

The ICF

Bugle

Inspiring a Global Community

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Caohai: A Model for Community Conservation in China

By Erica Cochrane, ICF Communications and Education Director



Nestled in the rolling hills of culturally-rich southwestern China lies a shallow, marshy lake called Caohai (*Sea of Grass*). One of the largest congregations of Black-necked Cranes (more than 10% of the global population) winters here.

Unlike the declines occurring in White-naped and Red-crowned Crane populations in eastern China, Black-necked Crane numbers are greater today than twenty years ago. But explosive economic development and reduction in glaciers

that feed many of the wetlands on which the Black-necked Cranes depend, forebode a challenging time ahead for this species. Caohai is important not only because it supports so many Black-necked Cranes, but because it is also a model for conservation. The Caohai Project, ICF's longest running community conservation project in China, demonstrates how community conservation approaches can successfully counter the threats posed by development. *Continued on page 2*



Black-necked Cranes gather to roost at Cao Hai (Sea of Grass) in southwestern China. When ICF began its community project here 20 years ago, villages were in open conflict with the nature reserve. By listening and responding to the needs of farmers, the nature reserve has improved conditions for both cranes and farmers. Now Cao Hai has a thousand wintering cranes, three times the numbers when our project began. Photo by Crane Wu



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See page 7.

In August, five of us gathered on the shores of Caohai. Li Fengshan, ICF's China Program Coordinator and Caohai Project leader for more than 20 years, and Hu Yabin, an educator working with ICF throughout China, led an environmental education workshop with representatives from 19 schools around the lake. Ren Qing, a Ph.D. student studying Caohai, Claire Mirande, ICF's Senior Director of Conservation Networking, and I came to gain a better understanding of the project's history, successes, and challenges, and to identify ways we could each support ICF's goals in China. Specifically, I came to help with conservation planning and adaptive management and to look for lessons to share across ICF's community conservation projects in Asia and Africa. I left with a great love for the people (and food!) and a profound respect for Fengshan as a conservation leader determined to find a future for both cranes and the poorest of farmers who share their landscapes in China's rapidly evolving world.

The government drained Caohai in the 1970s and granted land rights to local farmers, encouraging agriculture in the lake basin. Disappointing yields led to re-flooding the lake in the early 1980s. When ICF began working in Caohai, in 1993, there was significant tension between the rural community and the Chinese authorities. The farmers were angry about the loss of their lands. They continued to plant crops in the wetland and reclaim its edges, and began harassing and harming cranes. The nature reserve staff members were not from the area and saw the community as an obstacle to Caohai protection. There was no communication, no trust, and no desire on the part of the community to preserve the wetland or the cranes.

The Caohai Project's greatest achievement has been the creation of trust between the community and staff members of Caohai Nature Reserve. This trust was gained by listening to the community, designing project actions to address their needs, and committing to work together over the long haul. Over the past two decades, ICF has helped establish

As I watched us all outfitted in our bright orange life jackets floating through the sea of grasses and listened to the teachers, reserve staff, students, and local boat operators all sing a song about the Black-necked Crane, I could feel their pride in being the protectors of this magnificent place, and their hope for a future filled with crane songs. Then I was asked to teach them a song... and that was likely the only time Caohai has been filled with dozens of voices singing, *Row, Row, Row Your Boat*.

74 community trust funds – small loans managed by the farmers themselves to improve livelihoods and reduce farming pressure on the wetlands. We installed numerous water wells. We helped local teachers develop an environmental education curriculum unique to the area, engaging youth in protecting cranes and the lake. In addition, in a country where rural girls rarely finish school, our *One Helps One* program made it possible for over 50 girls to finish primary and



Students of Weining #4 School hold ICF's traveling Archie mascot, and a plaque recognizing their school's leadership in environmental education around Caohai.

secondary school; some have gone on to earn college degrees. Furthermore, ICF established the Farmers Conservation and Development Association that now runs the community work and serves as a liaison between the local communities and the reserve.

