

*The ICF* **Bugle**  
*Inspiring a Global Community*

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# Securing Waters for Cranes, Ourselves, Our World

*By Rich Beilfuss, Vice President-Programs*

Throughout the world, rivers and their floodplains provide clean drinking water and support agriculture, fisheries, and other vital ecosystem services that sustain our livelihoods. They nourish a remarkable biodiversity of plants and animals. Our most threatened cranes – Siberian, Whooping, Red-crowned, Wattled, and others – are intricately dependent on river floodplains for their survival.

But these magnificent places where cranes and waters meet are in trouble. Within our lifetime, the global population will reach nine billion people, mainly concentrated in urban centers. One billion will suffer from inadequate drinking water, and water shortages for agriculture will threaten food security for many. Political tensions already loom over the access to water and energy, and global climate change may further *Continued on page 2*



Wattled Cranes depend on the natural ebb and flow of rivers and their floodplains, as do many other species of plants and animals, and people.  
*Photo by Warwick Tarboton*



**Follow the Whooping Cranes!**  
 If you would like to receive email updates about Whooping Crane reintroduction efforts – please email: [info@savingcranes.org](mailto:info@savingcranes.org)

destabilize regions that are already water-stressed.

To help resolve this crisis, thousands of dams are being planned and built. Big dams seem like an important part of the solution – they divert water to cities and irrigation schemes, and generate hydropower as a renewable source of energy. But these dams come at great cost to forgotten people and wildlife downstream that depend on the natural ebb and flow of rivers. They provide a solution for some, but not for all.

ICF has long recognized that solving the global freshwater crisis is mainly a challenge of water distribution rather than absolute scarcity. Our solutions lie in bringing together diverse water users, managers, planners, and policy-makers to find common ground for sharing water. Cranes have a key role in this process – helping us understand the importance of naturally-functioning river systems for the web of life.

The great Zambezi River of southern Africa is a lifeline for 10 million people and many of Africa's greatest conservation areas, and home to most of the world's Wattled Cranes. For two decades ICF has worked in close partnership with colleagues from Africa and abroad to promote the sustainable management of Zambezi waters. At first, our goal seemed simple: to understand how big Zambezi dams affected Wattled Cranes in Mozambique, and what we

might do about it. We studied long-term changes in the annual timing, magnitude, and duration of Zambezi flows, and how these changes were adversely affecting these endangered birds. We learned how the annual spread and recession of floodwaters triggers production of the underground plant tubers that Wattled Cranes almost exclusively feed on, how failed floods fuel the wildfires that destroy their nests, and how mis-timed floodwaters wash out eggs and chicks. As we broadened our studies, we sought to understand how these hydrological changes affect a wider circle of species and ecological processes. A litany of ecological impacts emerged: loss of feeding grounds for many wildlife species, spread of damaging fires and invasive species, falling water tables with drying of lakes and wetlands, erosion of river banks and coastal shores, and salinization of soils.

Realizing that many of these impacts were as grave for people as for wildlife, we further expanded our investigation to include hundreds of interviews with local residents. We learned how these same changes in the water regime were harming agriculture, fisheries, grazing lands, natural resource stocks, and almost every aspect of how people use water for their daily needs. Economists estimated the value of these losses, and showed that the annual impact of hydrological changes resulted in tens of millions of dollars of lost revenues for Mozambique. These findings led us to develop simulation models of how Zambezi dams are operated. We modeled the potential for improved water

releases to mimic the natural flows that sustain freshwater ecosystems, support the human livelihoods that depend on these ecosystems, and contribute to the national economy.

Many important discoveries emerged from this work. First, the needs of people, cranes, and many other species of plants and animals are quite similar. There are no substantial conflicts or trade-offs among downstream water users: most require a return to more natural flow patterns. Second, immediate improvements downstream could be made with modest reductions in hydropower production, especially through the cooperative (conjunctive) management of Zambezi dams. Third, the economic value of releasing some water to downstream users outweighs its value when used solely for hydropower and upstream supply. And fourth, by releasing more natural flows in the early wet season, the dams increased their capacity to store damaging floods that may occur late in the wet season.

Our team used this scientific knowledge to advocate for a new approach to managing Zambezi waters in a more inclusive, equitable, and sustainable manner. Through forums with local communities, meetings with government decision-makers and planners, and presentations for global audiences such as the World Water Forum, we garnered local, national, and international attention. We gained the backing

of Mozambique's Ministry of Environment, the Zambezi Valley Planning Authority, and other government institutions.

