

*The ICF*

# Bugle

*Inspiring a Global Community*

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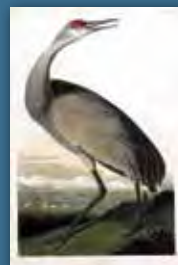
## Whooping Cranes of the 60<sup>th</sup> Parallel

*By Barry Hartup, Director of Veterinary Services*

Stepping out of the plane in Fort Smith, Northwest Territories, Canada, I could see the haze and detect the acrid smell from forest fires that had engulfed large patches of Wood Buffalo National Park (WBNP) this July. Our mission to capture 10 Whooping Crane chicks was on the verge of a costly delay due to poor visibility that was hampering reconnaissance flights. Fortunately, the news from Mark Bidwell of the Canadian Wildlife Service and Felipe Chavez-Ramirez of the Gulf Coast Bird Observatory the following day was good. Their efforts had documented many Whooping Crane family groups that would be suitable for a visit from our team of crane catchers, which also included Dave Brandt of the U.S. Geological Survey. *Continued on page 2*



Whooping Crane 2012-24 walks slowly away into a crane marsh in Wood Buffalo National Park after being released at water's edge. The chick had just been banded and health checked as part of a multi-year study in late July. *Photos by Mark Bidwell*



*Dr. George Archibald  
wins Audubon's  
Luskin Award,*

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For the past three summers, ICF has provided professional veterinary support to the Whooping Crane Tracking Partnership (not to be confused with the Whooping Crane Eastern Partnership) during captures and satellite tagging of pre-fledged chicks at WBNP. ICF's Veterinary Services Department is ideally positioned to play this important role in helping ensure the safety and welfare of the cranes, as well as adding significant scientific value to the project in the form of a first-time health assessment of the Aransas-Wood Buffalo population funded by the University of Wisconsin Companion Animal Fund.

After carefully checking our gear and refreshing ourselves on the applicable protocols – including an introduction to our Parks Canada spotter, Lucy Patterson – we climbed aboard the helicopter that would take us to the crane marshes 20 minutes away. We used a technique similar to that of the late Ernie Kuyt, who banded Whooping Cranes in the 1970s: a capture team is let off a short distance away from a family group (2 adults and their chick), and the helicopter then hovers a short distance from the cranes opposite the approach of the ground team, which is trudging through rough, boggy terrain. The cranes typically walk away from the disturbance of the helicopter, but the pilot attempts to steer their path away from open water, where capture of the chick would be nearly impossible. Once the adults see the ground team, they flush to a safe distance and our search for the chick begins in earnest.

The pre-fledged chicks are 7 to 10 weeks old, some nearly fully grown, and weigh 8 to 12 pounds. Ideally, they haven't achieved the ability to gain lift, and often seek cover and hide from a potential predator rather than actively evade it. In fact, our first attempt was about to be called off (we work with a 12-minute touch-down to capture limit), when I happened to turn to my left, and lo and



The boreal forest gives way to the crane marshes (right) of Wood Buffalo National Park near Fort Smith, Northwest Territories, Canada.

behold, there was the chick bunkered down below a small tree. The chick is then hooded to reduce visual stimulation and stress, and we begin our work on the bird.

I start by taking a blood sample that will be used as our baseline for many health related tests, while Dave attaches a GPS-satellite tag and color identification leg bands. In a carefully choreographed dance between swats at mosquitoes or flies, we then take swabs for virus and bacterial culture, wing, leg and beak measurements, weight, and finally note any other physical characteristics, including an oral exam, just prior to release. Our handling time averaged 13 minutes per bird this year, and we were successful in capturing 10 chicks in 11 tries – a new record!

The study has marked and sampled 31 chicks in WBNP since 2010. This is an impressive total that should provide several years' worth of migration, winter and breeding range movement data on a scale never before known, as well as an excellent health dataset to compare to captive-reared young and adult birds captured at Aransas National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) in Texas. The information will be used to assess ecological and conservation imperatives with respect to Whooping Crane recovery, including insights into their use of the Canadian tar sands region, Platte River usage, overlap with wind energy and coastal developments, winter ranging habits in times of drought, and disease risks tied to particular sites or seasons.