All of these efforts combined – addressing farmers' basic needs, increasing environmental awareness, improving children's education, opening dialogue between community members and reserve staff – has built trust and true community conservation engagement. Over the next several years, we will share the Caohai experience with other wetland reserves across Southwestern China

where cranes face similar challenges.

ICF works around the world to conserve cranes. For a small organization, ICF's breadth of work can be astounding. Sprinkled over this incredible breadth are places where we have made a distinct choice to dig deep. Caohai is one of those places, like the Kipsaina Crane and



Wetland Conservation Project in Kenya and the Tram Chim Project in Vietnam, where we have committed to long-term collaboration with local communities. These long-term model community conservation projects offer lessons for other programs and places as ICF strengthens our commitment on three continents.

Major support for this project has been provided by the Disney Wildlife Conservation Fund, Ford Foundation, Guizhou Provincial Government, Peter Jay Sharp Foundation and the University of Wisconsin-Madison.



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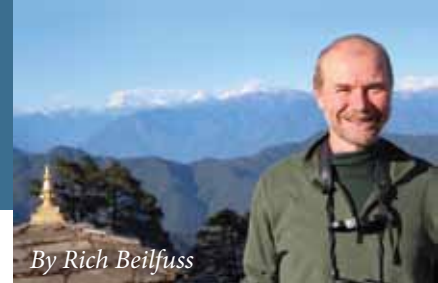
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Sponsor.....	\$500
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Cranemaker.....	\$10,000

Notes from the President



By Rich Beilfuss

It has been a time of reflection and celebration in the world of cranes and craniacs. We commemorated the 100-year passing of the last passenger pigeon, once the most abundant bird in North America, with a strong reminder that extinction is forever and the conservation stakes have never been higher. We shared a collective “phew” that the Whooping Crane – down to only 21 birds in the wild in the 1940s – escaped a similar fate, while redoubling our efforts to ensure that the still-fragile Whooper population remains safe on its Canadian breeding grounds, Texas wintering grounds, and along the flyways that connect them.

The inspiring recovery of our beloved Sandhill Cranes is cause for celebration at festivals across the country – one of the most successful conservation stories of the past century. I recently attended the Yampa Valley Crane Festival held in Steamboat Springs, Colorado that salutes the Rocky Mountain Population of Greater Sandhill Cranes. Each morning and evening, we delighted in the flight of hundreds of Sandhills between their daily feeding grounds and overnight roosting site on the Yampa River – a path that takes them right over festival organizer and ICF Director Nancy Merrill's home! The festival included a special session on cranes and water. I spoke about the global challenges of getting the right quantity, timing, and quality of water needed to sustain some of the most vulnerable species of cranes – including highly water-dependent Siberian, Wattled, and Whooping Cranes. Colleagues from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Nature Conservancy spoke of the local challenges of maintaining adequate water conditions at Monte Vista National Wildlife Refuge in Colorado, a key

stop-over area for Sandhills as they move further south, and ensuring that the free-flowing Yampa River remains their healthy roost site forever. Our friends in Michigan recently celebrated their 20th Crane Fest at Baker Sanctuary, North America's first sanctuary dedicated to the Sandhill Crane, which hosts up to 10,000 migrating cranes in the fall. Weekend visitors enjoyed cascades of trumpeting cranes returning to the marsh at dusk. Baker's Big Marsh Lake is also where Larry Walkinshaw (author of “Cranes of the World”) grew up and learned to love and save cranes. We applaud all who make these crane celebrations possible and remain vigilant that our now-abundant Sandhill Cranes avoid the unthinkable downfall of the Passenger Pigeons that once filled our skies. And those of you who were able to join us on a gorgeous September morning in Baraboo for our Annual Member's Day festivities helped us celebrate some really *Good Eggs*. ICF Director and emergency management guru Regina Phelps, volunteer-extraordinaire Ted Thousand, and travel agents Al and Diane Vavra were honored with this year's Good Egg Awards for their inspiring commitment to ICF and the cranes. We also gave educator Barb Thompson a standing ovation for her tireless efforts to foster educational and scientific exchange between teachers in Wisconsin and Russia's remote Muraviovka Park, a haven for six species of cranes and a wealth of other rare and endangered species. I hope cranes inspire you to make the world a better place!



