

The Bugle

Saving cranes for 45 years!

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Passport to Poyang

STRENGTHENING ENVIRONMENTAL
EDUCATION FOR SIBERIAN CRANES



By Cully Shelton, Visitor Program Manager

Siberian Cranes were my passport for a recent visit to China's largest freshwater lake, Poyang. This amazing lake's watershed encompasses most of Jiangxi Province and is known for its complex seasonal water fluctuations. In the summer, it floods to nearly a million acres – roughly the size of Rhode Island. During the dry season, the lake area shrinks and forms a vast expanse of wetlands and mudflats, attracting thousands of birds, including the critically endangered Siberian Crane. Many tourists also visit the area and that number is steadily growing.

I spent a week in December working alongside several Chinese colleagues with our program at Poyang Lake. One of our goals is to develop a model visitor program that can be replicated at other sites within the watershed. The Siberian Cranes at Poyang are revered for their beauty and rarity and are a favorite subject of photographers. This brings economic benefit to the area, but currently, there is

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The Poyang Lake Basin in Jiangxi Province, China is one of the most important areas for migratory waterbirds in Asia. Nearly all the world's critically endangered Siberian Cranes winter at Poyang along with White-naped Cranes, Swan Geese, and tens of thousands of egrets, spoonbills, storks, swans, ducks, and shorebirds. The Siberian Cranes are revered for their beauty and rarity and are a favorite subject of photographers. *Photo by Zhou Hai Yan*





Our team in China (right) eating at the homestead restaurant next to the Changhu Chi Environmental Education Center.



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very little management of visitors. Birdwatchers, tourists, and photographers often approach the Siberian Cranes too closely and disturb their feeding or cause them to fly away. We want people to experience the cranes in a way that does not disrupt their day-to-day activities. We also want Siberian Cranes to be valued for bringing eco-tourism and boosting the local economy. People protect what they value, and we believe that educating people about Siberian Cranes will help protect them well into the future.

Our China Program staff is off to a great start at Poyang. They have two new environmental educators who are training local guides, establishing an environmental education center, and developing activities to reduce disturbance. Something as simple as providing binoculars and spotting scopes helps people enjoy the cranes and observe natural behaviors from a distance. New educational signage at viewing hotspots instructs visitors on how to reduce human disturbance in sensitive ecosystems.

Another goal of our program is to create new sources of income for the communities that share their landscapes with cranes. A popular initiative involves working with farmer homestead restaurants that help feed the growing numbers of tourists. We are also hiring local people as guides and guards.



Visitors enjoy the treasures of Poyang Lake. Inset: Environmental Educator Huang Huiqin demonstrates how to reduce disturbance to wildlife by using spotting scopes and binoculars.



I was inspired by how my colleagues involve local communities in their activities. This is especially true with the establishment of the Changhu Chi Environmental Education Center. The center was created from a farmhouse near the wetland that has been leased to us for three rent-free years. The family who owns the house now runs a homestead restaurant next to the center and benefits from hungry visitors to the Education Center. The center provides educational programs for visitors, area students, and children brought in from urban areas for ecological camps. It was encouraging to see our win-win conservation solutions in action.

I shared my visitor program goals, training resources, and environmental education curricula with my Chinese colleagues. I was excited to learn about their strategies, including winter camps, school outreach programs, local guide training initiatives, and how they integrated Siberian Crane conservation across the entire lake basin.

Now that I'm home, I look forward to incorporating what I learned into our visitor program to better connect our birds on display with the stories of their endangered counterparts in the wild. My passport to Poyang truly inspired me to keep making a difference for cranes.

We are grateful for the support of the Erica P. John Fund for this international exchange and for major funding from Disney Conservation Fund for Poyang Lake conservation.