Our vision now is for the river operators themselves to take ownership of this process and make it their "business as usual." This past year we joined forces with the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), which has worked for decades to improve water management in the Kafue Flats – another key floodplain in the Zambezi Basin, The Nature Conservancy, which is engaged in sustainable hydropower development for freshwater conservation around the world, the UNESCO Institute for Water Education, and the national universities of Mozambique, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. Our partnership supports Zambezi river basin managers in realizing their goals for improved water management. As we continue to build trust and common understanding among us, we are learning about the constraints managers face and the training and resources they need to move forward.

What began as an effort to help an endangered population of cranes has scaled-up through time to tackle one of the greatest challenges of our times: to manage rivers for biodiversity, human livelihoods, and economic development. Significant challenges lie ahead, for the Zambezi and other rivers in Africa, Asia, and North America. But cranes – our ambassadors for water – have much to teach us about a better water future for all.

### Zambezi River Basin



Map by Mike Engels

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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.

### Editor: Betsy Didrickson

Bugle comments or questions? Please write Betsy at Bugle@savingcranes.org or P.O. Box 447, Baraboo, WI. 53913

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# Notes from ICF President Jim Hook . . .

## 2009: Successes Amidst Adversity

**As we close ICF to the public at the end of October, we are pleased with the results of a very successful 2009 season.** Spring was intensely busy as we scrambled to complete our new *Spirit of Africa* exhibit. Due in part to this beautiful addition to our campus, the remainder of the year has seen a marked increase in visitor numbers, tour groups, memberships and gift shop sales. Public interest in the cranes has been a bright spot in a very challenging year and we are thankful for our hard-working gift shop and site management staff, as well as our dedicated volunteers and naturalists for their efforts.

In September, the Wisconsin Green Building Alliance (WGBA) announced their 2009 Sustainability and Energy Efficiency Leadership Awards. ICF's *Spirit of Africa* was one of two recipients of the *Focus on Energy Award of Excellence*. WGBA noted our use of natural daylight and solar power, a design that stresses the capture and reuse of gray water, our use of recycled materials and low maintenance native plant species. Most notable is our expectation to be energy positive - making us a net provider of energy back into the electrical power grid. Just this week, the Baraboo Chamber of Commerce announced that ICF was honored with the 2009 Tourism Award that recognizes the importance of organizations like ours to the strong local interest in eco-tourism.

Our Baraboo campus grew in October. With the strong support of our Board of Directors, we proceeded with the strategic acquisition of a 15-acre property directly across Shady Lane Road from our visitor center. The land and buildings provide important growth options for ICF. The property includes a dwelling that will accommodate up to six interns next year. In recent years our Guest House capacity has been insufficient. We also will have excellent outbuildings to support our Site Management Department. Finally, the property will provide convenient off-site parking – something that is always a challenge for special events and buses at ICF.

This issue of *The Bugle*, and our 2009 Annual Campaign, highlight some of ICF's work on major water issues confronting cranes and wetlands. We are proud indeed that a small Baraboo organization, mobilizing numerous partners through the charismatic cranes, is playing a pioneering role for water management to sustain wetlands and wildlife in southern Africa and

northeast China. We have advanced other precedent-setting projects in northwest Kazakhstan (for the spectacular Naurzum wetlands, part of a newly declared World Heritage Site) and Vietnam (Tram Chim National Park). Our efforts for water are further strengthened by the return of Dr. Rich Beilfuss, hydrologist, to ICF to serve as Vice President-Programs.

ICF hosted its first *Cranes of the World Festival* during our Annual Meeting in September. We welcomed a record number of visitors, as well as special guests such as wildlife educator David Stokes. At the evening banquet, we celebrated the annual conferral of the ICF "Good Egg" awards. I am very pleased to recognize the three recipients:

- The **UW Veterinary School** has actively supported ICF's bird programs over the past 25 years. Our close partnership gives ICF ready access to the school's facilities, and in turn, provides unique learning opportunities for veterinary students in the field of avian and conservation medicine.
- **Ann Grigsby** has volunteered with our Crane Conservation Department for over 12 years and has made substantial contributions to our chick rearing program and the care of adult cranes at Crane City. Her dedicated support and her incredibly positive attitude is an inspiration to all of us.
- We are all aware that ICF had two co-founders, George Archibald and Ron Sauey. But, as George states, "ICF had a third co-founder, **Forrest Hartmann.**" In the early years, Ron and George met with attorney Forrest once a week to pay bills, discuss non-profit legal issues and develop strategies for moving our fledgling foundation forward. We recognize Forrest for his generosity, his professional expertise, and his common sense. Most recently, he helped with our successful acquisition of the property across the road.