While work in WBNP has likely finished for the time being, the capture crew has one big, last task ahead of it: capture 20 adults on Matagorda Island at Aransas NWR in Texas this winter and next. Instead of helicopters, smoke and terrible terrain, we may end up dealing with old trucks, lousy roads and snakes!



READ MORE ONLINE  
savingcranes.org/whats-new/2012/08/whooping-crane-tracking-partnership/

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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](mailto:Bugle@savingcranes.org) or P.O. Box 447, Baraboo, WI 53913

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## Notes from the President

### Cranes and Sustainable Energy



By Rich Beilfuss

When I think about the conservation challenges we face in the coming century, my thoughts invariably turn to food, water, and energy. How will we feed 9 billion people and still maintain healthy landscapes for cranes and other life we hold dear? How will we water thirsty cities and farmlands without sacrificing life-supporting rivers and wetlands? Can we meet the global demand for electricity without devastating our land, water, air...and climate?

We write and speak often about the role of cranes as flagships for sustainable water management, and the unique challenges of crane conservation on agricultural landscapes. The connections between cranes and energy – including its distribution, production, and exploration – are equally strong, but perhaps not as well-known.

In recent years, overhead power distribution lines have emerged as a serious threat to cranes and many other species worldwide. Cranes are vulnerable to power line collisions when flying in and out of wetland roosting sites before dawn and after dusk (when the lines are hard to see, even with markers), and on staging grounds where cranes are less familiar with the landscape. Juvenile birds new to flight are especially prone to collisions. Where cranes congregate in huge numbers, such as on the Platte River in spring, these collisions can take a heavy toll.

We are working with partners across the globe to reduce the risk of power line collisions along crane flyways. A new ICF collaboration with the Northern Prairie Wildlife Research Center and The Crane Trust aims to reduce power line collisions and other risks in the central flyway for Sandhill and Whooping Cranes. Our partners in South Africa, the Endangered Wildlife Trust (EWT), developed an innovative program with their national power company, Eskom – they are relocating power lines from the highest-risk areas, ensuring the safer placement of new lines, and marking power line stretches that cranes traverse by day. Together with EWT, we aim to expand this program to influence power distribution systems and decision-making across Africa. Our colleagues in Bhutan carried this a step further, burying more than 30 miles of powerlines at great cost to eliminate the risk to their beloved Black-necked Cranes. These decisions benefit much more than cranes – millions of birds, including vultures, bustards, eagles, owls and other raptors are thought to die each year as a result of power line interactions.

At the source, where power is produced, cranes also inspire improved land stewardship. Our long-term collaboration with power companies on the Zambezi River is balancing hydropower production

with downstream water requirements for cranes, other wildlife, and thousands of farmers and fishers negatively affected by river regulation. We also seek to understand and mitigate the impacts of “environmentally-friendly” sources of energy, such as wind turbines, that also could prove deadly for migrating cranes and other species.

Sustainable paths to energy exploration and mining remain a key conservation challenge. The procession of oil-laden barges through the coastal wintering grounds of Endangered Whooping Cranes in Texas is a constant reminder of the delicate balance between energy and biodiversity – a balance that was nearly tipped by the massive Gulf Coast oil spill of 2011. In South Africa, grasslands home to Blue, Wattled, and Grey Crowned Cranes are being developed at an alarming rate for coal and natural gas. Elsewhere in Africa, peatlands are being mined and destroyed to meet desperate, short-term energy needs.

Perhaps nowhere is there a starker trade-off between energy development and sustainable land use than on the tar sands of northwest Canada. Tar sands are mined for oil on a massive scale on the migratory route of the last naturally-occurring population of Whooping Cranes, one of the most heavily used flyways for waterbirds in North America. Last month, our colleagues at LightHawk flew over this devastated landscape and wrote a stunning exposé in *WayPoint Flight Stories*, Issue 68 (URL below). Their stark photos depict a region that, in their words, is more reminiscent of Mordor, the mythical dark land in Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings*, than the pristine boreal forests and wetlands of our mind's eye. Of grave concern to cranes are the vast, lake-sized tailings ponds that are so toxic that most every waterbird that lands on them dies – nearly 1,600 ducks in one reported incident. Tribal groups living downstream are experiencing a spike in rare cancers, asthma, and diabetes. The strong link between tar sands development and global greenhouse gas emissions is widely criticized by climate scientists.