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The Bugle is the quarterly newsletter 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

An Honored Legacy and a Glowing Future in China



One of my favorite things to do in China is to watch the ancient art of Tai Chi practiced by millions of Chinese in city parks at the break of day. As arms swing up in unison like graceful wings, I am reminded of the deep spiritual kinship the Chinese feel with cranes. Some 30 years ago, Tai Chi was the reason I was first drawn to cranes, when my class made a pilgrimage to the mysterious “crane zoo” in Baraboo to practice *White Crane Spreads its Wings* in front of a captive audience of cranes. Standing eye to eye with these magnificent birds, I was hooked! On that same day, I became aware of all the amazing work the International Crane Foundation was doing to save cranes in China, and why.

For decades, we have built a tremendous conservation legacy in China. From Dr. George Archibald's vision of securing the wintering grounds of critically endangered Siberian Cranes at Poyang Lake, to our leadership in establishing one of the world's first successful community-based conservation projects at Cao Hai, we have made a deep commitment in China – and for good reason. China is home to five threatened crane species, including Critically Endangered Siberian Cranes and Endangered Red-crowned Cranes. Chinese reverence for cranes has resulted in a remarkable network of 46 National Crane Nature Reserves, protecting a total area over 71 million acres, and providing vital habitat for hundreds of species and livelihoods for many people.

Despite these gains, and although China's economy has grown remarkably in recent years, there is still a great need for our help. Intense development pressure surrounds each of the crane areas. Thirsty cities demand the waters that sustain the reserves. Climate change, fires, and invasive species loom large. Red-crowned and White-naped Cranes are declining across the country, and others face an unknown future.

This past year, the International Crane Foundation became among the first conservation organizations to be officially registered in China under a new law regulating non-governmental organizations. This new status enables us to intensify our programs

and impact in the coming decades. We just hired our first China Country Director, Ms. Yu Qian, and we opened a new office in Beijing as the center for our programs that span across China.

I traveled to China recently with our new VP International-Asia, Spike Millington, who has lived and worked in China and throughout Asia for many years. We visited Poyang Lake, where our great team of Jiefeng Jin, Wang Hui, and Huang Huiqin were working with Cully Shelton (who you read about on the previous pages) to enhance outreach efforts around the reserve. Poyang was as amazing as always – we saw about a quarter of the world population of Siberian Cranes and thousands of ducks, geese, and swans.



Jim Harris (right) inspiring the future conservation leaders of China with Cully Shelton.

We continued to Huize National Nature Reserve where Dr. Li Fengshan convened a meeting of more than 60 specialists working to secure the Black-necked Crane. Fengshan has led these efforts for Black-necked Cranes in western China for nearly 30 years. In Beijing, we had the honor of speaking at an event hosted by our government sponsor, China's State Forestry Administration. In a room filled with leaders from the Nature Conservancy, World Wildlife Fund, Conservation International, Wildlife Conservation Society, National Geographic Society, Green China, and many others, our hosts made a special point of singling us out for our long-term commitment in China and our great partnership with the government and Chinese nature reserves.

No one deserves more credit for our long-term impact in China than Jim Harris. This spring, Jim will retire from the International Crane Foundation after serving for 34 years in diverse leadership roles including Education Director, Vice President, President, and East Asia Program Director. Together with his wife, Dr. Su Liying, Jim committed much of his life to the cranes, wetlands, and people of China. Their dedication to Chinese teachers and students has transformed caring into action for the places that cranes need. Thank you Jim for spreading our wings with grace and skill in China.

What You Do Makes a Difference

By Lizzie Condon, Whooping Crane Outreach Coordinator and Hillary Thompson, Crane Analyst

Dr. Jane Goodall famously said, “What you do makes a difference, and you have to decide what kind of difference you want to make.” At the International Crane Foundation, we are grateful for the people who decide to make a difference for Whooping Cranes. Establishing a new population of these endangered birds is challenging work and we certainly couldn't do it without our dedicated volunteers in the eastern flyway. Some of these volunteers haven't even been to our headquarters in Wisconsin, yet they put in countless hours in the field as our eyes and ears on the ground.

