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World Center for the Study and Preservation of Cranes

Communities Take Action to Save Cranes and Wetlands in the Lake Victoria Basin

By Rich Beilfuss, Africa Program Director

The Grey Crowned Crane is an indelible part of African folklore and culture. Across their range from Kenya to South Africa, these regal birds appear on everything from postage stamps to ornate Houses of Parliament. Grey Crowned Cranes are the national bird of Uganda and feature prominently on their national flag. Their exotic, graceful movements inspire traditional dances among tribes throughout the region.

Not long ago Grey Crowned Cranes were widespread in the grass swamps that carpet the valley floors of the Lake Victoria basin. In recent decades, however, Grey Crowned Cranes have decreased sharply. The Lake Victoria basin has one of the highest human population densities in Africa. Farmers – with few alternatives and against their better judgment – cultivate marginal areas on valley slopes and drain swamps on valley bottoms. Only a small fraction of the original wetlands of the Lake Victoria basin now remain, with most of these under imminent threat. As these wetlands disappear many of their valuable functions—filtering runoff water, reducing flooding, supporting fisheries, providing local materials, and sustaining critical wildlife habitat for cranes and other species—are lost.

The conservation of wetlands is thus one of the fundamental challenges of the Lake Victoria basin. As the rural population grows, the demands for food, land, water, and fuelwood are increasing exponentially.

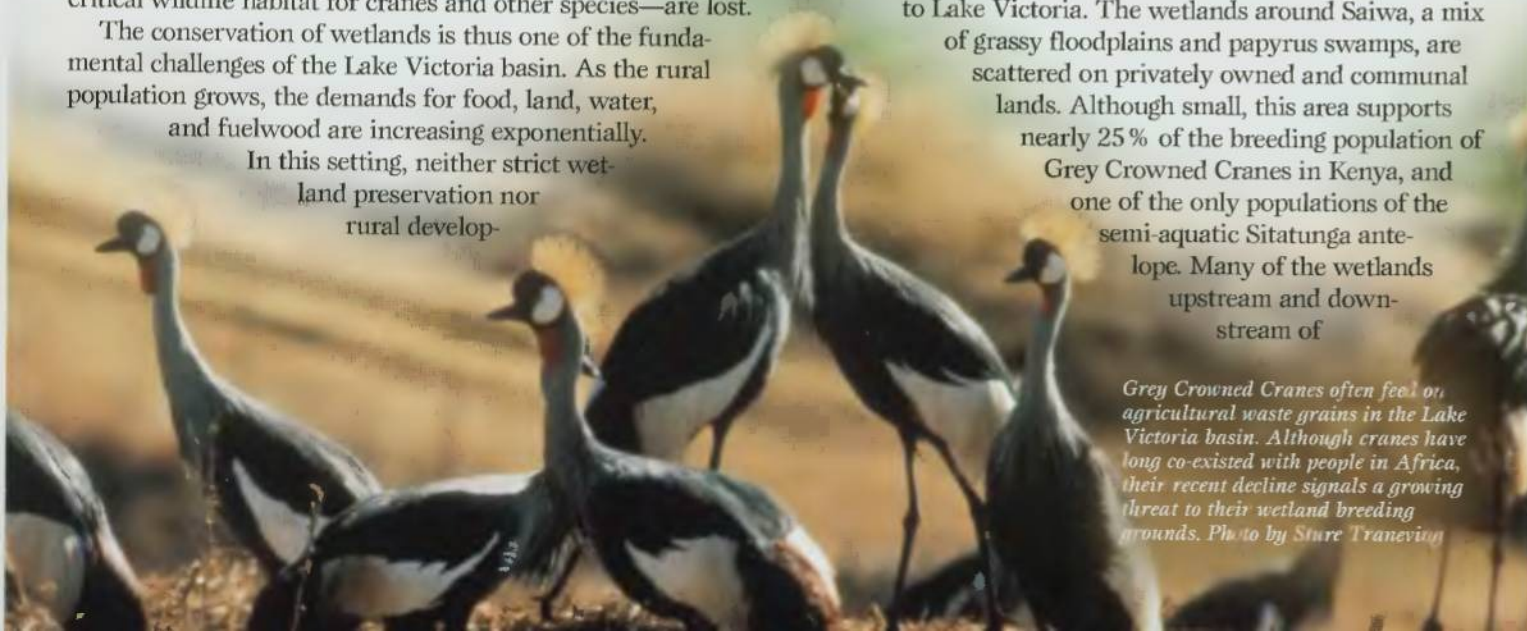
In this setting, neither strict wetland preservation nor rural develop-

