



THE ICF

# BUGLE

Volume 28, Number 1

February, 2002

World Center for the Study and Preservation of Cranes

## Let Wings Take You

To the whooping crane  
in all her purest whiteness,  
I cast my modest blessing  
to her resurrection,

to this renewed migration,  
this rise from near  
ashes of defeat  
this christening.

Resume your stolen history—  
smooth flight across our land,  
ink-dipped wings writing  
your long poem on the clouds.

Let wings take you  
south against all winds,  
weathering every storm  
that blows around you,

and back again,  
over earth's prescribed arcs  
that yield to this flighted healing,  
to reclaim your own place in the sky.

By Marilyn Peretti

Photo by Heather Ray/Operation Migration



*After forty-eight days and 1217.8 miles, Operation Migration successfully led seven endangered Whooping Cranes via ultralight aircraft to the Chassahowitzka National Wildlife Refuge in Crystal River, Florida. The trip consisted of 25 individual flights with the longest flight lasting 2 hours and 9 minutes and the shortest only 38 minutes. The journey began on October 17th at the Necedah National Wildlife Refuge in Central Wisconsin and proceeded south through seven states, ending in Florida on December 3.*

## Feet on the Ground – Head in the Clouds!

*By Kelly Maguire, ICF Aviculturist*

It is an exhilarating sight to watch seven Whooping Crane chicks soar behind an ultralight. But for me, it is just as exciting having these same chicks come in for a landing right beside me. Imagine seven bodies cruising straight toward you, then at the last minute, they veer to the side, and land so close you feel the wind from their wings. I am an ICF aviculturist assigned to work on the ground with the chicks from the time they arrive in Wisconsin as little fuzz balls all the way to their new winter home in sunny Florida!

The landing scene described above is only one reason I love working with the ultralight chicks at Necedah

National Wildlife Refuge. I watch the personalities of the chicks develop. It is fascinating to take the young chicks out to the marsh for the first time, and



*Photo by Kelly Maguire*

*Trusting chicks follow their surrogate parent over the river and through the woods to the safety of their night pen.*

see them watch the costume (me!) probing or grabbing dragonflies, and then see them mimic this behavior. As they grow older, I watch as No. 2 runs down dragonflies, No. 6 pulls at water plants, and the entire cohort bobs up and down while a flight of nighthawks flutters above. During this time, the chicks go from flapping and stumbling around on their long awkward legs, to coordinating the run and flaps that enable them to lift off the ground. Behind the costume I'm grinning from ear to ear.

Yes, the pilots have a unique experience when flying with the birds — but I have the rare opportunity of being with the birds. Leave the flying to the birds and pilots — I will be on the ground for the chicks when they land!

## Crane Caravan

*By Sara Zimorski, ICF Aviculturist*

By far the most visible part of the migration is the ultralights and birds, traveling through the sky. The very same route, however, is followed by a large group on the ground. Every morning after the planes and cranes take off — the caravan of vehicles heads out. Some leave right away while others follow at a more relaxed and leisurely pace. I drove a large van, assigned to be the chase or tracking vehicle. It was filled with all kinds of equipment: radio receivers, antennas, a GPS unit, cellular and satellite phones, an airplane radio, a costume, puppet, vocalizer, and bird



*Photo by Sara Zimorski*

*Crane No. 4 is loaded aboard the crane caravan.*

crates. We did use the van several times to track down a missing bird, that dropped out of the flight, but most often I chauffeured Whooping Crane No. 4, and occasionally one of his buddies who decided not to fly that day. Isolation rearing means the birds should not see humans, or hear them either. While others in the caravan sang along with their car radios or listened to their favorite CDs, the radio in my van stayed off. That didn't bother me though—I got to listen to all the peeps and chirps made by the chick in the back of my van. On straight and smooth roads, he usually stayed quiet, just peeping once in a while, but he would get louder and I could hear him shifting his weight as we went around curves or made a sharp turn. Sometimes he became really mad and I could even hear him when I was standing outside of the van looking at a map or making a phone call.