2014 Annual Member Appreciation Day at ICF Headquarters in Baraboo. Photos by Debbie Johnson

Strengthening our Commitment

ON THREE CONTINENTS

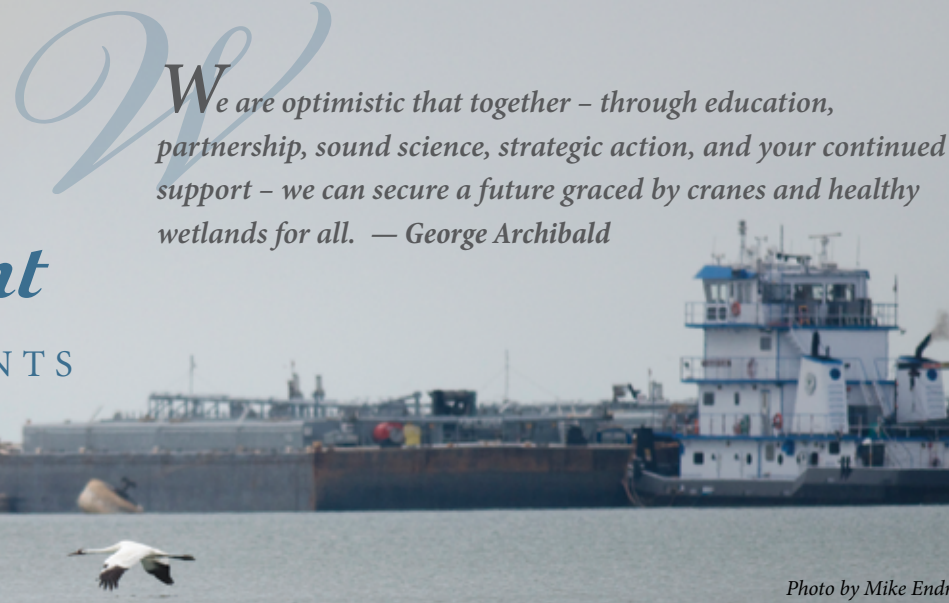


Photo by Mike Endres

We are optimistic that together – through education, partnership, sound science, strategic action, and your continued support – we can secure a future graced by cranes and healthy wetlands for all. — George Archibald

Africa

So much of our commitment to saving the world's cranes is about securing the wetlands that sustain them. ICF is working on behalf of some amazing wetlands, including the vast, bountiful floodplains in Zambia so important to Wattled and Grey Crowned Cranes and many species of African wildlife. This year, we spread our wings and launched our newest

initiative, the Zambia Crane and Wetlands Conservation Program, under the capable leadership of Zambian Griffin Shanungu.



The program focuses on safeguarding three remarkable wetlands – the Liuwa Plain, Kafue Flats, and Bangweulu Swamp – by resolving emerging threats such as water development, geothermal mining, and invasive shrubs. Our efforts in Zambia will train and empower Zambian wildlife managers to ensure the long-term sustainability of these rich wetlands and their inhabitants.

North America

Down to fewer than 20 birds in the 1940s, the Whooping Crane is one of conservation's great success stories – steadily recovering to over 600



birds today. But despite this progress, Whooping Cranes remain endangered with serious threats on

their wintering grounds and long annual migration route. Loss of coastal land, collisions with power lines, and illegal shootings are all major challenges to the survival of the species. With your support, we will intensify our efforts to keep Whooping Cranes safe in the wild. We are launching a major educational initiative to engage people in making meaningful differences for the future of Whooping Cranes. Like the parent crane trumpeting an alarm call to its chick, we will raise awareness about the plight of Whooping Cranes. We will inspire and empower citizens to become champions in their communities, and advocate for protection of the wetlands on which Whooping Cranes and so many species depend.