ment projects offer long-term conservation solutions. The future of Grey Crowned Cranes and their wetland homes depends on the capacity of rural communities to take innovative steps to protect their own environment and manage their natural resources in a sustainable manner. Such changes must be homegrown, based on practicable local examples and fostered by strong, trustworthy local leadership. None of our partners in Africa better embodies this vision and leadership than the Kipsaina Wetlands Conservation Group in Kenya and the Wildlife Clubs of Uganda.

The Kipsaina Wetlands Conservation Group

The Kipsaina Wetlands Conservation Group (KWCG) was formed in 1990 by Maurice Wanjala, a pastor and youth group leader. The motto of the KWCG is “touch one, touch all,” and the group promotes a variety of innovative programs to conserve wildlife and wetlands within and around Saiwa National Park. Saiwa is located near the headwaters of one of several rivers that drain from the highlands of western Kenya to Lake Victoria. The wetlands around Saiwa, a mix of grassy floodplains and papyrus swamps, are scattered on privately owned and communal lands. Although small, this area supports nearly 25% of the breeding population of Grey Crowned Cranes in Kenya, and one of the only populations of the semi-aquatic Sitatunga antelope. Many of the wetlands upstream and downstream of

Grey Crowned Cranes often feed on agricultural waste grains in the Lake Victoria basin. Although cranes have long co-existed with people in Africa, their recent decline signals a growing threat to their wetland breeding grounds. Photo by Sture Traneviog



Saiwa have been drained and cultivated.

Over the past twelve years, the KWCG has undertaken a variety of creative activities to protect Saiwa and its wildlife. Maurice and his team grow, distribute, and plant thousands of indigenous trees to create an upland buffer zone around the park. They provide livestock fodder to reduce grazing pressure on swamp areas and to reduce soil erosion. They raise public awareness at community centers throughout the Saiwa catchment through lectures, songs, poems, and traditional dances. The group demonstrates organic and bio-dynamic agricultural practices that reduce the runoff of fertilizers and pesticides into the swamp. They help local farmers dig and stock fishponds to prevent the dredging and damming of small ponds inside the swamps. The KWCG also enlists local volunteers ("Friends of Saiwa Swamp") to monitor Grey Crowned Crane nesting sites. Through these and other activities, they are demonstrating practical ways for farmers to generate income while minimizing impacts to Saiwa and its wildlife.

The Wildlife Clubs of Uganda

In Uganda Jimmy Muheebwa-Muhoozi, born in Bushenyi District and a tutor at a local primary teacher training college, founded local Wildlife Clubs to raise awareness about the plight of cranes and wetlands. Jimmy recently completed his Masters thesis at Makerere University, with a study of the impact of land use activities on the breeding success of the Grey Crowned Crane in southwest Uganda. Much of southwestern Uganda drains to Lake Victoria via a series of grassy swamps and streams that rise in the Rwenzori and Virunga Mountains. The region supports the largest number of breeding pairs of Grey Crowned Cranes in Uganda.

During the course of his fieldwork, Jimmy came to realize that the future of cranes and other wildlife in Uganda depends not only on laws and regulations, but also on creating an entirely new relationship between people and wetlands. He organized pupils into four Wildlife Clubs in Kabale and Bushenyi Districts, and helped them to