Everyday the routine was the same. We arrived at the new site, the pen was

assembled, and No. 4 was unloaded and reunited with the other chicks. The frantic pace of the morning quickly slowed down once all the birds were in the pen. Slowly, the rest of the vehicles trickled into the site. We chatted and visited with the landowners, or got something to eat. After a short break there were usually errands to run, vehicles to fuel up for the next morning, or media interviews. I was always amazed at the generosity of the landowners who not only let us use their land, but also welcomed our large group into their homes, often feeding us all dinner. The next morning, like every morning we are all up early, waiting for the sun to rise and to see if the weather would allow us to make it one step closer to the final destination.

My time on the migration was brief, but I will soon be reunited with the chicks I last saw in the middle of November. I will be in Florida helping to care for and monitor the birds during their first winter in Florida.



# In the Field

By Marianne Wellington, ICF  
Assistant Curator of Birds

People ask me what it is like to be in Florida watching the Whooping Cranes. It is a little of everything: blue skies, gulls, pelicans, white caps, oyster bars, no-see-ums, bobcats, physical labor, rain, oh, and the cranes. Seeing young cranes flying unfettered in the wild is one of the most awe inspiring sights I can imagine. Their beauty in flight tugs on all my emotions. To think that I am involved in projects where I have the honor of seeing the juveniles become independent and find their identity in the wild, is simply overwhelming at times.

I have been in Florida since November 2001 working with the Chassahowitzka National Wildlife Refuge staff constructing the crane pen and setting up a video monitoring system. The pen is built in a saltwater marsh. Limestone is the bedding with various depths of muck on top. When the tides are high, the ground is like quick sand, slowly supporting you but reluctant to let go. Boots left behind in the muck are a testament to the

tenacity of the muck. The one-acre enclosure, consisting mostly of water, is where we hope the cranes choose to stay. It is intended to be a safe haven in the wild. The pen is bobcat and alligator proof.

After three months in Florida, I can honestly say each day is different. I am learning not only about the cranes but also about airboats, trailers, and the tides. During high water, I can go just about anywhere. Gulls, herons, egrets, white and brown pelicans, otter, and dolphins

may cross my path on the way to the blind. A far cry from the fauna in Wisconsin! The difficulties of getting to and from the blind are well worth it. A short walk through the woods and I finally arrive. I can not wait to see what the cranes are doing today.

The blind is on stilts to provide better viewing over the black needle grass, though most of my viewing is on a computer screen. Solar panels and batteries provide power to the camera system and recorder. I plug into the VCR and watch the cranes in real time, or rewind the videotape to look at their activities early in the morning, or the previous evening. Sometimes I feel like Sherlock Holmes — bird detective. The videotapes show the birds are easily flying in and out of the pen. I discover that the birds left the pen after their evening check. Where they roosted I do not know, but I'm grateful when I find they are all accounted for when I look outside the window.

This new information has changed my working hours. Now I will stay out in the field later to confirm where they are roosting, or possibly try to coax them back to safety. Confirming or coaxing will depend on

the birds' reaction to the costumed me. The first night their choice is good - a pool by a tidal creek that has several limestone ridges away from the banks - just right for roosting out of bobcat leaping distance. The next night their choice is not as good, though it is still in the water. They choose an area where the creek separates. There are oyster bars for roosting, but they are not far from

## UPDATE

In December, a bobcat killed one of the young Whooping Cranes. While we live-trapped and relocated the animal the next day, bobcats are still present and definitely pose a threat to the birds. Although the costumed caretakers are visiting the small flock twice a day, the survival of these released birds will ultimately depend on their alertness and use of safe habitats.

Last year, the Whooping Crane Eastern Partnership performed an experimental release of Sandhill Cranes to test methods in preparation for Whooping Cranes, but we could not practice the wintering portion of the Whooping Crane project because Sandhills do not winter in salt marshes. Last year's birds lived in a very different setting on the mainland. While we hope all the birds this year will survive, this first year is a learning experience. Reintroductions take years of efforts, and include hard lessons. One measure of this year's success will be the knowledge we gain so we can improve next year's effort and the long term survival of this rarest of all cranes.