Cranes have often led us to better, more sustainable solutions for our land and water. I hope that public concern over the fate of Whooping Cranes, iconic symbols of recovery from the brink, will yet play a key role in finding a healthier path to our energy future.



## Hunters and Conservationists Join Forces to Protect Cranes in Central Asia

By Claire Mirande and Elena Ilyashenko



*I am 60 years old and I have been hunting almost for 40 years and thousands of birds including white cranes were hunted by myself and my sons. I was never aware of the decline and vulnerability of the birds before and I thought that our hunting would never decrease the number of birds, but now I understand that Siberian Cranes have disappeared and I am very upset accordingly. I will never hunt the cranes anymore and I will prevent my relatives as well.*  
– Amir Mohammed, Tribal elder and hunter from Kapisa Province, Afghanistan

Illegal hunting is the primary cause of the decline of the Critically Endangered Siberian Crane in Western and Central Asia. Through the support of the Mohamed bin Zayed Species Conservation Fund, ICF promoted widespread public education to hunters in Afghanistan, Kazakhstan, Pakistan, and Russia to improve understanding of the Siberian Crane and its habitats. Relationships were fostered with hunters who are inspired to make choices to help protect this species and its ecosystems, and to correctly identify the species, choose to avoid hunting cranes, and report sightings.

Each country undertook diverse and creative approaches to develop relationships and shared understanding with the hunting community. They gave presentations and held open discussions with hunters, border guards, and officials. They produced films and distributed posters and brochures to help hunters correctly identify the Siberian Crane. They also placed display boards on well-travelled roads near key wetlands.



*This group of hunters signed up for the Hunter Committee and training in Sayad, Kapisa Province, Afghanistan in February 2012. Photos by Qais Agah*

This work was not easy. Our Afghanistan colleagues encountered serious challenges, but were finally permitted to visit with hunters in important, high security border zones. With help from the local elders they established Hunter Committees to address crane conservation issues. They met with the District Governor and Chief of the Frontier Police in charge of security of the borders with Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan who are enforcing regulations to protect cranes including trapping by poisonous drugs. The team travelled in an unsteady boat across the Amudaria River to a target wetland on the border with Uzbekistan to visit crane areas. They conducted educational activities for hundreds of people in eight villages. They explained the significance of cranes and their ecosystem and their critical status in the world and in this area. Community elders and religious scholars explained the values of birds and the need to protect them through verses from the Quran. The words of Mr. Amir Mohammed above deeply touched our hearts. It is through discovery and affirmation of the shared connections with the local people that our best hope lies to secure a brighter future for cranes.

## A Whooping Crane Education Program

By Erica Cochran and Joan Garland, ICF Communications and Education Department

For 40 years, ICF and partners have worked to help Whooping Cranes recover from the brink of extinction. The people who share the land with these amazing birds will ultimately determine if they can recover and thrive to be part of our natural living heritage. Through a new education program, ICF hopes to engage thousands of teachers and inspire millions of students and their families to care about Whooping Cranes.

ICF and Hamline University's Center for Global Environmental Education have formed a partnership to develop a National Whooping Crane Environmental Education program. The program will educate 4<sup>th</sup> - 8<sup>th</sup> grade students, their parents and their teachers in how individuals and communities can help Whooping Cranes recover and thrive. Through the use of interactive multimedia and games, students will value having cranes as part of their future, they will understand the challenges of equitable water management and land stewardship, and they will engage in water conservation, wetland management, and responsible hunting practices.



*Students at Fulton Learning Center in Fulton, Texas learn about the importance of blue crabs for Whooping Crane survival.*

We have started this work in Texas through a partnership with Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi's Harte Research Institute for Gulf of Mexico Studies. A team of Texas teachers is helping us to develop and pilot a part of this program focused on the critical issue of maintaining a healthy estuary ecosystem through water management and conservation in the Coastal Bend of south Texas. We plan to launch the program and conduct our first teacher training in the summer of 2013.