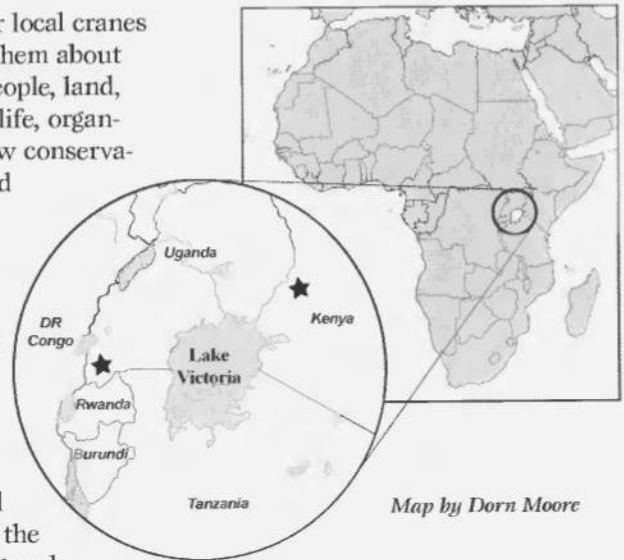
become caretakers of their local cranes and wetlands. He taught them about the interconnections of people, land, water, wetlands, and wildlife, organized debates to discuss new conservation farming practices, and helped them to dream up songs and dances about Grey Crowned Cranes, wetlands, and the importance of conservation. As the students fanned out into their community, sharing their knowledge with their parents and neighbors, Jimmy realized the potential of involving the Wildlife Clubs in affecting real change in Uganda.

Scaling up

These programs in Kenya and Uganda offer great hope for the future of cranes and wetlands in the Lake Victoria basin. They have made remarkable progress despite having little income or other resources, and offer proof that a dedicated group of individuals with strong leadership can be a powerful force for conservation. But they are only able to cover a tiny fraction of the Lake Victoria basin and are unable to reach the majority of families even within their focused program areas. Our challenge is to help scale-up from these efforts to reach a regional population with a very local message.

ICF is working in partnership with Nature Uganda, Moi University, Makerere University, the Kenya Crane Working Group, and others to empower the KWCG and the Wildlife Clubs of Uganda to grow into model programs for community-based conservation in the Lake Victoria basin. With support from the Disney Wildlife Conservation Fund, we are empowering these groups to expand and improve their outreach programs throughout their target areas.

Program leaders are traveling between each other's project sites in Kenya and Uganda to exchange ideas and critically reflect on what is working, and not working, in their programs. Funding for local transportation and communications is enabling group members to reach a wider circle of schools, churches, and other community institutions throughout the region with workshops, seminars,



debates, dramas, and choir performances. "Adopt a crane" programs with primary school children throughout the catchment are raising awareness and hands-on understanding of crane and wetland conservation issues. Site-specific educational materials are drawing from traditional knowledge and experiences of local people, using the Grey Crowned Crane as a flagship species for conservation. Extension education programs for farming families are promoting alternative agricultural practices for fish farming, livestock grazing, agro-forestry, vegetable farming, and bee-keeping, and enabling people from neighboring regions to visit and learn from expanded demonstration plots that showcase sustainable land use practices. We are developing new income-generating activities to support the future activities of the groups, including the marketing of crafts made from wetland resources and products from the demonstration plots.

The Kipsaina Wetlands Conservation Group and the Wildlife Clubs of Uganda offer a new framework for thinking about wetland conservation. Built on the understanding that community-based conservation programs are most effective when alternative land use programs offer sustainable incomes as well as ecologically-sound practices, they are linking conservation with community aspirations. We hope these programs will serve as sources of experience, knowledge, and inspiration for conservation and sustainable land use throughout the Lake Victoria basin.

Kids and Cranes . . . The Future is Now

By *Korie M. Klink*
Visitor Programs Coordinator

ICF is a place of miracles. It's a place of nurturing . . . of bright futures and unending spirits.

And that's not even beginning to talk about the cranes.

Each day, our lives are filled with the miracles of people. Those that particularly touch my heart are the young people empowered by the work of ICF to begin their own journeys of discovery and community involvement. And what an honor and privilege it is to meet, work with, and encourage them.

Among the countless stories of young people making a difference in the world is that of twelve-year-old Sara Otto, who lives with her Mom (Bonnie), Dad (John) and younger, yet just as vibrant sister, Jessica.

When it comes to craniacs, Sara is one of the craniest. And to boot, she's a conservationist in training. As Carol Spaeth-Bauer, reporter for the *Mukwanago Chief* wrote, "The Prairie View Elementary sixth-grader may be slight in stature and quiet in voice but she is big in heart as far as cranes are concerned."

Sara's story begins with a family adventure to ICF in 2000. As parents devoted to nurturing an appreciation for the natural world, Bonnie and John have created a family who seeks out natural areas like ICF for their outings.