Carol Thompson, a triple volunteer for the US Fish and Wildlife Service, the National Park Service, and the International Crane Foundation, has been volunteering for us in Alabama since 2013. In addition to educating the public about Whooping Cranes at Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge Visitor Center in Decatur, Alabama, Carol uses telemetry equipment and her keen eyesight to spot Whooping Cranes at the 30,000-acre wildlife refuge. She reports her sightings to us so we can learn more about how the birds are using the landscape. Carol and her husband Russ have dedicated their retirement to volunteering for wildlife conservation.

Dan Kaiser, a volunteer in Indiana, began tracking Whooping Cranes after he reported a sighting with a photograph, and discovered he was the first person to report a Whooping Crane in that region of Indiana. Realizing that we needed help monitoring Whooping Cranes, Dan now spends 20 hours per week monitoring Whooping Cranes along with Lee Sterrenburg, Stephen Smith, John Pohl in southeastern Indiana, and Charles Murray reporting in Tennessee. Many of our monitoring volunteers stay out all day covering long monitoring routes or searching for a missing crane if needed. These volunteers have valuable relationships with local landowners and often act as crane ambassadors to the locals they encounter on their surveys.



Dan Kaiser and Stephen Smith enjoy a sunny winter tracking day near Goose Pond Fish and Wildlife Area in southwestern Indiana. Photo by Lizzie Condon

“Because of the passion and hard work of our monitoring volunteers, who spend many hours surveying fields and wetlands, we know so much more about how the birds are faring in the wild. Their reports help us prioritize areas for outreach work and make management decisions.” – Hillary Thompson, International Crane Foundation Crane Analyst

In Baraboo and beyond, our volunteers are vital to our mission. You are making a difference every day and we are thankful.



Whooping Crane numbers vary on a daily basis. Yet, inquiries about the definitive size of each population are the most frequently asked questions we receive. Perhaps because Whooping Cranes teetered so near the brink of extinction, their numbers are of intense interest to people. We gather these numbers each year for this infographic that is meant to quickly convey an overall picture of Whooping Crane numbers in the wild and in captivity. Each time we update the infographic, it's reassuring to see the count steadily increasing as the Whooping Crane continues its fragile recovery.

End of an Era

Our Deepest Gratitude to the Patuxent Wildlife Research Center

By George Archibald, Co-Founder



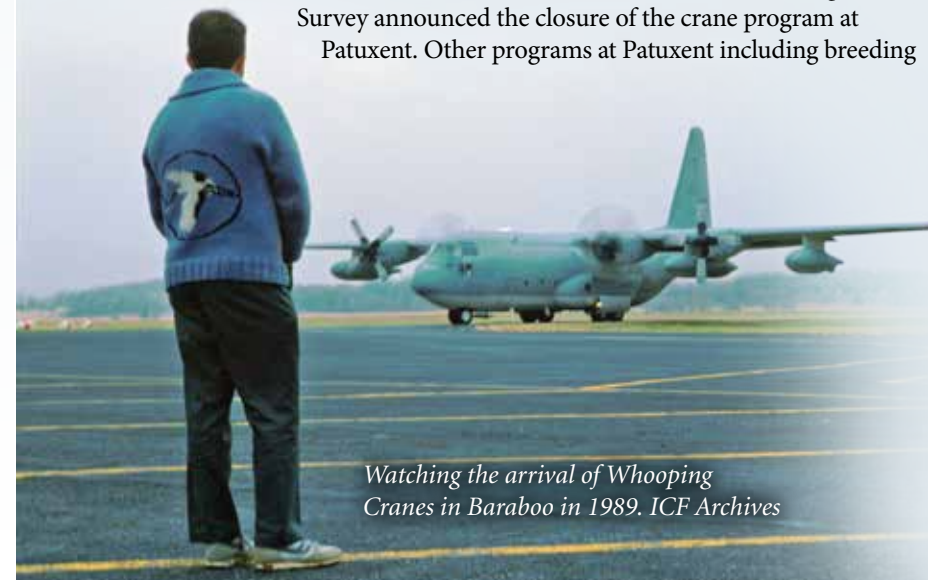
This historic photo from 1964 shows a very young Canus after his arrival at Patuxent Wildlife Research Center with a broken wing. Photo by Richard Slemmons

