

*The ICF*

# Bugle

*Inspiring a Global Community*

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## Water for Whoopers is Water for All

*By Rich Beilfuss, ICF President & CEO*

**I**n a momentous court decision that could reverberate throughout the conservation world, a U.S. District Court judge recently ruled to restrict water off-takes in the Guadalupe River basin of Texas until a plan is developed to protect the last naturally migrating flock of Whooping Cranes on their wintering grounds.

On March 10, 2010, The Aransas Project, an alliance of citizens, organizations, businesses, and municipalities who seek responsible water management of the Guadalupe River Basin and bays, filed a lawsuit against a Texas water authority (the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality, or TCEQ) for illegal harm and harassment of Whooping Cranes at Aransas National Wildlife Refuge in violation of the Endangered Species Act. The case went to trial before the United States District Court for the Southern District of Texas in December 2011. The historic decision by U.S. District Judge Janis Jack came three years to the day after the original filing. *Continued on page 2*

*Photo by Al Perry*

40 years  
of conservation leadership

*“Cranes are magnificent dancers, international travelers, and great ambassadors for conservation worldwide. What birds could be more deserving of our help and protection?”*

— Sir David Attenborough

The lawsuit contended that Texas water authorities allowed so much water to be removed from the Guadalupe River and its tributaries that the bay salinity was changed beyond what drought would cause, resulting in reduced fresh drinking water and food supply that ultimately caused the death of at least 23 Whooping Cranes during the winter of 2008-2009. Through 10 expert witnesses and five citizen witnesses, the legal team wove together the complex evidence that links the fate of Whooping Cranes – and all who depend on the bays for their livelihoods – to freshwater inflows. “As the first witness in this trial, I spent three hours talking about the importance of fresh water inflows to coastal wetlands and how it relates to the survival of Whooping Cranes,” noted ICF Co-founder George Archibald.

The Court ruled that the TCEQ had violated the Endangered Species Act and continued to do so through their water management practices – including the decision not to monitor domestic and livestock water rights users or to exercise emergency powers available to protect endangered Whooping Cranes. The Court ordered that new water permits affecting the Guadalupe River cannot be approved or granted until the State of Texas provides reasonable assurances to the Court that such permits will not harm Whooping Cranes in violation of the Endangered Species Act. The TCEQ must apply to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for an “Incidental Take Permit”, which will trigger the development of a Habitat Conservation Plan for Whooping Cranes. A Habitat Conservation Plan must include conservation measures designed to minimize and mitigate the impacts of water management on a species like the Whooping Crane that is listed under the Endangered Species Act. The Habitat Conservation Plan would not only serve to ensure a future for

Photo by Dave and Liz Smith

“In memory of Dave Smith and the coastal marshes he loved.”

Whooping Cranes on their wintering grounds in Texas, but also a sustainable solution for managing water and wetlands in this vital river basin.

As expected, the Court decision was immediately appealed by TCEQ, arguing that “it is critical that the state retain the ability to regulate state surface water as provided under state law, and not the Endangered Species Act.” We now await the U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals trial this summer.

In the meantime, ICF remains focused on answering two critical questions. First, **“How much water do Whooping Cranes, and the coastal marshes that sustain them, really need?”** We are leading research and modeling efforts to determine how the timing, magnitude, duration, and frequency of freshwater inflows affect wetland salinity levels, blue crab and wolfberry availability, freshwater supply, and other factors vital to Whooping Cranes on their wintering grounds. This question acknowledges that there is little chance of returning historic or “natural” flows to this water-starved river basin. We need to define (and defend) a new flow regime this is sufficient to maintain Whooping Cranes and the ecological integrity of the marshes, especially during drought years.

Second, **“How can we ensure this water reaches Whooping Cranes and other coastal dwellers without causing unacceptable harm to upstream water users?”** We are building a new collaboration with The Nature Conservancy, The National Wildlife Federation, Texas State University, the Harte Research Institute, and others to explore the potential for using water markets (including water purchase, trading, and leasing) to guarantee that water reaches the coastal bays and estuaries in times of drought while ensuring that water continues to serve the most important human needs as well.

**This is exciting, cutting-edge work with global application well-beyond Texas.**



ICF's approach to the conservation of cranes, and the wetlands and river systems on which they depend, has always focused on bringing people together to find win-win solutions for water sharing. We applaud the momentous decision of Judge Jack as the best way forward towards ensuring reasonable, sustainable, and environmentally-sound water management in the river basin for people and wildlife.