Photo by Jim Harris  
Fresh food and water are provided to the Whooping Cranes in their predator proof pen at Florida's Chassahowitzka National Wildlife Refuge.

shore - well within leaping distance of a hungry bobcat. Occasionally, my only choice is to listen to the sounds of their radio signals, get a location and hope they have learned to choose safe areas to roost. Driving back to the dock, I hope I don't flush them off a good roost when I pass by. We will see what tomorrow brings. Each day is different, each day both the cranes and I learn something new.



Refuge air boats like this one are the only way to reach the remote location of the wintering Whooping Cranes.

Photo by Jim Harris

## Thanks to ICF's major donors over the past year for supporting the Eastern Whooping Crane Reintroduction

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# Seeing Life

Photos by K.S. Gopi Sundar

# Sarus Style

by K.S. Gopi Sundar  
Wildlife Institute of India

Between June 1998 and October 1999, my colleague Jatinder Kaur and I conducted extensive surveys over most states of central and northern India. The purpose was to determine the distribution and status of the Indian Sarus Crane. Once common in the fields and marshlands of central and northern India, it appeared that the Sarus was decreasing in numbers throughout its range. The survey confirmed this – the Sarus was poised to leap onto the list of endangered species. Natural wetlands were being drained, lakes and village ponds filled up.

I discovered a Sarus population that still appeared far removed from these dangers. In the districts of Etawah and Mainpuri, lying about 100 kilometers east from the Taj Mahal, a landscape appeared to have evolved for the sole purpose of housing Sarus Cranes. After the survey, it became apparent that these two districts had the highest populations of Sarus Cranes in the subcontinent. A study was



Maps by  
Zoe Rickenbach



initiated  
in this  
area to

determine the impact of land use changes on the life history of these beautiful birds. I couldn't wait to begin work, and in December 1999, a field station was formally established and detailed ecological work on the species began.

It took about six months to survey the two districts thoroughly by road and foot, and the results were heart-warming. An immense area was simply superb for Sarus. Marshlands of all sizes, lakes, and innumerable village ponds lay in perfect

harmony amidst vast spreads of crop fields. The farmers grew rice in the summer immediately after the rains had fallen and followed up with a winter harvest of wheat. In summer, most left their fields fallow waiting for the rains to come. Local beliefs in the holiness of the birds are profound.

Killing a Sarus is a crime half as serious as murdering a human being. After careful counts, it became apparent that in these two districts lived 2,500 to 3,000 Sarus Cranes. Given that the estimate for the global population of this race is 8,000 to 10,000 birds, I was clearly looking at an area with the highest density of Indian Sarus Cranes in the world!

I decided to focus my studies in the densest Sarus populated area over approximately 900 square kilometers. Thanks to decades of sympathetic coexistence with the farmers, the Sarus were exceedingly tame and most lived beside main roads without fear. I etched out a road route for the study of 250 kilometers in length. Along this route lived about 150 territorial pairs, and four large natural marshlands housed about 1,500 congregating Sarus. Initially, I was slightly worried about discovering enough nests to satisfy the purposes of the project, but my fears were unfounded. On July

Wetlands are crucial habitats  
ing, but also for building nests



Just hatched at  
Another nest with  
in the 2000 by  
Both chicks fled,



A male gestures threateningly as the author approaches the nest, while the female stands behind. Decades of coexistence have ensured that the Sarus of Etawah and Mainpuri do not run from humans at first sight.





Sarus Cranes not just for feed-

*Gopi Sundar, a doctoral candidate at the Wildlife Institute of India, is one of those gifted young people who gives me great hope for the future of cranes. During the past three years, I have had the pleasure of keeping in close touch with Gopi concerning his field studies of Sarus Cranes in an area of India where Siberian Cranes once spent the winter. Although the wetlands near Etawah and Mainpuri support the greatest concentration of Sarus in India, even the Sarus are now threatened. Gopi hopes to make this population of Sarus a life-long research project.*

—George Archibald

27, 2000, I discovered the first egg laid in the area, and by October I had located 65 other nests and 31 other birds with chicks whose nests had escaped my notice. All this simply by motoring

fields, and the birds also ate up innumerable locusts that swarmed on the crops just as they were ripening. After harvest, the Sarus feasted on the waste grain. In short, the cranes of Etawah and Mainpuri had ample food and water the year round.