In 2001, as a 6th grade student at Prairie View Elementary School near Mukwanago, Wisconsin, Sara visited ICF for the second and third time. She was inspired and left ICF with an idea and a goal of adopting a crane for each of the fifth grade classes through ICF's Adopt-A-Crane program, an education activity that directly benefits the care and well-being of our captive flock. The fifth grade was chosen since they

make a field trip to ICF every year. At the request of Sara's sixth grade teacher, however, those classes became involved as well.

The idea flourished into a program called "Change For Cranes" (CFC). Sara wanted her project to involve as many people as possible, while keeping it inexpensive and realistic for her classmates to take part. Soon classmates were bringing in spare change to support CFC and to raise the \$30.00 needed for each adoption. The motivation? Save cranes and have an ice cream party sponsored by Sara's mom after all the cranes have been adopted.

The result? Over \$300.00 was col-

lected, and a packet that includes an environmental video about cranes and conservation starring Sara and Jessica, endangered species activity pages developed by Sara, CFC pencils, and a feature article about CFC from the *Mukwanago Chief*. These packets have been sent to 5 more schools in the Mukwanago School District in hopes of swelling CFC's impact.

Sara's favorite part of CFC has been giving the money to ICF. Jessica's favorite part is "doing it all!" Both girls love doing CFC presentations, collecting the change and watching the program grow.

"I love watching the girls when they feel proud of and pleased with what


they've accomplished. When they feel good about what they've done, they express it," shared Bonnie. "There's nothing like watching your child become something great."

Sara notes that her classmates too have been supportive of her CFC efforts. She's even received letters from her classmates' parents expressing support for her endeavors. And now there are not just coins in the CFC bucket, but paper money too.

Sara's activities with CFC have served as a catalyst encouraging her young classmates to participate in community and global issues. For

example, one of Sara's classmates organized an effort to create crafts for residents at a local children's hospital. Another created a butterfly garden. And Jessica? She's just as active, volunteering to help autistic children in her school.

"It makes me happy," Sara said softly with her gentle smile, "to know that we've triggered others to make a difference."

Where will Change For Cranes go in the future? The sky is the limit. But for now, Sara brings \$1.00 to school every day to support the cause. 



Sara (right) and Jessica (left) share their dedication with the other young people who visit ICF and become involved in our programs. Each year, our hearts are warmed by the generosity and innovation of many children and young adults. Photo by Korie Klink

lected, representatives from all 15 species were eventually adopted, over 130 children were connected to conservation, and CFC took off to new levels.

This year, Sara has inspired her sister Jessica to get involved with CFC. Jessica is making big plans to bring CFC into her fifth grade classrooms.

"It makes me excited!" Jessica bubbled. "I just can't wait to do this whole program with my class!"

Under the mentoring of their mother, Sara and Jessica have marketed CFC. They have bright blue CFC polo shirts that they wear for presentations

Siberian Passage:

By Claire Mirande, Director of Conservation Services

Although numbering 3,000 birds, the Siberian Crane is considered at high risk of extinction due to pressure from expanding human populations. Two overlapping and dwindling populations in Central Asia contain perhaps 10 to 20 birds.

Since 1991, conservationists have released captive Siberian Cranes to restore the populations. Costume reared chicks adapt to the wild, show proper feeding and roosting behavior and depart south with wild Eurasian Cranes.

Unfortunately, very few are seen again. We believe that if we provide assistance during migration, then survival may increase along their arduous migration routes. We therefore became interested in the current Whooping Crane Eastern Partnership (WCEP)

ultralight-led migrations

where Operation Migration pilots act as parents and guide the young Whooping Cranes along a new migration route. Maybe this approach would work for Siberian Cranes. Siberia, however, has extra challenges.

The wild Whooping Cranes are taught to fly from Wisconsin to Florida. We needed to fly almost three times the distance. The ultralight flies in the still air of early morning. If we were limited to that time of day, we would never complete the migration in a realistic time frame. So, we explored options to fly midday in thermals like the wild cranes. Wild cranes migrate by locating rising air currents called thermals. The warm air lifts the birds. They soar in spiraling patterns to the top of the columns of air and then glide to the next thermal. This type of flight takes less energy and birds can

fly longer distances. But who would be the human to guide them? We needed a skilled hang glider and we got the best — Angelo D'Arrigo.

