout, locally called “river pig.” This spot is a favorite place for river pigs, and soon we were spotting the fins and dark backs arching up and as swiftly vanishing in the blue-brown water. We were thrilled.

They were rising, one and then another, maybe 10 in all among the wooden-hulled boats that have an ancient, timeless look. Later Nastya Shilina wrote from Moscow, “I have gratitude for river pigs and tower. It seems to me I feel something like eternity when I saw these rivers, boats, river pigs, hills, sky, and roof of tower.”

Her words remind me that half of any experience is reliving it after. My memory of this rare sunny day in Wucheng mixes with earlier memories of Siberian Cranes on Bang Hu, and their high, piping voices. The cranes evoke the wild, much as wolves do, only the cranes at Wucheng and Wisconsin and most parts of earth now inhabit a landscape changed, impoverished, and at the same time enriched by people. Rural landscapes with cranes do touch on eternity.

The Siberian Cranes of east Asia likely will survive despite threats along their flyways, but Siberian Cranes of the central flyway (western Siberia to India) have almost disappeared. Earlier last autumn, the Director of Wildlife Preservation for the Government of India, Mr. S. C. Sharma, said to me with a half disappointed, half resigned smile, “So you have given up on our Siberian Cranes.”

This winter, only two Siberian Cranes passed the gauntlet of

hunters across central Asia to winter at Bharatpur south of Delhi. Sasha Sorokin, with us at Poyang, studies this identical pair on their Kunovat breeding grounds and calls them “the last hope pair.” Ten years ago, Sasha and I, with our mentor Vladimir Flint, traveled to Bharatpur and saw 17 Siberians. Since then, Sasha and his colleagues have done all possible to save this flock. But the threat lies not in the remote taiga of Kunovat, nor on wintering grounds of India, but in the immense distances between.

Our GEF project will safeguard wetlands and flyways for the eastern flock and also for the western flock wintering in Iran, but we have left out

WISH LIST

- Good pair of Binoculars
- Laminator - 36" across
- VCR
- New slide projector – Kodak Ektagraphic IIIA projector
- New Wheels for ICF

Thank you to Steven and Suzanne Hall Johnson for the 1990 Dodge Caravan and Jerome Bomier for the Golf Cart.



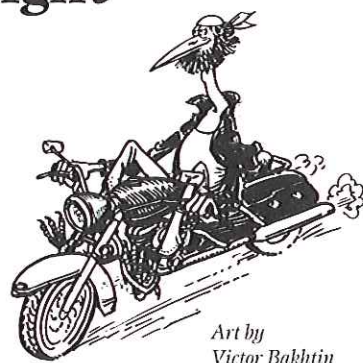
For updates on the Whooping Crane Eastern Partnership and the effort to establish a second migratory flock of

Whooping Cranes - that would summer in Wisconsin and learn to migrate to Florida by following an ultralight aircraft check out:

<http://bringbackthecranes.fws.gov>

Summer 2000 Highlight Ride for Rare Birds!

Crane lovers and Harley riders Janet and Jim McKenna, Patti and Jack McKeithan, and Doris and Woody Adkins organized ICF's first ever Ride for Rare Birds on August 26, 2000. What a success! Not even the early morning rainstorm, which canceled their bike ride to ICF, brought the 30 participants down. They piled into cars and made it to ICF for a VIP tour and lunch catered by the Little Village Cafe. This creative fundraiser made close to \$5,000 for the cranes. Thank you to all who participated and donated to ICF. A big crane salute goes out to Janet McKenna for leading the Ride for Rare Birds pack!



This is the second article in an unexpected series about a pair of wandering Whooping Cranes. These birds were reared in captivity at the Patuxent Wildlife Research Center (Maryland) and released into the experimental non-migratory flock of Florida in 1996 (the female) and 1997 (the male). In the November 2000 issue (Vol. 26 No.4) of the Bugle, George Archibald wrote about their disappearance from Florida and their reappearance in Michigan. Thanks to the Windway Capital Corporation, the Turner Foundation and many others, ICF staff was able to radio track the birds as they moved south.