Eventually we hope to reach every community in the vicinity of wild Whooping Cranes, inspiring our nation's youth to care about the future of cranes.

## FORTY YEARS of Conservation Leadership

By George Archibald, ICF Co-Founder

Wow, forty years! I look somewhat different in the mirror these days, but I am just as enthusiastic as ever about ICF's mission to touch the places and people where cranes still dance. What began as the dream of two students has matured into a global organization dedicated to saving this most endangered family of birds and the ecosystems on which cranes (and all of us) depend.

From the beginning, ICF's headquarters near Baraboo has been the incubator for both ideas and eggs. With five species of endangered cranes hidden behind the "Iron Curtain" of the USSR and the "Bamboo Curtain" of China, we spent our first decade establishing a species bank through captive breeding efforts. Conserving cranes in the wild was also a top priority back then as Co-founder Ron Sauey's early work focused on India and my efforts were concentrated in Japan and Korea. When relations between China and the U.S. improved, ICF entered a decade of exploration



*In 1978, George Archibald (left) met a weary Ron Sauey at the airport. Ron had just arrived from Moscow with five precious Siberian Crane eggs in tow, and a chick that hatched in the suitcase en route! George and Ron's innovative ideas and leadership in the early days helped ICF establish a unique "species bank" that is now vital for the reintroduction of endangered cranes. Continuity of excellent leadership has been central to ICF's successes for people, cranes, and their ecosystems over the decades.*

with Chinese colleagues to locate cranes and encourage habitat protection. When the Iron Curtain finally fell in 1991, new possibilities opened throughout the former USSR. As opportunities became available, we joined forces with colleagues in more places important for cranes.

As laws were enacted to protect cranes and their habitats, it became obvious that the fate of wildlife depended on the values and welfare of local people who shared water and land with cranes. Many who reside near cranes in Asia and Africa live in poverty and are concerned about meeting their basic needs. Consequently, ICF helped develop model community-based projects in some of the most economically depressed areas of China, Vietnam, and East Africa to improve local livelihoods while inspiring new appreciation for the endangered birds. We also grew to realize that the sustainable management of river basins was critical to the health of downstream wetlands, and ICF has become deeply involved in securing vital flows in major river systems around the world.

These achievements have been possible through your dedication and support, both in funding and volunteerism, to promote conservation leadership.

I think back to the early years when Baraboo attorney and passionate conservationist Forrest Hartmann met every Wednesday evening with Ron and me to pay bills and discuss crane business. Millie Zantow and Joan Fordham respectively held ICF together in the 1970s and 1980s, when Ron and I were helping cranes in far-away places. Mary Wickhem led the Board of Directors for eighteen years and never missed a meeting. Local hero of circus fame, Chappie Fox, brought inspiration and common sense to our operations and inspired the creation of the Ron Sauey Memorial Library for Bird Conservation following Ron's tragic death in 1987.

## George Archibald to Receive Inaugural Audubon Award

ICF Co-founder Dr. George Archibald will receive the inaugural Dan W. Lufkin Prize for Environmental Leadership from the National Audubon Society in January. The award will be presented during a special gala at the Plaza Hotel in New York. Congratulations to George for receiving this recognition for his lifelong commitment to cranes!



And gifted young people joined and remain on the staff to this day. Jim Harris started as the head of education in 1986 and today lives in China where he directs our programs in East Asia. Claire Mirande started as our Curator of Birds in 1984 and today with Jim spearheads the World Working Group of Cranes. Since 1987, Jeb Barzen has led the Field Ecology

Department and today oversees a fleet of researchers who study wild cranes and their habitats from Wisconsin to Cambodia. And our President and CEO, Rich Beilfuss, started at ICF as a graduate student and intern in 1988, before launching our programs in Africa in the 1990s.

As we celebrate our fortieth anniversary year, forthcoming issues of *The ICF Bugle* will highlight conservation leaders at home and abroad, many of whom were supported by ICF to pursue graduate programs at leading universities with thesis projects related to cranes. Two of these leaders, Tran Triet and Barry Hartup, are featured in this issue.