**For more information, visit: [www.thearansasproject.org](http://www.thearansasproject.org)**

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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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# A Victory in the Fight Against Illegal Trade of Crowned Cranes

**G**rey and Black Crowned Cranes, icons of the African landscape and once considered the most secure of African cranes, have dramatically declined in the wild over the last several decades. In response to their decline, Black Crowned Cranes have been up-listed to **Vulnerable** and Grey Crowned Cranes to **Endangered** under the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red Data Book.

Recently, a suspension of trade in Black Crowned Cranes from Guinea, Sudan and South Sudan and trade in Grey Crowned Cranes from Rwanda, Uganda and Tanzania, was announced by CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Flora and Fauna). The CITES suspension will remain in place until the country in question can prove that export will not be detrimental to the wild population and that they are able to successfully monitor export permits granted and actual exports, with the goal of limiting exports in order to maintain the species. **The Endangered Wildlife Trust (EWT)**



**and the International Crane Foundation (ICF) were instrumental throughout the Trade Review Process as they supplied CITES with crucial data about the state of trade in cranes on the African continent.**

*“We welcome the decision from CITES as these species of cranes are under very real threat from live trade. Many of the players involved in the demand and supply sides of this trade still believe that these species are plentiful. Without urgent attention, this trade could lead to the loss of these birds from much of Africa.”*  
— Kerryn Morrison, Manager of the ICF/EWT African Crane Conservation Programme

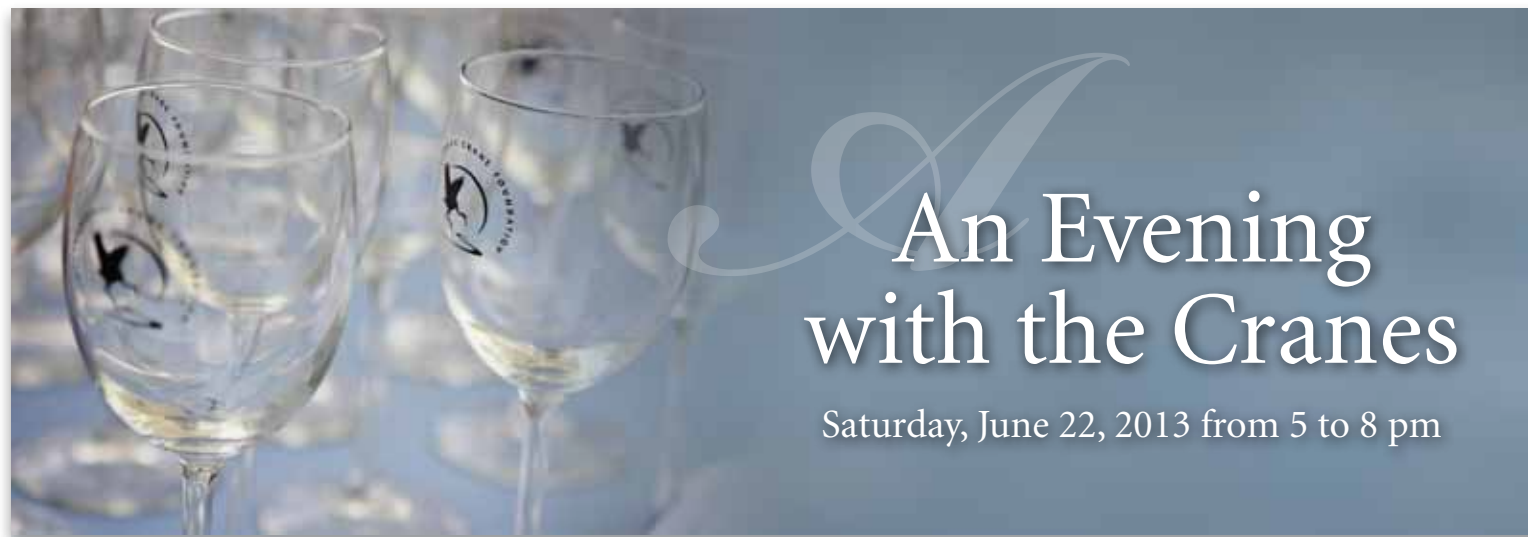
The cranes are removed illegally from the wild, usually as chicks, for the captive trade market. In some cases, this involves domestication where cranes are kept in private gardens, around homesteads and in hotel gardens. There is also a big demand for the species in captive facilities around the world where they are either placed in private breeding facilities or in mixed exhibits in captive facilities open to the public where they add value to savanna exhibits.

