

The ICF

Bugle

Inspiring a Global Community

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August 2013

CELEBRATE Cranes!

By Joan Garland, ICF Outreach Coordinator



As the sun begins to rise on a cold Nebraska morning, I can slowly make out the faces of my viewing-blind mates – men and women bundled in hats and scarves, some with camera lenses seemingly bigger than our blind, others, binoculars in hand, scanning the sandbars as tens of thousands of Sandhill Cranes stir from their roost. This hardy

band of bird-watchers has gathered for the annual Sandhill Crane migration along the Platte River, celebrated in nearby Kearney at the Rivers and Wildlife Celebration, one of the nation's longest-running wildlife festivals.

From the wilds of Alaska to coastal Texas, from the vineyards of California to Hiwassee Wildlife Refuge *Continued on page 2*



Every year, on the King of Bhutan's birthday, the Bhutanese celebrate a Crane Festival at the Gangteng Goenpa temple-monastery overlooking the valley below where their beloved Black-necked Cranes live. The festival celebrates the cranes' return from their breeding grounds in Tibet. The festival offers mornings filled with song and dance in the temple courtyard and afternoons of skill with archery, dart and stone throwing.

40th ANNIVERSARY
Gala

See Page 7 for Details

in Tennessee, crane festivals are springing up across North America. Crane festivals bring people together to celebrate the stunning beauty, joyful dances, and dramatic migrations of cranes, and the deep cultural connections we share with them.

Increasingly, these festivals are valuable tools for educating the public about the conservation of cranes and the important (and beautiful) places they depend on. In Steamboat Springs, Colorado, ICF member Nancy Merrill started the Yampa Valley Crane Festival to raise awareness about the proposed hunting of Sandhill Cranes in Northwest Colorado. “Sandhill Cranes are an iconic species of our area. When a Sandhill Crane hunt was narrowly averted in 2012, a new organization, Colorado Crane Conservation Coalition, put together the inaugural Yampa Valley Crane Festival,” said Nancy. “We hope that our annual crane festival will educate people about this amazing species and inspire them to protect cranes and their habitat.”

The Whooping Crane Festival in Port Aransas, Texas showcases the Aransas National Wildlife Refuge, winter home to the last remaining wild population of endangered Whooping Cranes. “The Festival partners with ICF to create awareness of conservation efforts around the world, particularly along the Whooping Cranes’ flyway from their nesting grounds in Canada, to the Gulf Coast of Texas,” said Ann Vaughan, President and CEO, Port Aransas Chamber of Commerce. “Our partnership with ICF has been the key to the festival’s success over the past 17 years. We look forward to our continued collaboration.”

Crane festivals offer a variety of social, recreational, and educational activities, including guided tours, presentations, photography and birding workshops, art exhibits, children’s activities, and trade shows. Some festivals are one-day events, while others span over a week. Attendance can range from hundreds to many thousands of people. Visitors come from



across the United States and beyond to attend these events. The 2013 Whooping Crane Festival in Port Aransas attracted visitors from 28 states, Canada, Germany, Australia, and Japan. The festivals often generate considerable benefits for their host communities – the four-day Monte Vista Crane Festival in Colorado raises about \$10,000 per day in revenue for the local economy.

Crane festivals are flourishing on other continents as well. Across the vast and diverse landscapes of Northern Europe and Asia, the Crane Working Group of Eurasia has inspired Crane Celebrations at more than 120 sites in nine countries. Through music, stories, art, and games, people of all ages gain a better understanding of the threats to cranes and the need for conservation measures. The Crane Celebrations are also celebrations of culture, and of people’s relationship to nature.

Perhaps the most extraordinary crane festival occurs in the tiny Himalayan Kingdom of Bhutan. Founded by Bhutan Heritage Tours, with support from the Royal Society for the Protection of Nature and ICF, the one-day Crane Festival celebrates the return of approximately 350 Black-necked Cranes to their wintering grounds in the Phobjikha Valley. The festival is now the pride of the local people. Auspicious days are important in Buddhist cultures, so it’s no coincidence that the Crane Festival coincides with the King’s birthday, and the inspiring arrival in early afternoon of flocks of Black-necked Cranes as they complete their astonishing migration at amazing altitudes over the mountains. As the performers dance in crane costumes, the cranes circle overhead, lowering landing gear for their arrival to spend the winter on the wetlands below the temple. As ICF celebrates its 40th anniversary, we invite you to participate in these festivals and join us in celebrating the magic of cranes.