Angelo, a passionate and generous man, is a world record hang glider who is in the midst of a four year quest to learn to "fly like a bird, think like a bird". His quest, called *Metamorphosis* (www.angelo-darrigo.com), was expanded when we asked him to help teach the Siberian Cranes a new migration route. He was pleased that his extreme sport expertise and his interest in free flight could contribute to the conservation of a rare and beautiful bird.

To develop a vision, ICF and Angelo worked closely with Russian crane experts Sasha Sorokin, Yuri Markin, and

Nastya Shilina. We all met in a frozen Moscow last December. In January, Angelo came to Florida to meet the WCEP team. Angelo and Operation Migration's Bill Lishman met for the first time and shared their dreams of flight with birds and brainstormed on design of the optimal aircraft to make this dream possible.

Angelo then designed a hang glider so that it could climb in thermals at the same rate as the cranes. With the help of a small "mosquito" engine, pilots can take off and land in shorter distances and on rougher terrain. The mosquito can also alter his speed allowing him to stay with the flock.

We developed an initial feasibility study endorsed under the US-Russia Environmental Agreement and sponsored by ICF supporters Pierre and Lee

Manigault. The Siberian Crane (Sterkh) Foundation in Russia raised additional funds. Bernhard Wessling of Germany helped to develop a lightweight speaker and provided recordings of parental calls and also of the mosquito engine to help us imprint and lead the chicks.

The staff at the Oka Crane Breeding Center constructed isolation pens. They costume reared and trained six Siberian Crane chicks. By mid-August, all six were following a costumed human pulling a mosquito engine on the ground. Two birds had begun to take short flights behind Angelo in the hang glider.

In mid-August, the birds were crated and trucked to Moscow. Here I joined the crew. After health clearance for the birds we flew to Salekhard on the Arctic Circle. The birds were settled overnight in temporary pens. The Yamalo-Nenetsky Administration treated us like royalty with special museum tours and caribou dinners.

The next day we departed by helicopter to the release site just west of the Kunovat Nature Reserve on the Ob River. The local farmers were fascinated and helped us prepare a training camp.

We were confronted with a huge obstacle. The water levels had reached a 100-year record and were five feet above normal! Where was Angelo going to take off and land? Numerous helicopter, boat, and ground explorations were conducted to seek suitable take off and landing sites amidst extensive flooding. The initial weather was often rainy with low cloud cover limiting Angelo's ability to conduct local training flights and to strengthen the birds.

After two weeks, the team headed south. They followed the Ob and Irtysh Rivers, and then traveled over-



Map by Zoe Rickenbach

Flight of Hope

land to the Belozerski Nature Reserve near the Kazakhstan border (see map). The birds gradually increased their flight strength by taking local practice flights.

The distance between dry and suitable landing sites was too long for the initial flights of the inexperienced birds, so they were placed in crates and transported by boat to the next landing site.

We did not attempt the full migration route this first year. In spite of the challenges, we learned valuable lessons. Angelo has flown with wild raptors and was amazed at the flight skill of the young birds. Their flight strength

steadily improved and by Belozerski, they were flying 2-3 times per day with Angelo for the last week of the experiment.

They soared and glided with agility in thermals. These highly-specialized aquatic birds also showed a helpful ability to adapt to a variety of habitats and natural foods along migration.

Three of the birds have returned to Oka. We hope that they can be transported to Iran later this winter and released at Bujagh National Park on the shore of the Caspian Sea. Here Angelo will fly with them locally to acclimate them to the site and to heighten local awareness for the plight of the species.

The other three birds were released at the Belozerski Reserve where they joined four other Siberian Cranes costume reared at Oka. All seven become wary of humans and departed south with the wild cranes.

It was hard for me to leave Siberia after

only 12 days while the outcome of the experiment was still unknown. As my plane rose above the clouds, I looked down

to see a circular rainbow with our image reflected in the center. On my last night with Angelo, he had mentioned the beauty of this same experience as he flew through and above the clouds. The image linked us together and with the birds and will always symbolize to me the hope that together we can close the circle and ensure a safe future for this magical creature.