In these times it is particularly important to nurture ICF's culture of caring and commitment. It takes a wide range of dedicated people to make this organization succeed and we can all be thankful that this year, particularly, we continue to have this support working for us every day. Thanks to all for generous contributions of your time, skills and interest – you are a pillar of strength for our foundation.

# Water for Zhalong

By Jim Harris, Vice President

The wetlands of Songnen Plain in northeast China lie mid-way along the migration for Siberian Cranes from the Yangtze River Basin to the tundra for nesting. Cranes and other waterbirds rest here for weeks each spring and fall. Water, always scarce in this region, supports a growing human population and rapidly changing economy. All these wetlands are threatened by water diversion for human uses, coupled with natural cycles of drought. With climate change, water scarcity will become more frequent.

Zhalong is the largest of these wetlands and supports the world's largest breeding population of Red-crowned Cranes. Water development, however, has transformed the hydrology of this 210,000 hectare national nature reserve. A system of canals – each 30 meters across – has stopped the historic flows of water across the landscape, from the Wuyuer and Nen Rivers. The purpose is not to drain the marsh itself, but simply to carry water past to distant human users. Zhalong now must depend on rainfall. Yet the average annual rainfall of 420 mm is far less than evapotranspiration of 1,310 mm. Fortunately, the canals have five water gates located along upper parts of the marsh. No construction is needed to facilitate water releases.

Nevertheless, a regular program of water releases, to sustain biodiversity and ecosystem functions of the wetlands, had never happened in China. Numerous agencies needed to be involved. But the timing was good. Recently, the Ministry of Water Resources expanded its mandate, so that ecological values of water have equal consideration with economic values. The Songliao Water Resources Commission (SWRC) – under this Ministry and responsible for water planning in northeast China – was tasked with determining and supplying the amount of water needed to sustain Zhalong. Our parallel water planning project for Zhalong, undertaken by ICF and Chinese partners, provided ecological expertise that complemented the efforts of SWRC.



The spring of 2005 was critical. Aside from the devastating fires and national media attention brought to the negative changes at Zhalong, project staff had the opportunity to fly over Zhalong to conduct aerial counts of breeding Red-crowned Cranes. ICF's Dr. Su Liying worked at Zhalong in the 1980s and knew the marsh intimately. From the plane, she observed numerous roads, dikes and ditches constructed in recent years across the marsh and through the core area.

As a result the marsh was heavily fragmented. Water could not flow freely. The flight occurred during a large release of water in response to the dry spring conditions and fires. Due to ditches and roads, this water flooded some areas deeply, no doubt washing out nests of birds; other adjacent areas received no water at all. A water management plan would need to address the flows of water around these obstructions. These events highlighted the need for on-going monitoring of the wetland, a program that we established for water, plants, and waterbirds. These data have allowed us to evaluate the water releases and provide on-going recommendations for improving their effectiveness.

ICF has worked with Chinese wetlands and remote sensing experts to map fragmentation of the wetland, as a baseline for preventing further encroachments. Based on this mapping, a wetland restoration plan has been developed with recommendations to reduce fragmentation by putting culverts under roads and breaking down dikes that serve little purpose or that have been built illegally.

The SWRC included the features of our water management plan within regional water management plans that have since been endorsed by the central government of China. A remaining challenge has been met by the Heilongjiang Provincial Government, which has allocated 4 million yuan annually to pay for water releases for Zhalong. These decisions provide a national precedent and represent a major contribution for China wetlands.

Zhalong Marsh, however, has experienced a serious ecological crisis. Strong measures already initiated can reverse the downward trends if they are adjusted regularly according to monitoring results.

We are making specific recommendations: release of water from multiple locations, release of water in autumn rather than spring, gradual removal of obstacles to water flow in the wetland, and prohibiting further construction in the wetland.