Continuity of excellent leadership has been central to ICF's successes for people, cranes, and their ecosystems over the decades. Through our 2012/13 annual campaign, *Forty Years of Conservation Leadership*, we continue advancing our global programs while placing special emphasis on mentoring and advising scores of young learners – through curricula for school children, volunteer opportunities, paid internships, field training, and post-graduate programs – to develop the on-the-ground leadership that makes our work and effective conservation possible.

**ICF's** Board of Directors and several generous supporters will provide over \$400,000 to this campaign. I invite you to make a special matching gift to help us reach our goal of \$800,000. Together, we will help capable and dedicated people around the world grow professionally and direct their energy to benefit cranes and the people who share their landscapes, today and tomorrow. From the heart of the USA, through strong leadership at ICF headquarters and with our colleagues abroad, we will help keep the cranes dancing over the next 40 years. Thank you very much for your faithful support.

# Mekong University Network Grows Strong

By Tran Triet, ICF Southeast Asia Program Coordinator

In 2002, ICF initiated the establishment of a university network in Southeast Asia that focused on wetland research and training. From 8 university members at the beginning, the University Network has now expanded to 18 members from 7 countries, including all 6 Mekong countries and Malaysia. From July 18 to August 6 of this year, the University Network implemented its 10th regional training course on wetland ecology and management.

Nineteen students, from 16 universities in China, Southeast Asia and Louisiana State University in the U.S., attended the training, which was taught by nine lecturers from Malaysia, Thailand, USA and Vietnam. An Giang University hosted the training course at its new campus in Long Xuyen City, Vietnam. Half of the training time, occurred in the field where students and instructors practiced basic topics of wetland ecology in different wetland ecosystems of the Mekong Delta (river, lakes, mangroves, floodplain swamp forests and marshes). During field practice, course



Dr. Rattanawat Chaiyarat (Mahidol University) and Ms. Haitarat Chaiamatakul (Kasetsart University) read the first SET benchmarks installed at Tram Chim National Park during the 10th Wetland Training Course, August 2012. Photo by Jeb Barzen

participants, with direct instruction from Dr. Donald Cahoon from the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) Patuxent Wildlife Research Center, also installed 3 SET (Surface Elevation Table) benchmarks at Tram Chim National Park. These benchmarks serve in the monitoring network of coastal surface elevation developed by USGS and assist scientific research on the impacts of global climate change.

The training course this year received financial support from the U.S. Department of State, USGS, International Crane Foundation and An Giang University. After the 10th training course, the University Network has trained more than 220 young lecturers and wetland managers from universities, governmental agencies and conservation NGOs in the Mekong River Basin.

The University Network has also developed and coordinated regional research projects that were jointly implemented by member universities. The most recent example is a study of persistent organic pollutants (POPs) on wetlands of the Mekong River Basin. Eight universities from five Mekong countries participated in the study, which was led by ICF. The study also involved the USGS National

Wetland Research Center, the University of Wisconsin – Madison, and Louisiana State University. The study is funded by a grant from the U.S. Department of State under the Mekong Initiative established by Secretary Hilary Clinton.

Within four months, more than 50 researchers from participating universities collected 531 sediment samples from about 450 wetlands located throughout the Mekong Basin from Myanmar to Laos, Thailand, Cambodia and Vietnam. This project is the first comprehensive study on POPs ever done for the Mekong River Basin and one of a few such large-scale studies worldwide. Results of the study showed that high

concentrations of POPs were present in wetlands that are important for conservation, including those that serve as breeding and wintering habitats for Sarus Cranes. The study recommends further investigation of the impacts of POPs on wildlife and humans in the Lower Mekong Basin. ICF researchers are working alongside their colleagues in the University Network to publish the results of this landmark study.

Since the beginning of the University Network, ICF has been assisting with fundraising and coordinating training and research activity. With a recent grant from U.S. Department of State, ICF is helping the University Network to further develop into an independent non-profit organization capable of directly handling training, research and public relation activities.