The African Crane Trade Project is working with zoo associations in Africa, North America, China and Europe to create programs within captive facilities that develop and manage sustainable populations of Grey Crowned Cranes, thus alleviating the need for wild caught cranes to supplement captive stock. Sadly, only a small fraction of zoos and wild animal attractions belong to professional zoo associations. Therefore, it is clear that more urgent attention must be paid to communicating to a far wider audience involved in the captive trade.



Photo by Sean Patrick

In response to the plight of the Grey Crowned Crane, ICF and EWT created a new video **Grey Crowned Cranes Need Our Help!** This 4-minute video is an important tool for raising awareness of the severe threat that trade poses to the species' survival and helps address one of the greatest needs: alerting captive facilities, wildlife authorities and the public about actions they can take to safeguard this charismatic species. To read more about the Crane Trade Project and to view the video, visit our website at: [www.savingcranes.org/african-crane-trade.html](http://www.savingcranes.org/african-crane-trade.html)



# An Evening with the Cranes

Saturday, June 22, 2013 from 5 to 8 pm

Join the International Crane Foundation (ICF) for our fourth annual **Evening with the Cranes** at our headquarters in Baraboo, WI. Experience great food from area restaurants, wine, craft beer from local brewery Port Huron, live music and conversation. Often referred to as a **magical evening** – guests stroll ICF’s nature paths surrounded by native plants and cranes while catching up with old and new friends. ICF staff will serve wine while answering questions about cranes and ICF’s conservation programs around the world. Be inspired by their stories and the cranes that help them come to life!

Tickets are \$50 for members and \$60 for non-members. Information and tickets are available on-line at [www.savingcranes.org](http://www.savingcranes.org) or by phone at 608-356-9462 ext. 101. We look forward to seeing you on June 22, 2013!

Photos by: Tom Lynn, Christina Beam, and Deb Johnson.



Photo by Pau Tang

## Travel to Vietnam and Cambodia with ICF!

Please join George Archibald and Tran Triet for a journey through Vietnam and Cambodia in April, 2014. You will be immersed in spectacular scenery and unique wildlife in the region’s nature reserves, including Cat Tien and Tram Chim National Parks,

Tra Su Provincial Park, Can Gio Mangrove Biosphere Reserve and ICF project sites to learn how we are making great progress toward improving conditions for cranes and people. You will also see stunning architecture and enjoy the rich cultural history. Please contact Jen Stewart for more information on this fantastic adventure with George and Triet at (608) 356-9462 ext. 119 or email, [travel@savingcranes.org](mailto:travel@savingcranes.org). Read more about our projects in Southeast Asia at: [www.savingcranes.org/mekong-river.html](http://www.savingcranes.org/mekong-river.html)



Photo by Al Perry

## A Future for Whooping Cranes

ICF’s commitment to Whooping Crane conservation and reintroduction is deep. In the cover story of this issue, you learned about the landmark court decision in Texas in favor of Whooping Cranes and the freshwater inflows that sustain them. Although this ruling is under appeal, we continue to work with our partners and supporters on a range of actions to ensure these birds have a secure place in our future.

For example, ICF President Richard Beilfuss is working with top water experts in Texas to find market solutions for getting freshwater into the coastal bays and estuaries during times of drought; Whooping Crane Biologist Liz Smith continues mapping the bays and wetlands surrounding Aransas National Wildlife Refuge to guide land protection efforts so that suitable habitats exist as the flock expands; Veterinarian Barry Hartup is working with a team from the U.S. Geological Survey to better understand movements and needs of the cranes over their 2,500-mile migration; and Field Ecologist Anne Lacy is guiding efforts to assess the impacts of power line collisions – a significant threat to these birds.

We remain committed to the landmark reintroduction of migratory Whooping Cranes east of the Mississippi River. After a century without America’s tallest bird in this region, more than 100 now spend the breeding season in central Wisconsin and the winter months across the southeast. We are breeding and raising cranes at our headquarters, for release into the wild, and under the leadership of our Chick Rearing Specialist Marianne Wellington, we plan to add 6-10 Whooping Cranes to the population this year. In addition, we are producing eggs for a third Whooping Crane population that is being re-established in former habitat at White Lake Wetlands Conservation Area in Louisiana.