Each spring, over 500,000 Sandhill Cranes converge on the Platte River in Nebraska as a “rest stop” on their long journey north to breeding territories. This annual wildlife spectacle draws thousands of wildlife watchers from around the world and is the basis for several crane celebrations. Photo by Tom Lynn



FESTIVALS

January

Wings Over Willcox, Willcox, AZ

Tennessee Sandhill Crane Festival, Birchwood, TN

February

Whooping Crane Festival, Port Aransas, TX

March

Monte Vista Crane Festival, Monte Vista, CO

Rivers & Wildlife Celebration, Kearney, NE

Crane Watch Festival, Kearney, NE

Family Crane Carnival, Gibbon, NE

April

Othello Sandhill Crane Festival, Othello, WA

May

Crane & Sheep Viewing Festival, Faro, YT Canada

June

Crane Dawn Festival, Muraviovka Park, Russia

August

ICF’s Cranes of the World Festival, Baraboo, WI

Tanana Valley Sandhill Crane Festival, Fairbanks, AK

September

Yampa Valley Crane Festival, Steamboat Springs & Hayden, CO

Whooping Crane Festival, Berlin, WI

Crane Week, Atherton Tablelands, Queensland, Australia

October

Sandhill Crane & Art Festival, Bellevue, MI

November

Lodi Sandhill Crane Festival, Lodi, CA

Festival of the Cranes, San Antonio, NM

Sandhill Crane Celebration, Albuquerque, NM

Bhutan Crane Festival, Kingdom of Bhutan

December

Breakfast with the Sandhill Cranes, Galveston, TX

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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

Memberships are vital to ICF. Please join or give a gift membership to a friend at the following annual rates:

Student or Senior Citizen.....	\$25
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Patron.....	\$1,000
Benefactor.....	\$2,000
Cranemaker.....	\$10,000

Notes from the President

By Rich Beilfuss

This May I had the pleasure of returning to Vietnam, a wonderful opportunity to re-connect with people and places I’ve held dear since my days as a graduate researcher in the 1980s. I was sponsored by the World Bank to participate in the World’s Deltas Forum, a brainstorming session about the future of the Mekong Delta of Vietnam based on lessons learned from other “working deltas” like our own Mississippi Delta and the Zambezi Delta in Mozambique where I have worked for decades. But the real reason I wanted to go back was to visit two special wetlands – Tram Chim and Phu My – where ICF’s long-term conservation commitment has made a real difference for cranes, many other species of wildlife, and the people of Vietnam.

Tram Chim (meaning “Bird Swamp”) was a local nature reserve when ICF first became involved 25 years ago in hopes of saving the only known population of Eastern Sarus Cranes. Tram Chim was created by the late Governor Nguyen Xuan Truong, who fought the Vietnam-American war in the swamps of the Mekong Delta and truly appreciated the value of wetlands for people and wildlife. The Governor, had the foresight to realize that within a few years of the end of the war, most of the 10 million acre delta would be converted into the world’s largest rice bowl, and few wetlands would survive. Even more remarkable, he understood that restoring the seasonal ebb and flow of water and other natural processes was the key to a healthy bird swamp.

ICF’s efforts then and now have focused on realizing Nguyen Xuan Truong’s vision for Tram Chim. There is much evidence today of tremendous progress through this commitment. Once completely unknown outside its confines, Tram Chim is now a National Park and designated a “Wetland of International Importance,” receiving more than 20,000 visitors a year, many of them Vietnamese who learn a new appreciation for wetlands and their abundant life. Nguyen Van Hung, who adeptly manages the park, and Nguyen Huu Thien, a leading Vietnamese conservationist and park adviser, were trained through ICF’s conservation leadership program. Good management has given rise to a rich diversity of birdlife, and as we traveled by small boat across the marsh, I delighted to see huge flocks of Asian openbill storks soaring overhead, scores of darters and cormorants diving into the open waters before us, and abundant waterbirds flushing from reeds and grasses at every turn – purple

swamphens, bronze-winged jacanas, spot-billed ducks, waterhens, yellow and cinnamon bitterns, purple and grey herons, and many, many more species. The native melaleuca trees lining our path were buzzing with bee-eaters, racket-tailed tree pies, sunbirds, and melodious golden-bellied gerygones, with huge roosts of black-crowned night herons and the hanging baskets of colonial Baya weavers overhead. The Sarus Cranes that winter at Tram Chim had migrated back to their breeding grounds in Cambodia, but signs of the cranes were



