



Annual Report 2015

Fiscal Year April 2014-March 2015



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Cover photo of Siberian Cranes by Shaohai Sun. The International Crane Foundation is leading efforts to protect this critically endangered species and its wetland habitats. This year marked the completion of our three-year project, “Cranes, Communities, Water, and Climate Change” at two wetlands key to Siberian Cranes in northeast China.



Letter from the President

Throughout our history, the International Crane Foundation has evolved to meet the emerging challenges of conservation. In the early days, we uncovered the mysteries of cranes—discovering previously unknown breeding grounds, identifying remote wetlands needed as stop-overs on long migrations, sleuthing out population numbers and trends. From these discoveries we built flagship projects at key sites around the world, while providing knowledge, leadership, and inspiration to budding “craniacs” in more than 50 countries.

Going forward, it’s all about strengthening our commitment to the places -- and people -- that cranes depend on. We’re investing deeply in:

- East Asia and Africa, where the future of 9 of the world’s 11 endangered cranes depends on our innovative water management strategies, conservation-friendly alternatives to mines, drainage, and pavement, and an end to the illegal capture and trade of wild cranes
- India, across Southeast Asia, to Australia, where Vulnerable Sarus Cranes are our last, best hope for saving vanishing wetlands
- Texas, where we are taking on the land and water conservation challenges facing Whooping Cranes on their wintering grounds, and their threats during migration from illegal shootings, powerlines, and energy development
- Our home base in Wisconsin, where we are bringing the Whooping Crane back to the eastern United States for the first time in more than a century

In this annual report, you’ll see the concrete steps taken this year to create lasting conservation solutions that will stand the test of time. You’ll get a snapshot of how the International Crane Foundation is bringing people together, developing tomorrow’s conservation leaders, improving local livelihoods, and more.

And while it doesn’t make for flashy photos and stories in an annual report, it’s important to note that we are taking other critical steps to strengthen our commitment – hiring new leaders in key locations, expanding our presence with new offices and partnerships, and redefining roles and responsibilities to better serve as a global resource for conservation.

I am incredibly proud of what we accomplished for cranes, people, and landscapes this year. We could not have done it without your support. Thank you.

The enormity of the challenges ahead are surpassed only by our own big ideas and boundless enthusiasm. We look forward to continuing this important work with you by our side.



Richard Beilfuss

Dr. Richard Beilfuss, President & CEO

Community-based Conservation Innovations in Rwanda



Photo by Claudien Nsabagasani

The Rugezi Marsh is the most important wetland in Rwanda, providing critical habitat to Endangered Grey Crowned Cranes. However, the marsh is threatened by intensive subsistence agriculture and other pressures from surrounding communities. The key to protecting the marsh and its cranes lies with addressing the socioeconomic needs of the people who call Rugezi home. Since 2013, the International Crane Foundation has actively collaborated with local communities to develop and support livelihoods that strengthen, rather than diminish, the value that people place on the marsh. We are exploring how to market products made from sustainably-harvested reeds and papyrus, supplement local livestock, and generate ecotourism linked to mountain gorilla viewing in the nearby Virunga Mountains. This year, we initiated a surprising new approach that shows promise – beekeeping!

Together with our partners, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, the Albertine Rift Conservation Society, and Kitabi College of Conservation and Environmental Management, the International Crane Foundation launched the project by forming six beekeeping cooperatives and hosting several beekeeping trainings. Beehives must be kept in trees planted on the edges of Rugezi Marsh, so the project creates incentives for protecting the marsh. Monitoring of the beehives is ongoing and we expect honey yields to increase each year, a result that is transforming local residents into wetland stewards. This project promises to sustain the marsh, the people, and the cranes for the future.



The Crane and Wetlands Conservation Program Takes off in Zambia



Photo by Rich Beilfuss

Zambia is home to most of the world's Vulnerable Wattled Cranes, and a stronghold for Endangered Grey Crowned Cranes too. The fate of these species and many others, and the livelihoods of millions of people, depends on keeping the vast floodplains of Zambia healthy. The inextricable link between cranes and people inspired this year's launch of the Crane and Wetlands Conservation Program in Zambia. The program builds on the intensive surveys we conducted for cranes and other large mammals and waterbirds in all of the major wetland systems of Zambia in the past, but expands our work by tailoring our conservation approach to the needs of each wetland ecosystem.