Additional support was provided by:

- All-Russian Research Institute for Nature Protection
- Convention on Conservation of Migratory Species
- Cracid Breeding and Conservation Center
- Jane and Dick Dana
- The Trust for Mutual Understanding
- Charlotte and Walter Kohler Charitable Trust

For more information, see the following websites:

- www.savingcranes.org/SCFC/NewsBriefs.htm
- www.angelodarrigo.com/htm/eng/sib.htm
- www.fondsterkh.yamal.org (Russian language only)
- www.operationmigration.org
- www.wcmc.org.uk/cms



A fun moment as the crew rides atop tree branches dragged behind a tractor to smooth runways for the hang glider. Photo by Claire Mirande



Siberian Crane chicks form bonds with the hang glider and its pilot. Photo by Genkin Sergey Valentinovich



Angelo in free flight with Siberian Crane chicks. Photo by Natasia Puspinov



The young cranes and their costumed parent share a quiet evening on the banks of the Ob River. Photo by Alexander Sorokin

Angelo flies over the Pra River at the Oka Crane Breeding Center. Photo by Angelo D'Arrigo

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Travel to Great Crane Places with Dr. George Archibald

Tibet/China - Poyang Lake

February 9 - 25, 2003

Winter home to almost all the world's Siberian Cranes and many other waterfowl. As a wildlife spectacle, Poyang Lake is the Asian counterpart to Nebraska's Platte River. When we travel to Tibet, the home of the Black-necked Crane, we'll experience hundreds of cranes, amazing architecture and colorful culture.

Platte River, Nebraska

April 4 - 6, 2003

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million Sandhill Cranes, and if lucky, maybe a few Whooping Cranes.

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August 12 - 26, 2003

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Check out our website for trip details www.savingcranes.org/travel and click the George's Travels button or contact Julie Zajicek: 608-356-9462 ext. 156 julie@savingcranes.org

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Editor: Kate Fitzwilliams

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Individual	Sponsor	\$500
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Share your love for cranes and adopt one. Any birds on display in our main exhibit area, representatives of all fifteen species of cranes, are available for adoption. Adopting a crane is a great gift idea and helps support our captive flock. For \$30.00 you receive:

- Certificate suitable for framing
- Picture and biography of the adopted crane
- Crane species fact sheet
- One year ICF membership including four issues of *The Bugle*
- 10% discount at the ICF gift shop
- An ICF sticker

To adopt contact:
 Maryann Pilch, Membership Secretary
 PO Box 447
 Baraboo, WI 53913
 608-356-9462 ext. 101 or maryann@savingcranes.org

Celebrate Cranes and the new year with a Michael Forsberg calendar.

Each month features an inspiring crane photo by talented photographer Michael Forsberg. Like any item in our gift-shop, members receive a 10% discount – so **ORDER NOW!** Calendars are \$14.95 plus \$4.00 shipping and handling. To order, call 608-356-9462 ext. 117 or go to our Cybird gift store at www.savingcranes.org and click on Shop.



The Bottom Line Retires

For 20 years, Bob Hallam raised money for ICF – a remarkable record, and highly unusual in the development world. We will miss his relaxed, “don’t worry about it” attitude, and frank comments about life in general. Bob’s commitment to the cranes helped ICF grow into an organization that is directly involved in over 40 projects in over 22 countries. Bob (right) accepts a picture by Russian artist Victor Bahktin (left) depicting Bob watering the money tree.

Photo by Al Perry

Good Eggs

This year the Good Egg Awards for outstanding service to ICF were presented at ICF’s Annual Meeting on September 21st to Reinhardt and Shirley Jahn of Riverside, Illinois and the husband and wife team of Kennedy Gilchrist and Heidi Wilde of Madison, Wisconsin.

Ever since the Jahn’s son, Charles, was a volunteer at ICF in 1976, Reinhardt and Shirley have been ICF supporters. The Reinhardt and Shirley Jahn Foundation has provided major gifts for multiple improvements to our headquarters that range from the beautiful dancing crane wrought iron gates that welcome visitors, to steel studs for buildings. The Jahns wanted to support important and less glamorous things that otherwise might be difficult to

fund. Unfortunately, they were unable to attend the Annual Meeting because of Reinhardt’s sudden illness, and on October 8th, this kind man passed away.