Sarus Cranes at Phu My, Vietnam.

Photo by Pau Tang

everywhere – on billboards and posters, and in local art. The restaurant in the nearby town where we ate our meals was a gallery of beautiful framed photos of Sarus and other scenes from the swamps. And while we were there the Provincial government, once opposed to the park, announced they would commit \$10 million for park research

and management. Tram Chim has aged like a fine wine, a model for the sustainable management of Vietnam’s protected lands.

Phu My, the last remaining wetland of its kind in the Mekong Delta, follows a different but equally successful conservation path. Here, the local Khmer people sustainably harvest the sedge *Lepironia* to weave into household products. We visited the factory where ICF has provided local people with skills training and production equipment so that they can make fine, export-quality handicrafts from the *Lepironia* they harvest. We also help them market these beautiful handicraft products to the world – Japan, the Middle East, even Europe. Phu My is a model for how poor people can directly benefit from conservation, while supporting vital habitat for a threatened species. After seven years, daily income has more than doubled for the 400 people who participate in the project, and – remarkably – the number of Sarus Cranes using this wetland in the winter has grown from a few birds to nearly 300 over this same time period. This unique remnant wetland, once under tremendous pressure to be converted to rice, now enjoys strong community support and government protection.

I want to give a shout-out to ICF’s Tran Triet and Jeb Barzen, and our entire team in Vietnam, who have worked so hard and so long in this region to make these wetlands what they are today. They demonstrate a sustainable future in the Mekong Delta, for cranes and the millions of people who share these lands. Tram Chim and Phu My are great examples of the good things that happen when we make long-term commitments to people and places.

Personifying Conservation Leadership

By Jeb Barzen, ICF Director of Field Ecology

When it comes right down to it, many environmental problems that we face today are caused by people. People, therefore, will be integral to any solution that we devise to address these same problems. At ICF, our approach to conservation leadership is to discover, nurture, promote and share experiences with the conservation leaders of today and tomorrow. The career paths of Nguyen Van Hung and Nguyen Huu Thien over the last two decades illustrate just how ICF works with our many colleagues to help them engage in solving conservation challenges.

Hung first came to what is now Vietnam's Tram Chim National Park in 1991. Though he was trained in agricultural economics, Hung was hired as Tram Chim's first biologist and his job was to focus on the parks *tram*, the Rear Mangrove that was painstakingly replanted in the mid-1980's. These trees were to drive many management actions at the park in the future. Though Hung spoke no English when he first came, he spoke a language of fascination and love for the ecology of Tram Chim that I clearly understood without translation. He was one of the few people we worked with who always wanted to be in the field more, not less. With his camera always at the ready, Hung has painstakingly documented the park's rich avifauna. In the two decades that unfolded since arriving at Tram Chim, Hung's love of the wetland never wavered as he rose through the administrative ranks. It was that love and dedication, dispensed on a daily basis, that helped keep Tram Chim from being destroyed during its early years. Eventually, Hung became *Giam Doc*, director of Tram Chim.

Thien also came to Tram Chim more than two decades ago, in 1990, as a young college graduate. After a tumultuous period while negotiating the first water management plan for Tram Chim, Thien was nominated for a graduate program at the University of Wisconsin-Madison under an ICF scholarship. Academically, Thien was a strong candidate. He just



Tran Triet, Nguyen Van Hung, and Rich Beilfuss at Tram Chim National Park.

didn't speak English. When asked how this barrier would be overcome, Thien's supervisors said he had 6 months to learn enough English to attend the University. Remarkably, he did! Once his MS was completed, however, Thien did not make the planned return to Tram Chim as a biologist. Instead, he struck out on his own to become a consulting ecologist. Though unorthodox, the route Thien chose ended up helping Tram Chim far more than if he had become an employee of Tram Chim National Park. Thien coordinated an IUCN team (that included ICF) that revised the original management plan for Tram Chim and led to the excellent conditions that occur today. Thien now engages with environmental issues that affect the entire Mekong basin such as hydropower development and climate change.