Our work at Zhalong has been part of the UNEP/GEF Siberian Crane Wetland Project, and is also supported by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and ConocoPhillips Spirit of Migratory Bird Conservation.

*ICF helped develop water management plans for three other reserves in Songnen Plain. Following completion of its plan, Momoge Nature Reserve then purchased water from Nen River to replenish wetlands otherwise dry this autumn. Over 2,000 Siberian Cranes paused to rest and feed, the result of pioneering water management along China's crane flyway. Photo by Jim Harris*

# Ambassadors for Water

Like humans, our beloved cranes – one of the world's most endangered family of birds – depend on fresh water for survival. Water and freshwater ecosystems provide for human sustenance, industry, transportation, energy, recreation and renewal. For cranes, access to water and healthy wetlands is essential to feed, breed and thrive. When wetlands dry, cranes vanish. As human demand for water and the impacts from water scarcity and variable climates grow, so do the strains on freshwater systems. It is our human obligation to create practical solutions and ensure access to water for all people, and we at ICF act upon that obligation as we work for the cranes.

The connections between water, people and cranes are central to nearly all ICF conservation programs. In order to save these magnificent birds, we must at the same time help meet the needs of the people who share these freshwater environments. Through the International Crane Foundation's annual campaign, *Ambassadors for Water*, we celebrate the remarkable effectiveness of cranes at inspiring partnership, creativity and action to achieve water conservation solutions for people and wildlife. The campaign advances key ICF programs where water is a central theme and expands our organization's expertise in this critical area of conservation.

To this end, *Ambassador for Water* allows a key addition to our staff, hydrologist Dr. Rich Beilfuss, as ICF's Vice President-Programs. Rich initiated ICF's work in Africa in the 1990s and has rejoined us to assume an expanded leadership role for the organization and to guide our many water-related projects. Rich will expand efforts to use environmental flows (prescribed releases of water from dams) on the Zambezi River Delta in Africa to restore habitat for threatened Wattled Cranes while sustaining those facets of the system that are vital to the region's food production and economy. The same flowing water needed to sustain people and nourish wetlands is essential to the continuation of Wattled Cranes and many other species. Rich's pioneering work demonstrates how dams and hydropower can be more compatible with ecosystem protection and wildlife.

At Poyang Lake in China, ICF has worked for over a decade to help safeguard the world's last flock of Siberian Cranes. Now is a

critical time for the fate of these birds as China's ambitious water development plans threaten to inundate their last significant wintering location. The plight of Siberian Cranes has captured the special attention of the Chinese government and local stakeholders, and ICF has earned an important role as our 11-year studies of the cranes and wetlands at Poyang provides the best basis for integrating waterbird conservation with improving human livelihoods.

Today, ICF researcher James Burnham is working to complete his doctoral research developing a computer model to help Chinese resource managers assess the impacts of proposed dams on the most important areas for Siberian Cranes and other wildlife. *Ambassadors for Water* supports this program and more to protect Asia's threatened cranes and freshwater ecosystems.

At home, ICF veterinarian Dr. Barry Hartup is serving as the medical lead on a multi-year project that will track the last naturally-reproducing flock of Whooping Cranes, which migrates between Wood Buffalo National Park in Canada and Aransas National Wildlife Refuge in Texas. This population suffered last winter as water diversions and drought reduced flows of freshwater into the estuaries where the Whooping Cranes feed on blue crabs. Research by Barry and partners will increase our understanding of the habitat requirements and challenges faced by Whooping Cranes during migration, and ultimately help inform and improve future conservation efforts for this rarest of the world's endangered cranes and the delicate systems on which they, and we, depend.

Your special gift to ICF's *Ambassadors for Water* campaign supports these important projects and more – across Asia, Africa and North America – where opportunities exist to help people, cranes, wild things and wild places. Together, we will continue to demonstrate how creative, inclusive, science-based approaches solve conflicts over water and secure a better future for us all.

Double your gift to conservation!  
Through commitments from ICF's Board of Directors, Phil Pines and other generous donors, your gift to the campaign will be matched dollar-for-dollar until we reach our goal of \$600,000.