Asia

We are committed to working with people who share some of the most important places on earth for cranes. Across Asia, the future for cranes depends on the value communities place on benefits their wetlands provide. These crane landscapes include Poyang Lake (winter home to 98% of the world's Critically Endangered Siberian Cranes), Hui River and Tumuji National Nature Reserves in Inner Mongolia (key breeding grounds for the Endangered Red-crowned Crane), and even remote valleys of Mongolia (where herdsman live beside the Vulnerable White-



naped Cranes). At these and other locations, we are demonstrating how restoring wetlands and water resources is vital to

human communities as well as their beloved cranes. Our expanding commitments help to address urgent human needs, integrated with education programs that bring the next generations into conservation.

MATCHING GIFT

We invite you to make a special campaign gift that will be matched by ICF's Board of Directors and several generous supporters. Your gift will help our campaign take flight and reach our goal of \$600,000. Together, we can ensure cranes, our symbols of long life and fidelity, grace healthy wetlands well into the future. Thank you for your faithful support.



A New Look for Our Website is Coming Soon!

Please give us your opinion by completing a short survey.

We are thrilled to announce that ICF has received a grant from the Arthur J. Donald Foundation to re-design our website. As we reach out and share our mission and conservation stories, it is important that our online presence is current and dynamic. One of the many new and exciting features of the new website will be a reactive design that adapts to desktop, tablet, and smart phone viewing. Please help us improve our website by taking a short survey and also enter to win a crane t-shirt! To take the survey, visit www.surveymonkey.com/s/icf-website-redesign.



ICF Makes New Friends at the UK Bird Fair

By K.S. Gopi Sundar, ICF Director of SarusScape

Thanks to ICF Board member Mirabel Helme and friend to cranes Tim Nevard, we have had an ICF booth at the UK Bird Fair for the last two years. This event is annual and is reputedly the biggest fair of its kind in the world. Set beside the lovely lakes of Rutland Waters, the Bird Fair attracts twitchers, artists, researchers, and conservationists alike – all united by the single mission to enjoy birds. The Bird Fair has provided several heart-warming moments that I share here.

Two elderly ladies looked about, clearly there just to absorb the general ambience, and also avid supporters of the Bird Fair. Attracted by the crane paintings on post cards and brightly colored origami cranes on our table, they came over to inquire about ICF. Mirabel took up the cause and detailed why we exist, and why cranes need help. Various products from our project at Phu My in Vietnam were displayed, and one of the ladies was fascinated by the patterns the reeds made. She reached into her wallet to pay for a hand bag and quietly remarked, "So glad that someone is watching out for the cranes. It is really nice that you are here."

The man stopped dumbstruck and stared with wide open eyes at our logo prominently displayed at our table. He fumbled hurriedly in his pocket, brought out his wallet, retrieved a business card, and marched up to us with a big smile. He held up the card for all of us to see. It read "A. Crane". After signing up for a membership, he remarked delightedly "there is a whole institution working for the preservation of our family!"

"I've been to Baraboo and seen your cranes there – what a great facility! Where is George Archibald nowadays?" The energy on the man's face shone through his wrinkles as he smiled delightedly and chatted about his trip to the United States many years ago. Widely travelled, and a confirmed craniac – we had been reunited with yet another ICF friend while in the UK.

Complete with rucksack, wearing hiking trousers with side pockets, and holding a map of the Bird Fair, the couple walked up to us. They had never heard of ICF before. The large posters displaying the Sarus had attracted them. They spoke fondly of the time they had visited Bharatpur in India and had witnessed a pair unison-calling. Their life list already included 10 of the 15 crane species. They were really looking forward to going to Africa soon and seeing more crane species. They promised to visit the Baraboo facility when they were in the United States next and walked away leaving everyone infected with their enthusiasm.

