

The Bugle

Inspiring a Global Community

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"I Give a Whoop!"

STAND UP TO PROTECT WHOOPING CRANES

By Elisabeth Condon, Whooping Crane Outreach Coordinator, and Anne Sayers, Director of Marketing and Communications

With only 450 in the wild, Whooping Cranes are the rarest cranes in the world. Given that once there were fewer than 20, their current numbers are encouraging – yet still not enough to guarantee their survival.

To safeguard the species, Whooping Crane recovery must be approached from every angle, across all populations. For 43 years, the International Crane Foundation has worked to do just that. We are working with partners in Texas to ensure that fresh water flows to the coastal bays where Whooping Cranes winter, while also protecting private lands in preparation for the loss of coastal habitats from rising sea levels. We provide eggs and chicks for reintroduction and share research on species recovery with our partners in Louisiana. *Continued on page 2*



We look forward to sharing updates on our expanding *I Give a Whoop!* campaign and providing more opportunities for you to make a difference. To get started and take the pledge, please visit www.savingcranes.org/i-give-a-whoop/
Photo by Ted Thousand





Another citizen adds her name to the thousands who have taken the pledge to protect Whooping Cranes!



Hope gives a hug to crane supporter Taddy McAllister at the Whooping Crane Festival in Texas.

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From our headquarters in Wisconsin, we rear and release Whooping Cranes into the eastern flyway, monitor released birds, and study the habitat requirements of the growing population. As a result, the number of Whooping Cranes has slowly but steadily risen. Unfortunately, their vulnerability to threats has also increased.

When it comes to reducing threats – powerline collisions, habitat loss, illegal shootings, and more – we know that the more people are involved, the more successful we will be. We have also learned that the more people know about Whooping Cranes, the more they *want* to help. Our new *I Give a Whoop!* campaign engages people in safeguarding the species – giving citizens the information they need to be guardians. We are building a team of people across the continent who will serve as a first line of defense in protecting Whooping Cranes. Thousands have already taken the *I Give a Whoop!* pledge, promising to help protect Whooping Cranes by knowing how to identify them, reporting any suspicious activity that appears to harm or disturb them, and telling their friends, family, and networks about the plight of Whooping Cranes.

Hope, the Whooping Crane mascot made specially for us by the Jim Henson Creature Shop (many thanks to Board member Heather Henson, for making this possible!), is doing her part to spread the word. Just like real Whooping Cranes, Hope is a showstopper wherever she appears, but she also serves an important purpose. She demonstrates key identifying characteristics of Whooping Cranes – their distinctive height, the red patch on their heads, and the black primary feathers that are only visible when they spread their wings. She also give hugs, which is a characteristic unique to Hope and not all Whooping Cranes!

Understanding that the hunting community is one of our greatest allies when it comes to raising awareness of Whooping Cranes, we developed several outreach programs specific to this critical audience. As vocal defenders of our natural heritage, hunters can help alert others when a Whooping Crane is in the area, spread the word when extra caution is needed, and report suspicious activities.

Because northern Alabama has recently become an important wintering area for many Whooping Cranes in the eastern population, we kicked off our on-the-ground campaign last fall just as the Whooping Cranes arrived at Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge. Not surprisingly, our early data showed that Alabamians did not know there were Whooping Cranes in the state. Most did not know anything about Whooping Cranes at all! Priority number one was to raise awareness about Whooping Cranes...and then tell the story of why they are endangered and how local communities can help protect them. We aired public service announcements, reported stories in magazines and on television news, posted billboards, participated in community events, and gave popular outreach

programs at many schools. These activities culminated with the *Festival of the Cranes* in January, where more than 3,000 people came out (a record for festival attendance!) to catch a glimpse of Whooping Cranes in the wild. Everyone was thrilled to see Whooping Cranes dancing, feeding, and calling at a refuge in their home state.