*Siberian Cranes. Photo by Sture Traneving*

# Crane News From Around the World



Capture team putting out snares in shallow water at Napahai Nature Reserve, Yunnan Province, China. Left: Yu Hongzhong from Shangri-la Forestry Bureau; Right: Wang Kai from Kunming Institute of Zoology. Photo by Li Fengshan

## Satellite tracking reveals a new migration route for Black-necked Cranes

By Li Fengshan and Sara Gavney Moore

Working with the China Exploration and Research Society, Kunming Institute of Zoology of the Chinese Academy of Sciences, Napahai Nature Reserve, Shangri-la County Forestry Bureau and National Bird Banding Center of China, ICF researchers successfully caught and banded two Black-necked Cranes with satellite transmitters at Napahai Nature Reserve in Yunnan Province, China (at 10,700 feet) from late February to mid-March 2009. One bird was caught with snares developed by the Kunming Institute of Zoology and the other by the same snares used for Sandhill Cranes in the USA. The first crane started its spring migration on April 7, 2009, stopped at Daocheng and Litang counties in Sichuan Province and on April 8th arrived at the border area between Baiyu and Xinlong counties in Sichuan. The total migration distance was about 400 km. This is the first time we have discovered that Black-necked Cranes use this area for breeding or spending the summer. The other crane, a juvenile, left Napahai on June 4 and arrived at the breeding area in Daocheng in one day, with a distance of 180 km travelled. The two migration routes are new to our knowledge of Black-necked Crane migration.



Educator Hu Yabin leads an environmental education activity in the grasslands at Keerqin Nature Reserve. Photo by Joan Garland

## Summer Camp in China

By Joan Garland

This summer ICF staff Jim Harris, Vice President and Joan Garland, Outreach Coordinator participated in a summer camp at Keerqin Nature Reserve in northeast China, breeding grounds for the Red-crowned and White-naped Cranes and migration stopover site for the Siberian Crane. The camp was led by educators from ICF's partner organization, Beijing Brooks Education Center, a Beijing-based nonprofit organization. Camp activities for students focused on ecosystem conservation and environmental stewardship. Educator workshops trained local teachers and nature reserve staff to implement these lessons. The camp was part of the *Three White Cranes, Two Flyways, One World* education project, which links students and teachers along the East Asian crane flyway with students and educators along the eastern flyway in the U.S. Project activities in China are supported by the UNEP/GEF Siberian Crane Wetlands Project. Activities for American schools are supported by the Erica P. John Fund and the Elizabeth A. Brinn Foundation.



Sarus pair duet in rice paddy. Photo by K.S. Gopi Sundar

## Update from the Field

By K.S. Gopi Sundar

Rainfall patterns in north India are changing, apparently in part due to the changing global climate. This year, the seasonal monsoonal rains began very late – the latest in four decades – and very little rainfall occurred in the central Gangetic flood plains. Sarus Cranes time their breeding with rainfall and the flooding of fields in preparation for the rice planting. In normal years, most Sarus pairs begin building nests in late June, but the first nests this year were seen in mid-August. Rice planting was also similarly delayed. The first few eggs are beginning to hatch now, and surveys over the winter will show how successful Sarus pairs have been relative to normal years. These surveys demonstrate the necessity to incorporate globally occurring changes in Sarus Crane conservation plans in addition to including local changes in wetland management.



Whooping Cranes. Photo by Christoph Mans

## Whooping Crane Reintroduction Update

Twelve pairs of Whooping Cranes nested in Wisconsin in April of this year. Unfortunately, all initial nests were abandoned. Five pairs re-nested. Three of these nests were abandoned, while two pairs hatched chicks. One pair had their chick for two weeks before it disappeared. The other pair hatched a chick from an egg that was "swapped" into their nest (their own egg was infertile). This chick was observed for about a month before it also disappeared. Many nest abandonments coincided with the hatch of black flies. Incubating birds appeared to be swarmed, stressed and then left their nests. The chicks that hatched were perhaps taken by predators. Releases of captive-reared Whooping Cranes will continue next year at Necedah National Wildlife Refuge (NWR). Several studies are underway to determine the cause of the nest failures.

Twenty Whooping Crane chicks left Necedah NWR behind ultralight aircraft in mid October. Due to adverse weather conditions forward progress of this migration has been hampered. Nine Direct Autumn Release (DAR) chicks have been acclimated by costumed aviculturists at the Necedah Refuge. These chicks were released recently to integrate and migrate with wild cranes.