These two men knew all along that the secret to Tram Chim was the water. Debates over the management of trees versus cranes at Tram Chim evolved over almost two decades while water levels were managed both too high and too low – and while cranes proliferated, declined and increased again. Though ICF could provide the facts necessary to achieve proper management of water to restore Tram Chim, it was Hung and Thien who breathed life into ICF's recommendations. They were willing to commit themselves to the decades required for a land ethic at Tram Chim to evolve, and for the park to become the bird paradise that Rich Beilfuss describes on the previous page. It is conservation leadership that allowed these two gifted men, and their partners, to do the work that has resulted in the 2012 designation of Tram Chim as the 2000th Wetland of International Importance.

Nguyen Huu Thien (left) and park staff measure vegetation recovery as water management improves at Tram Chim National Park.

Ensuring a Future for Whooping Cranes

When ICF took flight in 1973, the United States was swelling with political, economic, and cultural activity. The nation ended its involvement in the Vietnam War, the Watergate scandal erupted, and an energy crisis took root around the world. We celebrated the opening of the World Trade Center in New York City and the first handheld mobile phone call was placed. And in 1973, the country passed the Endangered Species Act, a piece of legislation that helped prevent the Whooping Crane and many other species from becoming mere pages in our history books.

For many years, we've believed there will be a place for Whooping Cranes in our wetlands and skies a century from now. We've worked hard to make that happen – and **you** are a significant part of this bird's remarkable story. With your help, ICF's dedication and commitment to Whooping Cranes now covers a comprehensive range of conservation and reintroduction efforts to ensure a future for this endangered species. But habitat degradation, energy development, and illegal shootings pose growing threats to Whooping Crane survival.

Our work in Texas, where the last naturally occurring population migrates for winter, is helping identify more sustainable water management practices to ensure the needs of both wildlife and people are met in coastal communities, especially during periods of drought. We are also working with partners to guide critical land protection measures to safeguard suitable habitat for Whooping Cranes for many years to come. In addition, ICF and partners are assessing potential health issues, critical habitat use, and key threats for Whooping Cranes along their 2,500-mile migration route.



Photo by Tom Lynn

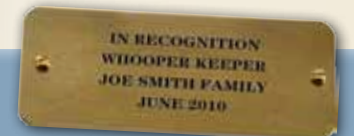
Through your tremendous support, ICF and partners also continue the reintroduction of migratory Whooping Cranes east of the Mississippi River. Our dedicated aviculture team is tirelessly raising young cranes for release into the wild, and we plan to add as many as 10 young Whooping Cranes to the eastern migratory population this year by Direct Autumn Release. We also continue to lead field research focused on environmental factors that may be impacting breeding success in the reintroduced population. A third, non-migratory Whooping Crane population is being established by our colleagues at the White Lake Wetlands Conservation Area in Louisiana. ICF also provides eggs for this reintroduction.

In support of our comprehensive efforts to save the Whooping Crane, ICF is engaged in a nationwide education initiative to raise awareness, understanding, and appreciation for these birds among K-12 students, teachers, outdoor enthusiasts, and the general public. Over the coming years, these educational tools will cover the entire range of threats to Whooping Cranes across their North American range. Our ultimate goal is to reduce all challenges facing Whooping Cranes and to inspire additional champions for their protection.

You can help secure a future for Whooping Cranes – for all cranes – and their ecosystems worldwide. Please use the enclosed envelope to make a special gift today. Together, we can work to ensure these birds remain part of our natural legacy now and for generations to come.

Photo by John Ford

Become a Whooper Keeper – guardians who contribute \$1,000 or more for vital conservation efforts for the Whooping Crane. All Whooper Keeper donors are recognized with a customized plaque displayed in our celebrated Whooping Crane exhibit at our headquarters in Wisconsin.