Encouraged by the success of the campaign in Alabama, we are excited to expand to Wisconsin where about 100 Whooping Cranes spend the summer, and to Texas where more than 300 Whooping Cranes spend the winter. The *I Give a Whoop!* campaign is needed in Texas now more than ever, given the poaching of two Whooping Cranes already this year. As the accused shooter is tried under the Endangered Species Act, we are advocating for a vigorous prosecution to deter future shootings. With shootings occurring far too regularly, this will continue to be a strong focus of our efforts. We look forward to sharing updates on the ever expanding *I Give a Whoop!* campaign and providing more opportunities for you to make a difference. We are so grateful to everyone who already participates. To get started and take the pledge, please visit www.savingcranes.org/i-give-a-whoop/.

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The 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

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Notes from the President

By Rich Beilfuss

Leading the Charge for Whooping Cranes



Extinction is forever. Around the world, conservationists are struggling to reverse the decline for many threatened species we hold dear, and to reintroduce populations we are losing from the wild. We may fantasize about rewilding North America with long lost mastodons and giant sloths, but the challenging truth is that there is so much work to be done to save what we still have. At the International Crane Foundation, we feel the immense responsibility that comes with our lead role in the future of all cranes and the wild places they need.

Our commitment to Endangered Whooping Cranes in North America runs especially deep. With programs based in Texas and along the migratory route to Canadian breeding grounds, we are invested in securing the last remaining wild flock of Whooping Cranes, which is recovering from fewer than 20 individuals in the 1940s to more than 300 today. Because this small population will remain vulnerable to disease, natural disasters, and human

encroachment for decades to come, additional populations are being reintroduced as an “insurance policy” for Whooping Crane survival. We are a founding member of the Whooping Crane Eastern Partnership (WCEP), a group of non-profit organizations and government agencies formed to establish a migratory population east of the Mississippi River. Our role includes strategic genetic breeding, egg production, raising chicks for release, monitoring released birds, habitat research, and outreach and education. Another non-migratory population is being reintroduced in Louisiana, to which ICF will contribute costume-reared chicks for release this year along with our partner, Patuxent Wildlife Research Center.

We know how much you care about Whooping Cranes, and we are always grateful for your thoughtful comments about this work. Some members have expressed concern about the recent US Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) decision to end the use of ultralight aircraft to guide young Whooping Cranes from Wisconsin to their wintering grounds. These and other changes in our rearing and reintroduction methods seek to limit the amount of time chicks spend with costumed staff, while emphasizing as much interaction as

possible with adult Whooping Cranes. **I want to assure you that these changes are built on a foundation of success.** More than 100 Whooping Cranes now successfully migrate between Wisconsin and the southeast US, and we are grateful to our partner, Operation Migration, for leading them in the past along this migratory pathway with ultralight aircraft. The cranes are pairing and nesting, and egg production is increasing.

The ultimate goal for any reintroduction effort is successful breeding in the wild at a level that allows the population to be self-sustaining without further supplementation. The eastern migratory flock has not yet successfully fledged chicks in large enough numbers to achieve this goal. Therefore, the next phase will address the obstacles preventing successful reproduction. We shifted our reintroduction efforts away from Necedah National Wildlife Refuge due to concerns that the high concentrations of black flies were a



Historic Hatch! Photo by Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries

contributing factor in driving incubating Whooping Cranes from their nests. This shift (to the “Eastern Rectangle” including Horicon National Wildlife Refuge) shows promise. The USFWS is now asking the partnership to take additional

steps to ensure that the population will become self-sustaining, and the International Crane Foundation will be a leader in meeting this challenge.

As I write this, we have learned the wonderful news that two Whooping Crane chicks hatched in Louisiana – **the first chicks there in 75 years!** – a huge victory in the effort to reintroduce Endangered Whooping Cranes to their historic range in south Louisiana. We extend heartfelt congratulations to the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries and all our partners and supporters for this success. Here in Wisconsin, we are busy with another season of hatching and raising Whooping Cranes for release. We have now reached an exciting new frontier in ensuring that wild Whooping Cranes thrive in North America, and the International Crane Foundation – with your support – will continue to play a leading role. Your investment in this work has never been more important. It is only with your help that we will be able to write the next chapter for Whooping Cranes. Thank you for your generous support.