As page four of the list of people signing up for ICF memberships filled up, the second year of our participation at the UK Bird Fair ended. We had made so many new connections, heard so many stories of people enjoying the reintroduced cranes in the UK, had reconnected with ICF friends in the UK, and thanks to the ready, contagious warmth of the British people, had become a part of the Bird Fair in just two years. All of this, of course, has been possible thanks to the generosity of Mirabel, and the helpfulness of Tim – our gratitude to both.

With representatives from Vietnam, Australia, India and the UK, the team at the ICF booth was an international one. Left to right: Harry Nevard, Tim Nevard, Swati Kittur with Nguyen Bao Toan, Gopi Sundar, ICF Director Mirabel Helme and Bui Minh Nguyet.

MY CONSERVATION Umbrella

By Tanya Smith, EWT Southern African Regional Manager



Tanya Smith (at right) with a farmer and a Wattled Crane chick that was successfully caught and fitted with identification color bands on each leg. Photo by Brent Coverdale

in South Africa. I began as a Junior Field Officer with the Endangered Wildlife Trust's (EWT) South African Crane Working Group in 2007. I was based in the very remote farming area of the Eastern Cape, where approximately one third of South Africa's 7,000-strong Grey Crowned Crane population calls home. The biggest threat facing the iconic Grey Crowned Crane in that area is poison set out by farmers due to damage caused to corn crops. Our efforts to prevent damage to germinating corn by cranes and other birds focused on scare tactics, but those have since proven mostly unsuccessful. In my new role, I will work with partners EcoGuard and Arkion Life Sciences on the testing of a distasteful but safe deterrent Avipel™, so that it may be registered for use in South Africa. ICF played a big role in developing Avipel™ and it is being successfully used in the U.S. as a seed treatment product to deter bird damage to seedlings.

One of my first tasks, however, is a thorough review of our strategy for conserving cranes in South Africa. A big focus moving forward will be the securing of critical habitats and breeding sites for Grey Crowned and Wattled Cranes in particular. In addition, in 2015 we will launch a new project in the Western Cape – the stronghold for the South African national bird, the Blue Crane. The new project will determine the movement and landscape utilization patterns of Blue Cranes in the Western Cape in order to inform wind energy farm development in the region. I also look forward to working with Griffin Shanungu and the newly launched Zambia Crane and Wetland Conservation Project (featured in the last issue of *The ICF Bugle*). I look forward to sharing lessons learned from the last decade with neighboring countries.

The efforts required for crane conservation in Southern Africa, and Africa as a whole, are great and only achievable through the commitment of a team of individuals – and that's what the African Crane Conservation Programme is – a dedicated and effective team within two organizations (ICF/EWT) who have proven that partnerships work! With my diverse crane experience, my passion for conservation, and my symbolic umbrella, I look forward to standing with my colleagues in the African Crane Conservation Programme and succeeding!

Since I can remember, I wanted to save the planet and every animal and plant on it. As a child, I spent any spare time with my dogs or rescuing abandoned baby birds or injured animals. On one occasion, when I was 12 years-old, I very bravely (or stupidly) stood out in an African summer storm with hail falling from the sky armed with nothing but an umbrella and one mission in mind – to protect a nest of tiny Cape White-eyes from the huge hail stones that threatened their little lives. I was successful. My views of saving the planet have expanded since then and I now understand that conservation of species and ecosystems is far more complex than standing in a storm armed with an umbrella, but I will carry my umbrella symbolically into my new role as Southern African Regional Manager with a mission to lead and guide the crane conservation efforts in Southern Africa.

For the last seven years I have been part of a team of the most dedicated and passionate individuals I have had the pleasure and privilege of working with, to save cranes and our valuable catchments

Travel with ICF

Now is the time to answer that yearning for adventure! Join ICF Co-founder George Archibald in June 2015 on the trip of a lifetime to Mongolia, where human numbers are low, and nature abounds. You will view the indigenous Przewalski's horses in their expansive steppe habitat, experience life in a ger camp, and participate in a Crane Festival. Along the way you will visit important historic and cultural sites, observe nesting White-naped Cranes among many endemic species of birds, and listen to expert commentary from George about ICF initiatives to help protect the birds and their habitats. For more information contact Kari Stauffer at 608-356-9462 ext. 115 or email: travel@savingcranes.org.