## Visit Southern Africa with ICF: Zambia, Zimbabwe, and South Africa August 14-24, 2013

This adventure led by ICF President and CEO, Rich Beilfuss, will begin in Lusaka, Zambia and conclude at Johannesburg, South Africa. We will visit South Luangwa National Park, the magnificent Kafue Flats, the awe-inspiring Victoria Falls, and the lakes district of South Africa. Together with key ICF staff and partners, we will learn about

international efforts to save three species of endangered cranes, and experience the myriad birds, lions, elephant, buffalo, leopard, zebra, and hippos that share these diverse landscapes. We will keep the group small, with a maximum of 14 travelers. Call 608-356-9462 ext. 101 or email [info@savingcranes.org](mailto:info@savingcranes.org) for more details on this awesome adventure!



## ANNUAL MEMBER DAY

Thank you, members for attending our first-ever *Pizza on the Prairie* event! The evening was reminiscent of a family reunion as ICF staff shared stories from around the world.



Despite hundreds of visitors being on our site - there's always a peaceful vista to enjoy!



Our coveted behind-the-scenes tour of Crane City is always a big hit.

Photos by Deb Johnson

## GOOD EGG AWARDS



Good Egg awards were presented to Tom Lynn (left) and to Charlie Luthin. Tom was recognized for outstanding contributions of time and effort photographing native plants, prairie, and panoramas at ICF, while Charlie was lauded for launching ecological restoration efforts at ICF, and for major contributions to the reintroduction of Whooping Cranes and the conservation of wetlands worldwide.

## HOLIDAY GIFTS FOR CRANIACS



### And the Crane Flew Over the Moon

This original block print of a Sandhill Crane flying

in front of a full moon was created exclusively for the International Crane Foundation by one of our staff. Silk-screened onto beautiful Galapagos Blue 100% cotton t-shirts. \$19.99. Unisex sizes – S,M,L, XL, XXL



### International Crane Foundation Logo T-Shirt

Our beautiful logo embodies the mission of the

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### Peace and Whooping Cranes Holiday Card by Janet Flynn

Adapted from an original watercolor

of Whooping Cranes. This self-standing card is pretty enough to keep up year round. Package of 10 -8 1/2" x 11" cards and 10 - #10 recycled white envelopes - \$20/pkg.

Shop online at [www.craneshop.org](http://www.craneshop.org), email [Giftshop@savingcranes.org](mailto:Giftshop@savingcranes.org) or call 608-356-9462 ext. 116.



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# Cranes on Ice

*By James Harris, ICF Senior Vice President*

The Black-necked Crane inhabits high elevations of the Tibetan-Qinghai Plateau, descending to slightly lower altitudes in winter. These high places have experienced some of the earth's most dramatic changes in climate. The warmer conditions of recent years might make life – and survival – easier for this threatened species and thus partly account for the dramatic growth in this crane's population since the early 1990s. As we try to understand how climate change may affect the cranes, however, we must consider more than simply average monthly or annual temperatures.

At the first meeting of the Black-necked Crane Network, held in Yunnan, China in August, we discussed impacts of more variable weather, in particular the greater extremes of hot and cold for this region. Dr. Kong Dejun of the Kunming Institute of Zoology at the Chinese Academy of Sciences has documented crane mortality during abnormally cold winter periods at Dashanbao National Nature Reserve (NNR). Impacts of climate change are complex, and likely to change with time for any given crane species.

Dr. Li Fengshan, ICF's China Program Coordinator, was one of the organizers of the meeting that involved 39 participants from across the range of Black-necked Cranes in China, including both wildlife managers and researchers. The network plans to meet regularly to exchange results of research and conservation, with the next meeting to occur in summer 2013 at Cao Hai NNR.

ICF, together with the Wetlands International – IUCN Species Survival Commission Crane Specialist Group, is pleased to announce the publication of the proceedings of the 2010 workshop held at Muraviovka Park in far eastern Russia. Edited by Jim Harris, ICF Senior Vice President and Chair of the Crane Specialist Group, *Cranes, Agriculture, and Climate Change* includes 20 papers. This publication will be available for download by December 2012 from the ICF website at [www.savingcranes.org/digital-books.html](http://www.savingcranes.org/digital-books.html).

*Photo taken by Wang Keju following a winter storm that deposited ice across the entire landscape – including over the backs of these Black-necked Cranes at Dashanbao National Nature Reserve.*