CRANE FEATHERS Help Spirits Soar

By Marianne Wellington, Senior Aviculturist

Dear Marianne:

We are offering special prayers on your behalf during our sunrise ceremony this morning! What a wonderful contribution to our Sia Essential Species Repository. The feathers of so many appropriate sizes will go a long, long way in meeting the cultural needs of indigenous People who rely on this iconic species. Words cannot fully express our gratitude! I wanted to start the day by sharing our feelings for you and all the International Crane Foundation folks. Of course, special prayers this morning for the Cranes themselves and the promise of a successful breeding season!

With heartfelt appreciation,
Wahathuweeka aka Bill



Left: Waatu, the ceremony of purification and welcome of Crane energy. Right: Euclee Tribal member Scott Stafford's daughter "Loda" represents the first generation of Euclee in over 100 years to be connected with Crane energy.

What a wonderful email message to read on a gloomy and overcast February morning!

I work in the Crane Conservation Department at the International Crane Foundation where we care for all the cranes in our captive breeding facility. We have been collecting molted Whooping Crane feathers of all sizes over the last few years to send to Sia, the Essential Species Repository of the Comanche Nation in Oklahoma, after a request from Founder and Director Bill Voelker. In the past, we sent mostly primary feathers, but this last shipment included a wider selection of feathers ranging from the small, fluffy, downy feathers and coverts, to body feathers and primaries shed naturally from our birds. Usually, we incinerate molted feathers in order to comply with the

Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA), which makes it illegal to possess the feathers, eggs, parts, or nests of over 800 listed birds. The MBTA was enacted in an era when many bird species were threatened by the commercial trade in birds and bird feathers. The Eagle Feather Law is an exception allowing federally recognized tribes to apply for a permit to use protected feathers in tribal ceremonies. The Sia Initiative is just such a repository.

I couldn't have been happier to read this message and see the photos of the Euclee ceremony. Working with cranes is a spiritual experience for me and it feels so right to have the gift from the cranes be valued and used in this manner. This is just one more way that cranes bring us together!



Travel to the Cloud Kingdom of Bhutan

ICF Co-Founder Dr. George Archibald invites you to travel with him to the winter home of Black-necked Cranes in the Kingdom of Bhutan from November 5–20, 2016. The Black-necked Crane Festival at the beautiful temple monastery in the Phobjikha Valley will give you a splendid taste of Bhutan. Throughout the excursion, you will be delighted by the timeless culture, spectacular landscapes, and the matchless hospitality of the Bhutanese people. Trips to Bhutan fill quickly. If you would like more information about this trip, please contact Kari Stauffer at 608-356-9462 ext. 115 or email, travel@savingcranes.org.



Calling Cranes!

This hot-off-the presses royal blue short-sleeved t-shirt was created by artist Kim Russell exclusively for the International Crane Foundation. 50% Cotton 50% Polyester and available in adult unisex sizes from small to XXL. Price: \$19.99. Shop online at www.craneshop.org, email: giftshop@savingcranes.org, or call (608) 356-9462 ext. 171.

The future of cranes was once as fragile as the delicate and graceful birds themselves.

In 1973, inspired by the elegance and plight of cranes, George Archibald co-founded a global center for crane conservation, the International Crane Foundation. Forty-three years later, his vision has given flight to grassroots conservation efforts around the world and a network of passionate leaders committed to the preservation of landscapes critical to the survival of cranes and people alike.

As George celebrates his 70th birthday this year, he is as busy as ever – traveling to remote corners of the world to continue his life's work. With every trip and every encounter, one thing remains constant – George discovers, nurtures, and inspires the conservation leaders of the future.

George has just one birthday wish, but we need your help to grant it. He wants to ensure that the global conservation leadership that he's built over a lifetime will continue.

Forever.



Please wish George a very happy birthday by donating today! Your gift supports the conservation work of tomorrow.