The system, however, was not without danger for the cranes. Farmers with small landholdings feared for their crops and often removed the eggs of nesting cranes. Eggs were sought after by a nomadic tribe frequenting the area. Several cranes died every year due to collision with electric wires, and a few were poisoned unwittingly due to application of pesticides on crops in the fields. Over zealous boys, guarding the harvest in the fields sometimes killed young cranes while attempting to chase them away. Village



Village boys walk past a Sarus family eating waste grain from a hay pile behind a village.

dogs chased down crippled cranes, and wild cats picked up unattended chicks. All the natural perils, it appeared, were still in place. Production far outnumbered deaths, however, and the crane population was a healthy, growing one.

In October of 2000, a small article in a local newspaper caught my attention. A project in precisely this region had been envisaged by the Ministry of Agriculture of the Government of India, to get more land under the plow by “developing” the

wastelands including the natural wetlands, the home of thousands of Sarus Cranes. Hoping for a change of heart if the government realized the importance of the wetlands to the conservation of cranes and all the biodiversity they represent, I shared my information with the officials. ICF and other conservation organizations also wrote letters of concern. As a result, the government’s plans are being re-evaluated. Perhaps my research was perfectly timed to help save the wetlands that once provided a home in winter to Siberian Cranes and that are now crucial to the survival of the subcontinent’s greatest concentration of Sarus.

The plight of the wetlands of Etawah and Mainpuri and the future of the Sarus is being placed before the Indian Board for Wildlife (IBWL)

in January 2002. The Prime Minister of India chairs the IBWL and hopefully the wetlands and Sarus will receive sympathetic attention!

**To Catch a Sarus... And Band it too!**  
The color banding of Sarus Cranes provided much excitement during a Wildlife Institute of India field project in Uttar Pradesh. Nearly fifty young Sarus were color banded with bands made and donated by ICF.

along the roads! The numbers were staggering.

What I observed was a system that maintained its pristine quality in spite of a burgeoning human population. The large amounts of natural marshlands were just what the Sarus required. The wetlands supported various plants whose tubers the Sarus coveted and raised their chicks on. A large number of amphibians and reptiles abounded, not to mention insects, all of which the omnivorous Sarus chased and gobbled. Just before the rice fields were harvested, farmers

drained water from the fields. At this time rodents took over, and the critters caused an enormous amount of damage to the crops. But the Sarus ate incredible quantities of the rodents from the crop



...raring to go! Two chicks hatching during nesting season. ...d successfully.



# Contributions

October 2001 - December 2001

## GRANTS AND AWARDS

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## BIRDER'S WORLD MAGAZINE

Thank you BIRDER'S WORLD MAGAZINE for sponsoring Crane Fest 2002

## WISH LIST

- An Epson Expression 1640 XL-Special Edition wide format scanner (NEW) for the GIS Lab.
- Television for the Guest House.
- VCR or DVD player for the Guest House.
- Television with a built-in VCR for our educational programs on and off-site.
- A new or slightly used lap top for the Education Dept.

If you can help us with any of these items, please contact Peter Murray at 608-356-9462 ext. 153 or email [pmurray@savingcranes.org](mailto:pmurray@savingcranes.org)

National Book Award winner Peter Matthiessen is touring the USA to promote his new book *The Birds of Heaven*, illustrated by wildlife artist Robert Bateman. The book is available from ICF by calling 608-356-9462 ext. 117 or visiting our website <http://www.savingcranes.org/lobby.asp>

## Public Lecture Schedule:

- March 21** Denver, CO, Tattered Cover Bookstore, Jeff Lee 303-322-1965 x 2729.  
**March 22** Walla Walla, WA, Whitman College.  
**March 23-24** Othello, WA, Sandhill Crane Festival, 1-866-SANDHIL.  
**March 25** San Francisco, CA, City Arts & Lectures, Sydney Goldstein 415-563-2463.  
**March 26** Portland, OR, Audubon Society of Portland at the Oregon Zoo, Sandy Armstrong 503-653-4743.