At one vital wetland—the Kafue Flats—the staff of the International Crane Foundation is working in close collaboration with the Zambia Wildlife Authority and World Wildlife Fund-Zambia to restore natural flood patterns that have been altered by large dam operations. Through this partnership, we are also controlling invasive shrubs that displace important feeding grounds. This results in a direct benefit to the local communities that depend on this wetland for fishing, grazing their livestock, and other livelihoods. Concurrently, we are deepening our understanding of the factors that influence crane survival through research and monitoring.

Everywhere we work in Zambia, we are focused on building the capacity of local wildlife managers and students to secure the long-term sustainability of these rich wetlands and their threatened cranes. We are already encouraged by the results and we've only just begun...Stay tuned!



Aerial Survey Confirms Increases in South Africa's Cranes



Photo by Shawn Olesen

South Africa's three crane species face many threats, but there is evidence that our protection efforts are working. This year's annual crane survey in the crane-rich north-eastern region of South Africa was filled with good news. Across the board, the numbers of Vulnerable Blue Cranes, Endangered Grey Crowned Cranes, and Vulnerable Wattled Cranes were up. In fact, the Wattled Crane count was the highest in 21 years!

Our work in South Africa is achieved through a remarkable partnership with the Endangered Wildlife Trust. Together, our team is focused on farmer awareness and education, poisoning prevention, marking power lines to reduce bird collisions, and large-scale habitat protection and restoration.

While the surveys have made it possible for us to confirm that our conservation efforts are working, they also warn that crane population numbers aren't where they need to be to erase the threat of extinction. Our results suggest that we must continue to do the hard work it takes for cranes to thrive, which is just what we'll do.



Sarus Crane Conservation in South Asia



Photo by Rae Bareli

The world's tallest flying bird, the Sarus Crane, is vulnerable to rapid habitat loss and wetland degradation in India. The International Crane Foundation is focused on non-traditional conservation areas – especially the rich agricultural lands where most Sarus and many other species occur – to ensure the long-term survival of the species.

This past year, our work led us to Haryana in northern India where we documented a new threat to Sarus Cranes – large-scale conversion of wetlands for fish farming. This practice divides large wetlands into smaller ones, leaving them vulnerable to invasive species, dumping of urban waste, and other impacts. We documented a nearly 50% decline in wetlands here since the 1970s, as well as reduced complexity of the habitat in the remaining wetlands. Alarmingly, in this study, Sarus Cranes were never seen using converted fish ponds. We quickly published our findings to be used to engage state authorities in finding a solution to this new, serious threat to Sarus Cranes.



Decoding Sarus Crane Breeding Grounds in Cambodia and Vietnam



Photo by K.S. Gopi Sundar

Incredibly, there are tens of thousands of wetlands associated with the Mekong River basin in Southeast Asia. The ecological importance of these wetlands, especially the smaller forest wetlands that cover fewer than 200 acres, has long been underestimated — an oversight that has resulted in the wetlands remaining unprotected and highly vulnerable to development. Without these wetlands, birds like the Vulnerable Sarus Cranes and Endangered Giant Ibis, Lesser Adjutant Stork, Greater Adjutant Stork, White-shouldered Ibis, and others could not breed.

The International Crane Foundation is on a mission to help decision-makers and local communities understand the critical role of forest wetlands in northern Cambodia and the Central Highland of Vietnam, and take action to save them. This year, we deployed a team to classify and map these small wetlands and identify the key attributes critical for Sarus Crane breeding. In addition, villagers provided information about how wildlife and local communities depend on the forests and wetlands. We are using this information to develop management recommendations for protected areas and community livelihoods projects. These science-based recommendations will be key to guarding against impending agricultural pressures and securing a future for people and Sarus Cranes alike.



Improving Winter Habitat for Siberian Cranes in China



Photo by Jim Harris

China's Poyang Lake is the winter home to 400,000 waterbirds, including 98% of the world's Critically Endangered Siberian Cranes. Poyang Lake is really a mosaic of smaller sub-lakes that connect during high waters. Some of the most important sub-lakes for Siberian Cranes are drained early in winter for fish harvest. Fishermen release lake waters by opening sluice gates (like the one in the foreground of the photo above), so they can catch the fish as the water races out. The process dries up the shallow water habitats vital to Siberian Cranes and other species.

The International Crane Foundation is addressing this problem by working with partners and local communities to integrate fish management practices with waterbird protection. We helped develop a "Sub Lake Management and Monitoring Plan," that recommends holding back a portion of the water into late winter, a practice that maintains feeding habitat for Siberian Cranes. It will also benefit fisheries by allowing some fish to remain and reproduce the following year. The Poyang Lake National Nature Reserve began a trial implementation of the plan for two sub lakes in winter 2014-15. Based on the trial, we expect that sluice gates will become a tool for long-term crane conservation, as well as the key to sustainable livelihoods for local fishermen.