WAYS TO GIVE

Call: 608-356-9462
Donate at: savingcranes.org, or
Return the envelope in this issue!

Please remember the International Crane Foundation when making your estate plans. Please call 608-356-9462 ext. 115 for more information.

Help Continue George's Legacy

Honor George Archibald's birthday by investing in the next generation of scientists, educators, conservationists, and leaders who will carry his work forward. Here are just a few of the amazing individuals putting your gift to work:



TRAN TRIET.

As a graduate student supported by the International Crane Foundation, Triet identified the last remaining wetlands in the Mekong Delta and the role Sarus Cranes can play in saving them. His studies led

to an award-winning eco-business project in Vietnam that is improving livelihoods and increasing Sarus Crane numbers. Triet himself is now training future wetland conservationists across the Mekong Basin.



LIZZIE CONDON.

Since her first day as an education intern with the International Crane Foundation, Lizzie seized every possible experience in crane conservation, with a special interest in the human aspects. Lizzie is now using

her communication skills and ecological expertise as our frontline Whooping Crane outreach specialist, a position dedicated to changing the human behaviors that threaten Endangered Whooping Cranes.



GRIFFIN SHANUNGU.

Under the mentorship of the International Crane Foundation, Griffin became a leader in the management of the three Zambian floodplains that sustain most of the

world's Wattled Cranes. Griffin is now paying it forward by mentoring an exceptional team of seven young Zambians, each of whom is leading wetland conservation efforts across critical crane habitats in Africa.

International Nature School

A FIELD SCIENTIST EMBRACES ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

By Jim Harris, Senior Vice President

It all began in Hulunbeier of Inner Mongolia, where biologist Su Liying, our East Asia Flyways Program Leader, was studying the status of Red-crowned Cranes along the Hui River. She had worked on this species since the early 1980s when she joined George Archibald as a local guide for the International Crane Foundation's first field research in China, an experience that affirmed her love for wild wetlands and a field career seldom appealing to young women at that time.

Now, a quarter century later, Su Liying's research spans much of northeast China. Despite the cultural significance of the magnificent Red-crowned Crane, she was shocked to find its numbers at Hui River had declined from 100 birds to 40, with only 1-2 chicks produced each year. Liying recognized the necessity of going door-to-door, to meet and talk with herders and their families about how preventing disturbances near nests could save their cranes. But this task far exceeded what one scientist could do, so Liying recruited college student volunteers, trained them, and brought them to the Hulunbeier steppe each May. During their conservation campaigns, the students reached out to hundreds of people living on the grassland, and the numbers of crane chicks grew year by year. At the same time, Liying saw what a difference effective conservation action made for the students' vision and commitment.



Dr. Su Liying encourages children to touch sedge roots and tubers – favorite foods of Siberian Cranes – at Tumuji National Nature Reserve, Inner Mongolia, China. Photo by Jim Harris.

Based on this success, Liying shifted the student volunteers east to the Songnen Plain, where six crane species breed or rest on migration. The primary objectives of the International Crane Foundation's newly envisioned International Nature School (INS) were to train college student volunteers to lead outdoor education programs – and to open the eyes of children living beside the great crane marshes. She brought in seasoned teachers, artists, and biologists to mentor the student volunteers. Each INS lasts 2-3 days with 60-120 rural children, 4-5 mentors, 20 college students, and five or more local teachers and nature reserve staff. Because cranes are migratory, Liying feels that safeguarding cranes is a global effort, so she has included conservationists from foreign countries to assist the college students. Specialists come from Russia, Korea, Japan, and the United States, including some of the foremost crane scientists of East Asia.