Watershed Planning in Far Eastern Russia

By Sammy L. King, U.S. Geological Survey, Louisiana Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit

Muraviovka Park in eastern Russia is nestled above the floodplain of the mighty Amur River. Damming of the Amur's largest tributary, the Zeya, has reduced wetland habitat quality at the Park. However, the Gitlchin River has a less obvious but important connection to the park as well. The Gitlchin is a much smaller river and its environmental problems and issues are representative of hundreds of smaller rivers in eastern Russia. Poor water quality, intensive agriculture with extensive use of insecticides and pesticides, and a host of other activities impact the people and wildlife within its watershed.



The Amur River floodplain supports an amazing diversity of plants and animals.



Dr. Durelle Scott of Virginia Tech University evaluates a water quality sample from a local reservoir along with Sergei Smirenski and other Russian scientists.



Drinking water containers are necessary in some villages due to groundwater contamination.

which is heavily polluted. Consequently, large 55 gallon drums were set at the end of each driveway to be filled with drinking water by a tanker truck.

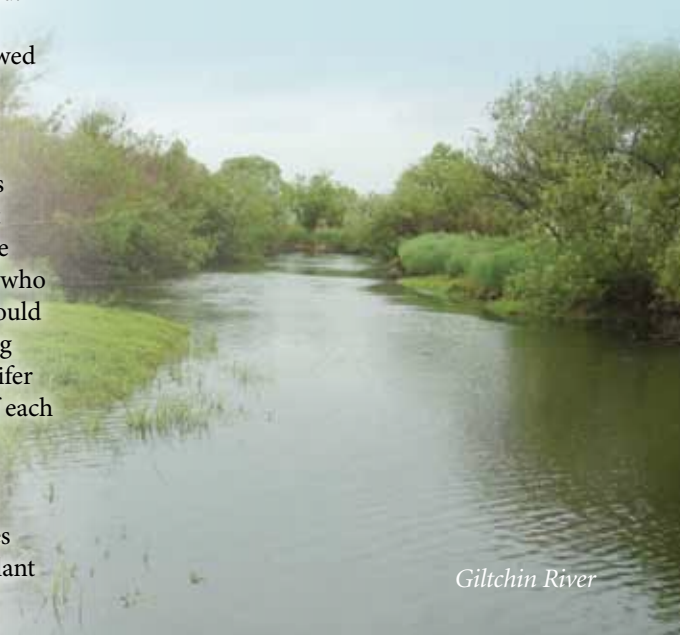
Despite these challenges, this trip and the planning process was not defined by negativity. The people we met were vibrant, passionate, and determined to set forth a better future. We learned of a middle school project focused on making beneficial uses of garbage; another completed a wetland science project about an indigenous water plant

that can only live in pure water and was found only at Muraviovka Park, where water pollution has been prevented. We visited a natural history museum at the school which was fascinating and clearly a direct result of the environmental education program at the Park. We also learned how the Park's activities over the last few decades have had a dramatic impact on the people by increasing environmental awareness and showing them there can be a better future. In short, we learned that the people had hope and a vision, both of which always precede change.

By the end of the week, it was clear that Scotty's and my role had switched from educators to spectators. We held a closing meeting at the same university and Sergei presented the basic concepts and goals for the proposed watershed plan before inviting comments from the attendees. It was truly fulfilling to watch a group of strangers speaking passionately about the plan. We could not understand what was being said, but we could see and feel the emotion as they described their hopes and opinions. Sergei and a team of local scientists are continuing to develop and implement the plan. Our hope is that this process will lead to effective watershed planning for the hundreds of other small rivers throughout the vast wild lands of eastern Russia. As a fitting end to our trip, it was announced that the Ministry of the Environment in Moscow had just issued a proclamation for watershed planning and management on all rivers in eastern Russia. Let's hope that this proclamation comes to fruition!

The Giltchin River Watershed project was supported by the Trust for Mutual Understanding and the Bay and Paul Foundations.