ICF is also leading a nationwide education initiative to raise awareness, understanding, and appreciation for Whooping Cranes among students, hunters, and the general public, to reduce illegal shootings and inspire additional champions for their protection. We are working with Hamline University to develop multi-media educational tools such as *Estuaries in Balance*. Introduced last year, this program features the importance of Texas coastal areas and water management for the survival of Whooping Cranes and other species. This year, we will complete a new program called *To the Brink and Back*, highlighting the Whooping Cranes’ incredible recovery from a low of just 22 birds in 1941.

**In recognition of our shared success, as well as the work ahead, we invite you to make a special gift this year to help in the continued recovery of the Whooping Crane, and our conservation efforts for cranes and their ecosystems worldwide. Thank you for helping ensure that Whooping Cranes remain part of our natural legacy now and for generations to come.**

Please consider joining our *Whooper Keepers* – guardians who contribute \$1,000 or more for these vital conservation efforts. As a token of our thanks, all *Whooper Keepers* are recognized by a plaque bearing their special message and displayed in ICF’s celebrated Whooping Crane exhibit at our headquarters in Wisconsin.

*I recently met this passionate birder, Ben Marn, at the Platte River during the annual spring crane migration. When I meet inspirational young people like Ben, I am encouraged that there is a future for Whooping Cranes in North America. With your support, North America’s tallest and perhaps loudest bird will persist for future generations. – George Archibald*



Photo by Irene Sullivan

# CARLOS BENTO: A Passion for Conservation

By Rich Beilfuss, ICF President & CEO



In 2001, Carlos Bento (left) and I travelled the lower Zambezi by boat to assess the impact of dams on the people and wildlife of this great river.

**M**y conservation heroes have many qualities, but two matter most – passion and tenacity.

I first met Mozambican Carlos Bento in 1996. I had just returned from an exploratory trip to the Zambezi Delta, a vast, remote, and mostly forgotten wilderness in central Mozambique. The delta floodplains had once harbored some of the most magnificent concentrations of wildlife in Africa, including the biggest flock of endangered Wattled Cranes ever recorded, but had suffered much in recent years. Enormous dams now blocked the life-giving Zambezi River waters from nourishing the delta and a brutal civil war wiped out many of the big mammals and birds. I fell in love with the delta on that trip and became determined to bring it back to its former grandeur, but everyone I spoke with, from government agencies to private organizations, dismissed the idea as hopeless.

Carlos Bento, a young teacher at Mozambique's national university, was different. When I shared my naïve dream to get the big Zambezi dams to release water to the delta to save cranes, he listened politely and then said, "Let's do it." Thus began a 17-year mentorship, partnership, and friendship that has shaped much of my thinking about conservation and a life of commitment to the natural world.

Carlos Bento dedicated himself to learn everything he could about the Wattled Cranes of the Zambezi Delta. With two loyal assistants he hired from a nearby village, he set off for weeks at a time to the heart of the delta to collect data. He waded across swamps infested with crocodiles, and battled mosquitos so thick he stuffed newspapers in his clothing and slept in trees to gain the slightest respite offered by elevation. Once, when he was running low on food supplies, Carlos chased a lion off a buffalo kill to grab some meat.

Through Carlos' hard work, we gained a clear picture of the relationships among Wattled Cranes, water, soils, and the cranes' most important food source, the tubers of the spike rush *Eleocharis*. Under my supervision, Carlos completed his Master's degree at the University of Cape Town. Our ambitions grew. We extended our studies to other birds

and mammals – Carlos is now completing his Ph.D. on the ecological requirements of Africa buffalo in the delta.

As we learned more about the delta, we began connecting the needs of people in the delta to these same life-giving waters. The artisanal fisherman, commercial shrimpers, and riverbank farmers, all suffering from upstream water management practices, started paying attention. Carlos appeared on local television, in newspapers, on the radio, and in public forums, arguing passionately for getting more water to the delta as a national priority. We reached out to government water authorities and dam operators, who were disarmed by Carlos' deferential demeanor but unwavering resolve. Other conservation groups and businesses joined in. And slowly, over the years, we put the Zambezi Delta back on the map and built the largest "environmental flows" project in the world for sustainable water management of the Zambezi River and its wetlands.