This year's work began as frigid winter gripped northern China. Liying recruited students and met with them in her home city of Harbin, China. Students from previous years guide the new students, and together they design a practice INS to be held in June. The rehearsals have become so popular that there is a waiting list for city children to join, so a second session has been scheduled this year. The students gather in the evenings and on weekends to prepare a



Undergraduate student Yang Xiandong introduces children to the diverse shapes of wetland plants at Huanzidong. Photo by Zhao Jialong

variety of outdoor activities and divide into four teams focused on wetlands, waterbirds, aquatic plants, and art/writing. When the day finally arrives for the INS, a large bus creeps through city traffic to the gates of Liying's apartment compound. A dozen students and foreign colleagues load up equipment and materials. The bus makes a few stops to pick up more students, mentors, and foreign colleagues, and they arrive near the crane site by evening.

Liying has organized INS at five different wetlands across northern China, with a sixth site planned this summer. On the first day, the teaching teams adapt their plans to the wetland edge where they'll be teaching, followed by 2-3 intensely busy days with local children. During the evenings, the college students meet with Liying and the mentors to share stories from the day. This process builds confidence for the student volunteers who are eager to make an impact on the children who will grow up using the wetland and, we hope, safeguarding resources for decades to come. The students have learned the facts and theories of science in the classroom, but have little opportunity for practical conservation or leadership. In Liying, the students see a woman who not only knows the science, but who uses it to inspire others to continue her passion and commitment to care for their homeland – for the sake of endangered cranes and people alike. For them, it is extraordinary to see an older woman like Liying tramp for days through shallow water, floating sedge mats, and windswept steppe.

Many students come back to help her with field research or to join another INS. Liying is pleased to now see students graduating directly into conservation jobs while others pursue graduate studies. By embracing environmental education, Liying has inspired conservation leadership among the next generation for her beloved cranes and wetlands. She could never have predicted the impact a field scientist could have, or where her commitment to cranes might take her. Support for the International Nature School has come from ConocoPhillips, Disney Conservation Fund, Red-crowned Crane Conservancy, and the Erica P. John Fund.



Undergraduate student Yao Yichen leads children into the wetland at Huanzidong. Photo by Jim Harris.

A Major Milestone for Sarus Crane Protection

While the world's tallest flying bird can be found across south Asia and into Australia, the highest concentrations of Sarus Cranes are found in India. Within India, they are most numerous in the north-central state of Uttar Pradesh, so it was only fitting that an international conference on the conservation of Sarus Cranes would be held there. The congregation of experts from Nepal, India, Myanmar, Australia, Vietnam, and Cambodia who gathered there in February shared the latest science on the path forward for Sarus conservation. As experts presented information from their respective countries, one thing became clear. While the long-term success of this vulnerable species hinges on habitat protection, the solution is not one size fits all. The strategies needed to safeguard the Sarus Cranes differ based on unique political histories, agricultural strategies, and human attitudes. It's an order as tall as the Sarus itself, but one that everyone agreed was necessary, urgent, and possible.

To that end, the International Crane Foundation and our Sarus Scape program in India were proud to sign a Memorandum of Understanding with the state of Uttar Pradesh to formalize our shared commitment to conserving and restoring Sarus Crane populations and habitats. This agreement marks a significant milestone in our ongoing efforts to work collaboratively with local governments, farmers, and partners to protect Sarus Cranes and the way of life that allows them to live in harmony with people.



Representatives of the International Crane Foundation celebrate the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding with Chief Minister Akhilesh Yadav (left). From left to right: Mirabel Helme (Board of Directors), Dr. Tran Triet (Southeast Asia Program Director), Dr. Gopi Sundar (Director of SarusScape). Photo by Darcy Love



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MARK YOUR CALENDAR FOR SATURDAY, OCTOBER 8, 2016 Member Appreciation Day

Enjoy a fun-filled day to celebrate our members and the 70th birthday of Co-founder, George Archibald! For more information or to become a member, please visit our website, www.savingcranes.org

All the
Whooping
Cranes
in the world
612



The Count is in!

Whooping Crane numbers are reported each year by the Whooping Crane Recovery Team, and those numbers are used to create this Whooping Cranes “at a glance.” It simplifies complex census data in an easily digestible way showing the general total for each population, but more importantly how each sub-group contributes to the overall number of Whooping Cranes in the world.

Photo by George Lee