Training the Next Generation of Crane Scientists in China



The future of China's threatened crane species, including Red-crowned and White-naped Cranes, rests with the next generation, which is why we were happy to host a record three sessions of our International Nature School in the past year. Nearly 500 local children, teachers, college students, and staff explored wetlands by testing water samples, discovering aquatic plants, creating crane art, and more, all with the goal of demonstrating the important connection between wetlands, water, and crane health. With leading crane scientists and students from across East Asia sharing their expertise, the curriculum was infused with a critical international perspective. The school also provided more than 20 college students with the opportunity to design and lead a real conservation activity, under the mentorship of experienced educators. These experiences at the International Nature School lay the foundation for the next generation of craniacs who we hope will become conservation scientists, but who we know will forever serve as crane ambassadors.



Protecting Land for Whooping Cranes



Photo by Mike Sloat

The last original flock of Endangered Whooping Cranes make their winter home along the coast of Texas, where they require wide swaths of undisturbed land to access food and fresh water, finish raising their chicks, and prepare for the next nesting season in Canada. It is estimated that as much as 50% of the Texas habitat that Whooping Cranes depend upon is at risk due to rising sea levels associated with global climate change.

The International Crane Foundation has spearheaded a two-year effort to identify and map the areas most in need of protection in order for the expanding Whooping Crane population to have an adequate home for the long-term. As a result of this intensive and sophisticated mapping work, 90,000 acres have been selected in the San Antonio and Matagorda Bay systems as high priority for conservation protection using methods like easements or purchase. The mapping tool is already being used to target and secure healthy coastal habitats for the cranes and other biodiversity. The Powderhorn Lake Ranch, a 17,000-acre property that includes 11 miles of shoreline along Matagorda Bay and Powderhorn Lake, is just one such example. Here, we've worked closely with partners to create state recreational land and a wildlife refuge. The Whooping Cranes who have been documented using the shoreline marshes are evidence that we are protecting the right places. The low-lying areas of the property will continue to provide marsh habitat even as sea levels rise.



From Baraboo to the Wild



Photo by Tom Lynn

The International Crane Foundation's captive breeding efforts at our headquarters in Baraboo, Wisconsin are fundamental to our ultimate goal of creating multiple self-sustaining flocks of Whooping Cranes in the wild. The spring of 2014 was a particularly successful season for our captive Whooping Crane flock. A total of 54 Whooping Crane eggs were laid, the highest number ever produced at the International Crane Foundation in a single year! Chicks Tabasco, Pico de Gallo, Sweet Baby Ray, Honey, Sriracha, and Aioli became our first cohort to join the non-migratory flock in Louisiana. We are encouraged that the number of nesting attempts among previously released cranes in the Wisconsin eastern migratory population continue to increase, with 28 nesting attempts this past year alone. With careful science, a lot of patience, and your support, our propagation efforts are boosting the number of wild Whooping Cranes, one chick at a time.



Conserving Rare Cranes in Captivity



Photo by Ted Thousand

Captive cranes help us educate the public about the beauty, grace, and cultural significance of cranes, and the challenges to saving them in the wild. Captive cranes also are an important genetic bank for their species, helping guard against extinction in the wild. The International Crane Foundation is leading the way with innovative methods to maintain sustainable captive populations of threatened cranes —and this year this work yielded some important successes.

A 28-year-old female Vulnerable Hooded Crane (who had not produced any eggs in 8 years!) produced fertile eggs through artificial insemination using a sample from a 30-year-old male. Visitors delighted in watching their genetically-important chick, Wasabi, grow-up on display.

We also facilitated the successful hatch of a Vulnerable Sarus Crane chick. Curry is the culmination of several years of work by our aviculturists to reduce egg breaking and encourage incubation behavior in our only pair of these birds. Curry's father is 51 years old, the oldest bird at the International Crane Foundation!

These successes and others are made possible by our dedicated aviculturists who apply lessons learned from many years of captive breeding.



A Worldwide Plan for Crane Conservation Success



International Crane Foundation staff provide the leadership for the Wetlands International – IUCN Species Survival Commission Crane Specialist Group, a network of more than 250 specialists from 50 countries dedicated to promoting the study and conservation of the world’s 15 crane species. This year, the Crane Specialist Group’s steering committee met in Germany to develop a global Crane Conservation Strategy – the first comprehensive plan for cranes since 1996. The revised strategy reflects new threats to cranes that have emerged strongly over the past two decades, such as mining and water scarcity. It also incorporates our deeper understanding of crane population numbers and distribution around the world. Keep an eye on www.savingcranes.org, where we will post the strategy document upon completion.