First Sight

By Kristin Lucas, Briggsville Project Manager

What will the wandering Whooping Cranes in Michigan do when winter rolls around? Everyone had a different opinion. The truth was, no one knew, so why not find out? On the evening of November 6 2000, Anne Lacy and I boarded the now famous Alliant Energy radio tracking

van. Our destination: Michigan. Our mission: to observe the pair who unexpectedly left the sedentary flock of Whooping Cranes in Florida, and to follow when they began moving south. On the evening of the 8th, we arrived at the Batkie's dairy farm in Sandusky, Michigan. Marilyn and her son Mark welcomed us like family. We made plans to witness the cranes' arrival the next morning.

At dawn, Anne went to the window and there they were, two giant, white birds, about 50 meters from the barn! Rushing outside, we quietly snuck behind an old truck to get our first view of these amazing birds. As the day went on we

realized these birds were not in a hurry to go anywhere. We even went inside for tea with Marilyn. The next two weeks fell into a routine: wake up, check on the whoopers, have tea, read, check on the whoopers, play with Copper (the Batkie's dog), check on the whoopers...We began to wonder if they were going to move at all.



The female (foreground) and male forage in a cut corn field of the Batkie Farm in Sandusky, Michigan.

And They're Off!!

By Matt Hayes, Field Ecology Intern

Day 1: On November 21, suspicious that they might move, we got to the roost early. Less than five minutes after our arrival, the pair's radio tracking signals were overhead and then south of us. They didn't stop at their usual foraging fields, and the signals just kept moving south. We called Windway

Capital Corp. pilot Mike Frakes and designated Marine City Airport as our rendezvous point. Sara, Koji and I managed to follow the birds for four hours until the tracking plane could catch up. Koji and the pilot, Mike, were then able to track the birds' signals into Canada while Sara and I followed with the van.

Lake Erie and Canada were huge obstacles for the van, so we drove ahead to Sandusky, Ohio and waited for the birds to cross the lake. The air crew was unable to see the pair all day due to snow squalls, then it was getting dark so the plane had to land. The last signal heard came from Point Pelee National Park in Ontario, Canada.

Sara and I backtracked through Detroit, entered Canada, and headed to Point

Pelee. At 10:30 pm we flipped on the switch to listen for the radio signals. Nothing. The next morning we listened again, still nothing. Had the birds crossed the lake or did they try to go around? At 10:00 am the aircrew picked up a signal from the female and we headed back to Ohio along a now very familiar route. We felt as if we were playing catch-up all day.

Only One?

By Koji Suzuki, Field Ecology Intern

Day 2: After an unsuccessful search by plane over Canada, we heard our first signal from the air in northern Ohio. Compared to the day before, the weather was excellent for flying. We loved the high pressure! I remember the time, 12:58 pm, when I first found a tiny white speck just above a deep green forest. By then, the signal was painfully pinging in my ears, but even the pain was pleasant because it meant I was flying with a Whooping Crane! After a few moments, however, I realized something was wrong. The white speck, no matter how long we waited,



Rounding out the crew in more ways than one Anne Lacy, (left) and Kristin Lucas (right).

never became two. There was no sign of the male. Where was he? Since we couldn't abandon the female to look for the male, we stayed with her. She ended the day's trip alone, at a large pond in a southern Ohio coal mine.

Day 3: I remained on the ground to track the bird. We went to examine the

coalmine site. It was like a "moonscape" with no vegetation. Seeing the female in this vast landscape seemed so bizarre. Just after 10:00 am, I felt a slight wind from the northeast. She must have felt it too. At 10:22, she circled the pond and flew south toward Florida, until she stopped in Chucky, Tennessee.

Fly, Rest, Fly!

By Sara Zimorski, Aviculturist

Day 5: Today was my first chance to track from the airplane, but the whooper had other plans. By 11:30 am it looked like she was going to stay put, but then she unexpectedly took off. As we drove up the road to follow, we noticed she was flying with two Sandhill Cranes. Were they leaving? We headed to the airport to find out. I was really excited to get up in the plane and much to my relief I heard a signal immediately. We started to fly south but the signal faded so we turned around and headed back. The signal grew stronger. Just as we were flying over a farm the van radioed; they were below us, looking at the bird in the very same place we left her. She spent the rest of the day there and that was the end of my first day of flying.