## Prairie Songs

On February 23, The Festival Choir of Madison will present the world premiere of a set of six *Prairie Songs*, commissioned from St. Paul, Minnesota composer Stephen Paulus. Part of a multi-media show including slides of Aldo Leopold, poems and readings from Wisconsin poets, the concert will be at 7:30 at the Mitby Theater on the Madison Area Technical College cam-

pus, with a conversation hour at 6:30 with the composer. Advance tickets are available for \$12 (\$10 for seniors and students) by calling 608-238-8030 or the Mitby box office at 608-243-4000. This program will also be at the River Arts Center in Prairie du Sac on March 9, at 7:30. Tickets will be \$12 and \$8, and are available by calling 608-643-5636.

# Returning to the Flock

## Michael S. Putnam, Curator of Birds

Mike grew up in Dolton, IL and started raising birds at 12 years of age when his mother agreed to let him keep birds instead of a dog. Mike's collection of finches, doves, quail, pheasants, ducks and others soon filled half the basement and the backyard and peaked at 75. Mike earned a BS in biology from Purdue University and then came to ICF as a temporary summer aviculturist. Within months, Mike was head aviculturist and in the following two years achieved several firsts for ICF: first ever captive breeding of Siberian Cranes and raising ICF's first Whooping Crane – Tex's only son, Gee Whiz. Mike then earned a Master's degree that continued research he started at



Mike's first stint at directing ICF's aviculturists (1981) with Dushenka our first Siberian Crane chick hatched at ICF. We are enjoying their reunion.

ICF on egg formation in cranes. Next, Mike undertook a Ph.D. project on forest bird communities in Madagascar. As a side project, Mike and colleagues from the University of Wisconsin conducted a rain forest inventory on the island of New Britain in the country of Papua New Guinea. Finally, Mike has worked for the past four years with the Community Conservation Coalition for the Sauk Prairie to help secure a conservation future for the closing Badger Army Ammunition Plant in ICF's own Sauk County. Mike and his wife Mari Larson just bought a home in Sauk City and are expecting a baby in April.

## Sally Hanuszczak, Development Coordinator

Sally was born in Chicago and received a B.A. in Environmental Studies and Origins of Behavior from Cornell College in Iowa. She first came to ICF in 1998 as an aviculture intern. Sally then moved to Washington, DC in 1999, where she worked for Defenders of Wildlife and then as Development Coordinator for The Ocean Conservancy. Although she was halfway across the country, ICF and the cranes were never far from her thoughts.

"I fell in love with these beautiful birds the first time I laid eyes on them. As soon as I heard about an opening in Development, I jumped at the opportunity to be back at ICF with the cranes," Sally said. Sally enjoys bird watching and collecting Oriental artwork.



Sally's first ICF experience focused on developing crane behavior. Now her sights are set on ICF's financial well being, while Belmont (pictured here) is still soaring over the prairie for visitors.

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

Editors: Kate Fitzwilliams & 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 .....	Associate .....	\$100	Patron .....	\$1,000
Foreign .....	Sustaining .....	\$250	Benefactor ..	\$2,000

## WE NEED YOU

It's time to be a volunteer at your favorite crane organization! You can lead tours as an ICF naturalist or help care for the cranes as an ICF chick parent. ICF's Volunteer Training takes place from 9 a.m. - 1 p.m. on Saturdays March 9, 16, and 23 in the Ron Sauey Memorial Library on the ICF campus. Each Saturday builds on the previous session. If a volunteer can't attend all three sessions, special arrangements will be made. Beverages and snacks will be provided. Come join in the fun!