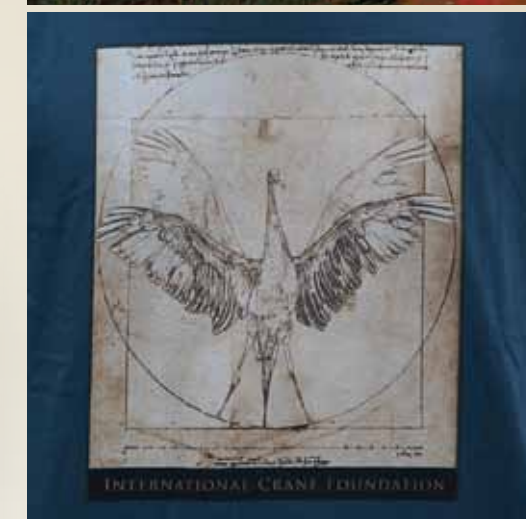
Holiday Gifts for CRANIACS!

Two Sandhill Cranes call out a simple message in many languages – *May Peace Prevail on Earth*. This original watercolor by Wisconsin artist, Diane Splinter, adorns our cards printed on 100% recycled paper. Each package contains 8 cards and envelopes. Inside blank. Price: \$30.00

These delicate square earrings frame the silhouette of a crane. 1.75 inches long in gold or silver tone. Price: \$24.99

Inspired by Leonardo DaVinci, our new DaVinci Crane T-shirt is a must-have for craniacs this holiday season. The long-sleeved 100% organic cotton t-shirt is pigment dyed and super soft. Color: Pacific Blue. This design is also available in unisex short-sleeved in meteorite brown, and ladies-cut short-sleeved in navy blue. Price: \$34.99.

Shop online at www.craneshop.org, email: giftshop@savingcranes.org, or call (608) 356-9462 ext. 135.



Notes From the Field

By Tran Triet, ICF Southeast Asia Program Coordinator

Location: Kulen Promtep Wildlife Sanctuary, Northern Plain, Cambodia – the heartland of the open Dipterocarp forest ecosystem of Southeast Asia.



Eight of us, four Cambodian, a Laotian and three Vietnamese, just finished a field survey to map wetlands and locate Sarus crane nests. This was the first field excursion under a research project funded by USGS and SUMMERNET. It rained hard almost every day, especially at night. Monsoonal rains filled up wetlands to their fullest water holding capacity, turning a desert-like forest of half-a-year ago into a water world. Water is everywhere. We often couldn't tell where the wetland ended and where the upland began. The whole sanctuary (some 1.2 million acres) has transformed itself into a gigantic wetland at this time of the year. Everywhere there are aquatic plants, birds, fish, frogs, crabs, snails – and lots of them. What else could we ask for from a wetland? Life fully manifested itself, indulging in the luxury of abundant water and foods – busy

producing offspring for the generations to come, but perhaps most importantly, storing enough energy to endure a harsh dry season that will very soon descend.

For a wetland botanist, few things could make me as happy as seeing so many wetland plants in full bloom. Many of these plants would either disappear or be unidentifiable in the dry season. We can't wait to return to this sanctuary in May or early June at the onset of the rainy season, an ecological equivalence of spring time in the Midwest, when a special group of wetland plants will bloom. These "spring ephemeral" plants live shortly and can only be seen during the time when the dry season progresses to the wet. That is also the time when the Sarus cranes return to their breeding grounds.

Siem Riep, Cambodia 10/7/2014



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Newsletter is also available in digital format.

Black Crowned Cranes are threatened and declining across their range in West and Central Africa, but recent reports from Zakouma National Park in Chad – where as many as 7,000 birds were observed with flocks numbering in the thousands – are very encouraging. ICF hopes to work in partnership with Chad wildlife managers and the Africa Parks Foundation to safeguard this important stronghold for the species. Photo by Michael Lorentz