Day 7: This was her third day in Chucky, so just the ground crew went to check on the bird. I sat in the hotel for an hour and a half, with no word. Mike's phone finally rang. It was from someone he didn't know and all the person said was, "she left, get to the airport." He told me to call a cab. We later found out the ground crew had been trying to call us but the cell

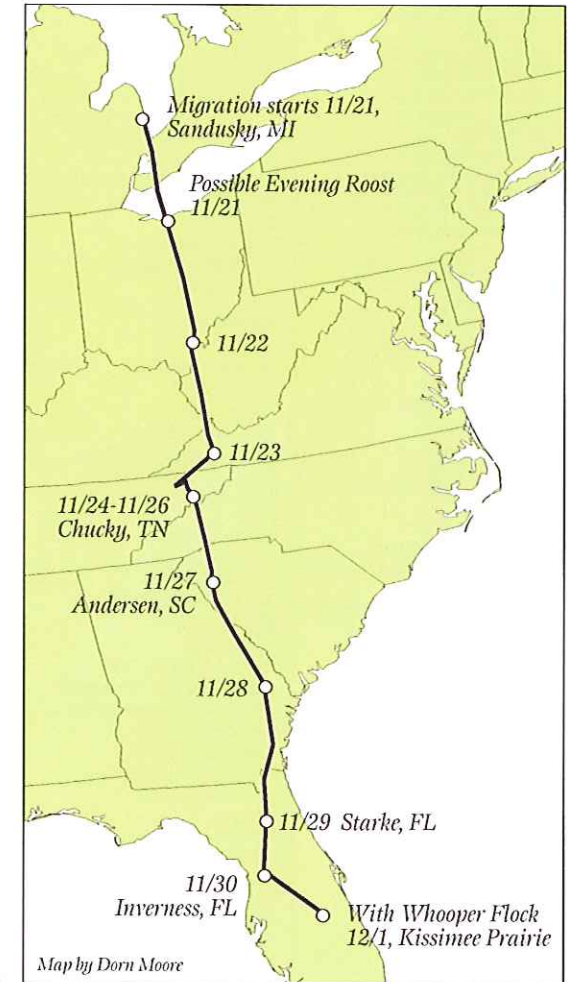
phones were not working so they asked one of the bird watchers to give us the message. Once in the air I picked up the signal right away. Heading south this time, we followed her over the Appalachian Mountains into North Carolina. Successfully following this bird on such a clear, beautiful day was quite an experience. My first full day of radio tracking from the plane ended in Anderson, South Carolina, where she picked a small pond on a grassy hill for a roost. That night I could still hear her signal beeping in my head.

The End of the Beginning

By Anne Lacy, Field Ecology Intern

Day 10: It seemed she was headed one of two ways. At the roost in Starke, Florida, we were about 80 miles from Inverness, the last known Florida location of this female and her mate. Would she fly there or would she go to the Kissimmee Prairie, where she was released as a chick? We got the call about 9:00 am - she's in the air! Once airborne we quickly found the signal, and not too long after, the bird. I mapped her trajectory - sure enough, she was headed straight to Inverness! She knew exactly where she was going that morning!

Little did we know the saga wasn't over - for the whooper anyway! The next day, as the tracking team relaxed in the Florida sun, Marty Folk of the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation



Map by Dorn Moore

Commission came up to see if the bird was in her old home range of last year. She wasn't. The female had picked up and left again after just one night and continued to move - day 11! She settled at Kissimmee Prairie, where she had been released as a chick in 1996. To guess what she was thinking is futile, but we couldn't help putting a human ending to her story. She had found her territory again, but where was her mate? After not finding him "home" in Inverness, perhaps she decided to go and make a fresh start back in the prairie. Regardless, all of us are excited and very curious to see what will transpire during the spring of 2001 - migration anyone??



The tracking crew takes a break while the female paused in Chucky, TN. On the van from left to right: Koji Suzuki and Mike Frakes. The more grounded members from left to right: Matt Hayes and Sara Zimorski. Our tracking van was donated by Alliant Energy.



An aerial photo of the pond, pasture and green alfalfa fields where the female rested for 2 1/2 days in Chucky, TN.

Photo by Al Perry