For more information contact: Korie Klink, Visitor Programs Coordinator, 608-356-9462, ext. 127 or [korie@savingcranes.org](mailto:korie@savingcranes.org)



## GET INVOLVED!

Last year's Bird-A-Thon raised over \$31,000 for the Ron Sauey Conservation Fund and for ICF operations here in Baraboo. Since 1989, the Bird-A-Thon has raised over \$262,000. Please help the cranes by joining in the 2002 Bird-A-Thon. In March, ICF will mail you information about ICF's Fourteenth Annual Bird-A-Thon and how you can help.

*Thank you* Carol and Tom Zimorski for donating a digital camera to the Crane Conservation Department.

*Thank you* Ginny Wolfe for adding to ICF's fleet by donating your car.



# Band Aid!

by Matt Hayes, Field Ecology Department



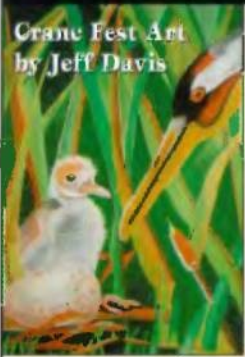
A banded Sandhill Crane family near Briggsville, Wisconsin.

Our annual Midwest Sandhill Crane Count will happen on April 13, 2002. In addition to the normal count activities, this year we are hoping to discover where many of the banded chicks from our Briggsville study have dispersed. We are encouraging Crane Counters to spot the banded cranes. Counters who send in band sightings will receive a gift certificate to Culver's Restaurant and an ICF family membership

(or renewal) as a token of our appreciation. Please help us advance our research (and your waistline!) by participating in this year's Crane Count and keeping your eyes peeled for banded birds. If you would like to participate or have any other questions, please contact Count Coordinator Rachel Jepson Wolf at (608) 356-9462, ext. 142, or [explorer@savingcranes.org](mailto:explorer@savingcranes.org)

## MARK YOUR CALENDAR!

Crane Fest Art  
by Jeff Davis



The following events will be held from 9-5 at ICF headquarters on E-11376 Shady Lane Rd. in Baraboo. Regular admission price required. For more information check out: [www.savingcranes.org](http://www.savingcranes.org) or call 608-356-9462 ext. 127.

### April 15 - June 30: Children's International Art Exchange

This exhibit highlights children's crane art from Russia, China, Cuba, & the United States.

### May 11: Crane Fest 2002

Celebrate International Migratory Bird Day at the birdiest place in town, the International Crane Foundation! Enjoy an all-ages, jam-packed day of guided tours, birdhouse building, crane dancing, music, lectures, field trips and more! Concessions available.

### June 22: Birdwatching Bonanza.

Basic birdwatching tips for the whole family.

**July 20: Flower Power.** Explore ICF's extensive prairie trails and learn about the many species of native plants at ICF.

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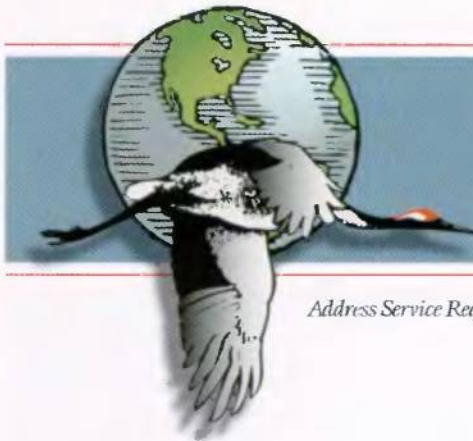
**August 17: Cranes and Kids Day!** Kids 11 and under get in free.

**August 24: Exploring the World of Wetlands**

**September 21: ICF's Annual Meeting**

Enjoy a day dedicated to our members! Take field trips, behind-the-scenes tours of our facilities and listen to special guest speakers. The evening banquet will be at the Kalahari Resort in Lake Delton.

**October 12: Fall Into Nature** Join regional conservation organizations and celebrate the changing seasons with hands-on fun and discovery!



## International Crane Foundation

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