Kennedy and Heidi have helped ICF by volunteering their time and talents. They have traveled with ICF to Bhutan, China, Japan, Korea, Nepal, Russia, and Vietnam. Kennedy is a board member for the Friends of Muraviovka Park, a group that raises support for Russia’s first private nature park, one that ICF helped found. Heidi helped organize a national lecture tour for Bhutanese colleagues to raise support for the Royal Society for the Preservation of Nature. During the past two years, these generous people have provided a home for Sherub, Bhutan’s foremost ornithologist, while he pursued

graduate studies at the University of Wisconsin - Madison.

Reinhardt and Shirley Jahn, Kennedy Gilchrist and Heidi Wilde are outstanding crane ambassadors. ICF thanks you for making our effectiveness worldwide possible.



Kennedy Gilchrist and Heidi Wilde accept their 2002 Good Egg Award from ICF President Jim Harris at ICF’s Annual Meeting September 21. Photo by Dave Chesky

2002 International Crane Workshop: Bringing People Together in Beijing

by Jim Harris, President

In 1987, ICF collaborated with the Ministry of Forestry in China to organize an International Crane Workshop in Qiqihar, the first major international conservation meeting in China. Fifteen years later, in August of 2002, ICF partnered with the China Ornithological Society to host a second international workshop in Beijing. This recent meeting reminded me of how much the crane world, and the world in general, has changed since 1987.

The 2002 meeting addressed research needs for cranes and their management, and also the process of people working together. We wanted a smaller, less exhausting and less expensive meeting than Qiqihar, where people would have the chance to talk and share ideas. The workshop drew 86 people of 12 countries, roughly half of them from China, and an ideal size for enhancing communication among crane specialists of different countries.

It helped that many people spoke both English and Chinese, especially the younger researchers. This meeting was the first international gathering ICF has hosted where translation was not a serious bottleneck. While in Qiqihar we had just one delegate from then Soviet Union; in Beijing we had six from Russia, all speaking English.

Another main goal of the workshop was to strengthen the China Crane and

Waterbirds Specialist Group that has cooperated with ICF and the Cracid Breeding and Conservation Center to publish China Crane News and distribute small research grants. In particular, we wished to foster closer working relationships between academic institutions and the nature reserves where cranes live. We were delighted that the State



A diverse ICF team gathered at the International Crane Workshop. Our projects depend on staff from Baraboo as well as associates working in their home countries around the world. ICF's Annual Campaign is raising support vital to this entire network. Thanks to everyone who has contributed already, and we hope more of you will help by year's end!

Forestry Administration (formerly Ministry of Forestry) facilitated the attendance of staff members from ten Chinese nature reserves important to cranes.

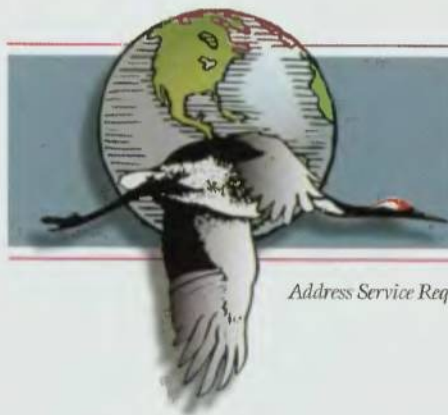
Some of the best presentations were actually only half finished projects, potentially the beginning of collaborations. Oleg Goroshko, who has long worked at Dauriski Nature Reserve in Russia, exemplified this effort to learn and to consider cranes from a larger

perspective. I first met him in 1991, as a young man avid about White-naped Cranes. Twice, ICF has helped him visit Poyang Lake, where White-naped Cranes winter, and he has also forged strong collaborations with Mongolian colleagues working just across the international border from Oleg's research area.

Oleg's paper explored the relationship between White-naped Crane reproductive success in the Russia-Mongolia border area with changes in rainfall, and ultimately with climate change that affects major crane breeding grounds in northeast Asia. His paper suggested that these breeding ground fluctuations in rainfall and breeding success might correlate with winter counts at Poyang. While data from Poyang Lake are not yet precise enough to support Oleg's suggestion, his ideas inspired participants to think of the White-naped Cranes – and other migratory species – as single populations linking distant places. We believe that stronger linkages among researchers of far distant places, working on common problems, are essential for the cranes.

Support for the International Crane Workshop came from ICF, the Cracid Breeding and Conservation Center, the Trust for Mutual Understanding, and the China Ornithological Society.


For more information on our Annual Campaign call Sally: 608-356-9462 ext. 145



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