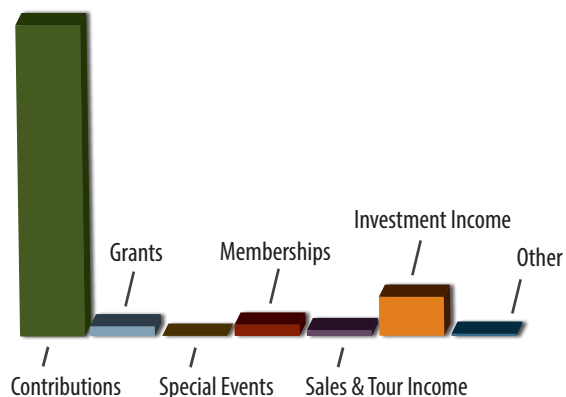
FINANCIAL SUMMARY

Fiscal Year April 2014 - March 2015

STATEMENTS OF FINANCIAL POSITION

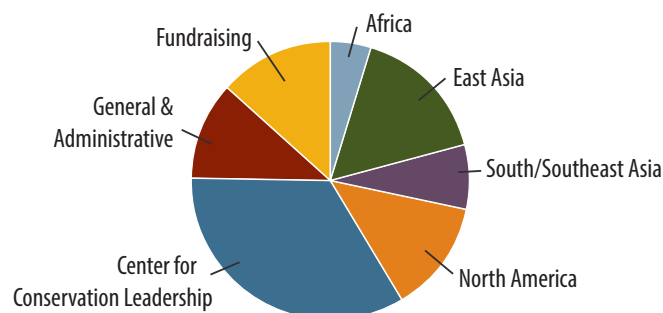
ASSETS	2015	2014
CURRENT ASSETS		
Cash and cash equivalents	\$2,893,637	\$2,076,505
Certificates of deposit	\$256,700	\$256,001
Accounts receivable	\$17,795	\$6,054
Grants receivable	\$-	\$39,999
Unconditional promises to give, current portion	\$1,150,795	\$244,328
Inventories	\$65,055	\$68,498
Prepaid expenses	\$72,927	\$88,917
Total Current Assets	\$4,456,909	\$2,780,302
PROPERTY & EQUIPMENT, NET	\$4,212,349	\$3,548,865
OTHER ASSETS		
Unconditional promises to give, long term portion	\$2,647,851	\$267,246
Beneficial interest in charitable remainder trust	\$876,204	\$861,260
Assets restricted to endowments	\$2,222,871	\$1,622,871
Long-term investments	\$15,660,390	\$14,442,047
Cash restricted for capital improvements	\$224,725	\$-
Total Other Assets	\$21,632,041	\$17,193,424
Total Assets	\$30,301,299	\$23,522,591
LIABILITIES & NET ASSETS		
CURRENT LIABILITIES		
Accounts payable and accrued expenses	\$186,475	\$140,148
Accrued payroll and related liabilities	\$178,844	\$160,714
Deferred revenue	\$31,762	\$100,915
Total Current Liabilities	\$397,081	\$401,777
NET ASSETS		
Unrestricted	\$19,833,663	\$18,896,252
Temporarily restricted	\$6,847,684	\$2,601,691
Permanently restricted	\$3,222,871	\$1,622,871
Total Net Assets	\$29,904,218	\$23,120,814
Total Liabilities & Net Assets	\$30,301,299	\$23,522,591

2015 REVENUE



Contributions	\$10,361,926	82.1%
Grants	\$318,504	2.5%
Special Events	\$4,937	0.0%
Memberships	\$372,476	3.0%
Sales and Tour Income	\$190,107	1.5%
Investment Income	\$1,294,277	10.3%
Other	\$72,597	0.6%
Total Revenue	\$12,614,824	100.0%

2015 EXPENSES



Africa	\$284,251	4.87%
East Asia	\$943,764	16.18%
South and Southeast Asia	\$425,785	7.30%
North America	\$768,492	13.18%
Center for Conservation Leadership	\$1,974,124	33.86%
General & Administrative	\$659,900	11.32%
Fundraising	\$775,104	13.29%
Total Program Services	\$4,396,416	75.39%
Total Supporting Activities	\$1,435,004	24.61%
Total Expenses	\$5,831,420	100.00%



CONTRIBUTORS

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\$50,000 - \$99,999

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* Active and Emeritus Directors

*The International Crane Foundation works worldwide to conserve cranes
and the ecosystems, watersheds, and flyways on which they depend.*

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