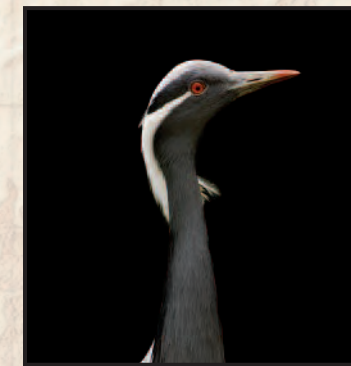


Photo by Rich Armstrong

## Demoiselle Cranes in Ethiopia

By Berihun Gebremedhin, Yirmed Demeke, Teshale Atsebeha and Berhane Meressa

A field trip to the Kafta-Sheraro National Park in northwest Ethiopia, was undertaken from March 26 - April 16, 2009 to assess the faunal diversity of the park and learn the impacts of the major threats. The park is registered among the 73 Important Bird Areas in Ethiopia. Besides supporting the remnant elephant population in the expanse of the Tekeze Valley, and being a home to many ungulates, predators and a variety of birds, this expedition reports for the record more than 21,500 Demoiselle Cranes *Anthropoides virgo*. This number is about 9% of the world's Demoiselle Crane population, which qualifies the park to be a Ramsar Site. This record is perhaps the first document for Ethiopia and confirms that the country serves as a wintering site for Demoiselle Cranes. Finally, this report suggests that the Ethiopian as well as the Eritrean Governments and local and international conservation groups should provide their utmost attention to this park.



Wildlife entertainer David Stokes teaches visitors at the Cranes of the World Festival about native reptiles, amphibians, and mammals. Photo by Debbie Johnson

## A Good Year for ICF's Visitor Program

By Rob Carr

2009 proved to be a successful year for ICF's visitor program. We have welcomed over 27,000 visitors to our site this season. ICF provided guided programs for over 15,000 people, including students and teachers from over 100 schools in the Midwest. In addition, we held two well attended special events. The *Spirit of Africa* grand opening marked the highest attendance day in ICF's history, and our first annual *Cranes of the World Festival* in September also boasted record attendance. We would like to thank all of the dedicated staff, interns and volunteers that made this season's success possible. For more information about visiting ICF, guided programs or special events, please contact us at (608) 356-9462 ext. 127 or visit ICF's website at [www.savingcranes.org/visiticf.html](http://www.savingcranes.org/visiticf.html)



**New Crane Specialist Forum** ICF announces a new opportunity for crane specialists from anywhere in the world to post updates on crane status, distribution, threats to cranes or their habitats, and conservation experiences or solutions. To contribute, please send text and photos to moderator Jim Harris, Chair of the Crane Specialist Group under the auspices of the Species Survival Commission of IUCN and Wetlands International. Your news and material will be helpful to us as the Crane Specialist Group updates the Crane Action Plan, and will be available for anyone to read. Questions about research, or requests for advice or others' experience with specific conservation challenges, are also welcome. The Crane Specialist Forum is under construction on the ICF website. There will be an icon on the home page that will connect specialists with the forum. Help us develop the content by sending your information and photos to: [CraneSpecialists@savingcranes.org](mailto:CraneSpecialists@savingcranes.org)





## International Crane Foundation

E11376 Shady Lane Rd.  
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# Holiday Gifts



Our new *Cranes of the World* T-shirt is available just in time for the gift giving season. The artwork was created by our very own Education Naturalist Darcy Love. These 100% pre-shrunk cotton tees come in LONG sleeved sizes S-XL in dark chocolate or forest green or SHORT sleeved, also in sizes S-XL in indigo blue or dark chocolate. Price: \$24.99 Short Sleeve or \$29.99 Long Sleeve. **FREE shipping** in the Continental U.S. through Jan. 15, 2010.



Artist Jay Jocham has done it again. Another wonderful and original Christmas card. This one is titled, *Enlightenment* and the inside text reads: **Joy Peace Hope**. This lively winter scene of dancing Whooping Cranes comes in packages of 10 cards with white envelopes. Price: \$20.00. **FREE shipping** in the Continental U.S. through Jan. 15, 2010.



Let the festivities begin... with this 3" hand-painted **glass ball ornament**. These meticulously crafted ornaments come in a beautiful red fabric gift box that is ready to go at a price that is sure to please. Price: \$15.99. **FREE shipping** in the Continental U.S. through Jan. 15, 2010.

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