Carlos' commitment to conservation and community extends well beyond the Zambezi basin. He led a highly public effort to force a large aluminum smelter – one of the most powerful companies in Mozambique – to improve their air pollution control practices. When he and his colleagues discovered that a large party of 4-wheel drive vehicles was driving illegally on a beachfront with nesting sea turtles and seabirds (despite numerous warnings) he hired a small Cessna plane and asked me to join him in chasing the transgressors off the beach. He arranged for local police to wait at the exit road, where they captured and impounded the fleeing vehicles.

Perhaps the most unusual thing about Carlos is his deep passion for birds -- a hobby often associated with tourists and colonial times in Africa. He learned the plumage and songs of Mozambique's 740 bird species and has assisted



Cahora Bassa Dam in Mozambique regulates Zambezi waters for hydropower production. Our research demonstrated that the value of sharing waters between upstream and downstream users outweighs the value of the water being used solely for hydropower production.



Aerial survey team to count large mammals and waterbirds, including cranes, at Gorongosa National Park in Mozambique. (Carlos is third from right).

professional expeditions to document some of the rarest birds. He wrote the *Birds of Inhaca Island* as an undergraduate honors study, camping on the island for a month to complete his inventory. He has contributed to dozens of environmental assessments of the impact of roads, airports, dams, bridges, mines, and other projects on birds and their haunts. More than once I have overheard an aunt or uncle asking him, "When are you going to get a real job?"

As an ICF Research Associate, Carlos continues to work closely with us on a range of conservation challenges for cranes, wetlands, and water in the region. Carlos also shares his passion through the national university, where he teaches and advises student projects. Some find his enthusiasm for saving the natural world contagious and join the struggle, while others flee for better paying, less arduous jobs in the city. But all are indebted to him for making Mozambique, and the world, a better place.

## Forty Years of Conservation Leadership: A Multimedia Exhibit



most vulnerable cranes. **From June 22 through October 31, iPads filled with stories, slideshows, video and personal accounts will be available to use on our site.** As guests move through the bird exhibits, they will discover the ingenuity of these conservation pioneers at our project sites around the world.

## A stroll down... Memory Lane

photos from our archive



**T**he famous Whooping Crane, Tex, guards George Archibald's sleeping bag in 1982. George remembers, "I slept beside Tex's nest after she laid her first egg to provide security and to encourage production of a second egg." Tex was hopelessly imprinted on human males and was expected to never reproduce. George believed Tex would lay eggs if she found a suitable mate. He knew she liked human males best – so he had the wild idea to convince her that he could play the role of her "partner." Skeptics thought the attempt to form a pair bond with a bird bizarre – but George persevered – hoping she would produce an egg.



Tex finally laid the one and only egg that would carry on her important genetic legacy.

After a precarious incubation and under watchful eyes, the egg hatched to become the male chick named Gee Whiz. Gee Whiz is still alive at ICF, and has fathered 14 chicks. Many of his descendants have been released into the wild.





## International Crane Foundation

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# Look What Just Hatched at ICF!

This adorable plush crane chick is an ICF Exclusive! He is 7" tall and with embroidered eyes – safe for your little chick. He's **precocial**\* and ready to **imprint**\* on you. **Price: \$12.99.** 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.

## It's breeding time at ICF and here are a few of the most commonly asked questions about crane chicks:

**\*Q:** What is a **precocial** bird?

**A:** Precocial chicks, like cranes, hatch with down feathers, open eyes, and the ability to leave the nest within hours of hatching. Songbirds are altricial. They hatch naked and blind, and are dependent on their parents for food.

**\*Q:** What is **imprinting**?

**A:** Imprinting is a rapid learning process that occurs when young precocial birds follow and identify as a parent the first large moving object they see. They learn their parents' behavioral and physical characteristics and gain impressions which remain with them for life. The process of imprinting is still not well understood.

To read more *Common Crane Questions*, visit our website:  
[www.savingcranes.org/common-questions-2.html](http://www.savingcranes.org/common-questions-2.html)



Live Whooping Crane chicks coming soon at  
[www.cranechickcam.org](http://www.cranechickcam.org)

## Participate in the 2013 Bird-a-thon!



See enclosed envelope for details or visit:  
[www.savingcranes.org/bird-a-thon.html](http://www.savingcranes.org/bird-a-thon.html)