We spent several days visiting areas and people within the watershed. Cattle are allowed to freely graze along the edges of reservoirs and wade into the shallows. As a result, the nitrate concentrations were up to 10 times the recommended levels and swimming was prohibited. Raw sewage was pumped into at least one reservoir and just below the sewage discharge point we visited with a fisherman who proudly displayed his stringer of fish that would soon be his dinner. In some villages, running water is available only from the shallow aquifer



Giltchin River

40th ANNIVERSARY Gala

Salute to the Dawn: ICF Anniversary Gala!

Saturday, September 28 at 6 p.m.
Discovery World at Pier Wisconsin, Milwaukee

Celebrate the people and programs behind four decades of crane conservation. Join us in Milwaukee as ICF Co-founder Dr. George Archibald hosts special guests Dr. Jane Goodall, actress Jane Alexander and renowned photographer Tom Mangelsen at our anniversary dinner event. Tickets and table sponsorships are limited and start at \$250. For more information and to register visit www.cranegala.org or contact Kel Kopish at (608) 356-9462 ext. 115, or email cranegala@savingcranes.org. All proceeds benefit ICF's highest priorities for cranes and wetlands.



The Mother of ICF

A remarkable lady and friend to cranes, Mary Wickhem, passed away on June 6th at the age of 91.

She was a close friend to many and a supporter of cranes in a diversity of ways throughout ICF's first 40 years. As Chair of the Board of Directors for 22 years she was instrumental in securing our permanent home along Shady Lane Road



Mary Wickhem (left) embraces a close friend, the late Nina Bradley at a function at ICF. Nina, the daughter of Aldo Leopold, was for the Aldo Leopold Foundation, what Mary was for ICF. The passing of this great generation of remarkable people, challenges us all to higher levels of excellence.

By George Archibald, ICF Co-Founder

and overseeing the construction of the majority of the ICF campus. She guided ICF safely across several spells of rough water. Well known as the Mother of ICF, Mary was also a community leader in her home town, Janesville, Wisconsin, a devoted wife of lawyer, John Wickhem, the mother of four and grandmother of seventeen. With her warm smile, sparkling eyes, sensitivity, intelligence, zest for life and love of nature and people, she was a treasured friend and an outstanding leader. Where ever she went she "lit up the room" with warmth and contagious optimism. I recall as we departed from a two week visit to South Africa, an elderly lady who we had briefly met, burst into tears when she bid farewell to Mary. They had connected – briefly but deeply. That was Mary's magic. She will be greatly missed by many, but she will never be forgotten through her monumental contribution to the welfare of cranes.

Annual Member Appreciation Day

We're adding a unique 40th Anniversary twist to this year's Member Appreciation Day by inviting you to join us for a truly exclusive **members-only event** – just days after our site closes to the public!

Saturday, November 2, 2013 from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. at our headquarters site in Baraboo, Wisconsin.

Discover our innovative approaches to captive crane management by taking a behind-the-scenes tour with ICF aviculturists. Tours of Crane City (ICF's crane breeding facility) and the Felburn-Leidigh Chick Rearing Facility will be filled on a first-come, first-served basis the day of the event. Tours of our crowned crane enclosures and veterinary labs will be available throughout the day. **Don't forget your membership card!** Bag lunches will be available for purchase on-site for \$7.00. Proceeds support sustainable land use and crane conservation in Russia. **Registration is not required for this event, but you must bring proof of membership.**

Want to bring guests? As a member, you may bring the designated number of guests as shown on your membership card. For membership questions, please contact Merith Adams at (608) 356-9462 ext. 149, or email membership@savingcranes.org.

Whooping Crane Puppet

Our felted wool Whooping Crane puppet is handcrafted by artisans in Nepal and has as much personality as a real Whooper! Measuring 11" tall with an 18" wingspan, he fits perfectly on your hand and will quickly find a place in your heart.

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Hatch to Release: A PHOTO JOURNAL

In keeping with the celebration of our 40th anniversary, our chick naming theme this year is “television sitcoms and characters from the 1970s.” This little chick’s name is Fonzy, and he was photographed recently by photographer Tom Lynn. Tom is chronicling our Whooping Crane reintroduction this summer. His photo project, **Hatch to Release**, documents our Whooping Crane chicks from hatching and their first wobbly steps, to their eventual release in Wisconsin this fall. View Tom's photos at:

www.savingcranes.org/hatch-to-release.html