In 1964, a juvenile Whooping Crane with a broken wing was retrieved from Wood Buffalo National Park in subarctic Canada. He was named CAN-US by the two countries fervently working to save the last remaining Whooping Cranes. At that time, the outlook for Whooping Cranes was bleak. There were only 42 left in the wild. The capture of Canus was preceded by an agreement between Canada and the U.S. to establish a breeding flock of captive Whooping Cranes at Patuxent Wildlife Research Center in Maryland as a hedge against the species' looming extinction.

Patuxent was the birthplace of the captive breeding program for Whooping Cranes. The first Whooping Cranes to arrive there were Canus and a human-imprinted juvenile female from the San Antonio Zoo named Tex. These pioneers were followed by Whooping Cranes hatched from 12 eggs collected from the wild in 1967. For over 50 years, researchers at Patuxent nurtured the rare white birds and perfected techniques for breeding and rearing them. Cranes produced at Patuxent have always been critical to the establishment of new populations in the wild.

To avoid catastrophic loss from having all the birds in one place, the Patuxent flock was split in 1989. Twenty-two Whooping Cranes were sent to the International Crane Foundation and formed the second breeding flock in captivity. I joined the Whooping Crane Recovery Team at that time.

And so it came as a shock in 2017 when the U.S. Geological Survey announced the closure of the crane program at Patuxent. Other programs at Patuxent including breeding



Watching the arrival of Whooping Cranes in Baraboo in 1989. ICF Archives



Whooping Cranes at Patuxent Wildlife Research Center in 1983.

bird surveys, banding, and studies of contaminants will continue. Staff formerly employed to help cranes will join those programs. Patuxent's 72 Whooping Cranes will be sent to other centers including the International Crane Foundation. The Whooping Crane Species Survival Program created by the American Zoological Association, with guidance from the Whooping Crane Recovery Team, was tasked with identifying accredited facilities for these Whooping Cranes.

In December, I visited Patuxent to express my gratitude to those who have devoted so many years to their robust crane program. I joined my friend, Dr. John French, Director of Patuxent and fellow member of the Whooping Crane Recovery Team, to discuss the transition. The new centers managing breeding pairs will contribute eggs and chicks to the reintroduction projects. The descendants of Canus will carry on in new surroundings.

It has been a pleasure to work closely with our colleagues at Patuxent since I studied cranes there as a graduate student in the late 1960s. Many devoted workers, too many to list, have come and gone over this long period. I wish to especially thank Dr. Ray Erickson, founder of the crane program at Patuxent, who celebrates his 100th birthday this year. After all, it is widely believed that cranes bring long life!

In Baraboo, we are busily preparing for the transfer of six Whooping Cranes from Patuxent. They will join 38 Whooping Cranes already living here. The aging 10-acre complex known as Crane City where all our breeding cranes live has been undergoing renovations for several years. The arrival of more cranes has now intensified the need for continuing repairs and upgrades. We are as committed as ever to a future with Whooping Cranes and will keep you updated on our progress. We won't be able to do it without you.

OUR WORK IS ABOUT Life on Earth

With 11 of 15 species facing extinction, cranes are among the most endangered families of birds on Earth. From bringing back the Whooping Crane from the brink of extinction to reversing the decline of endangered cranes in Asia and Africa, our efforts ensure that cranes will always grace our planet.



But the work of the International Crane Foundation is about so much more than cranes. Our work is about life on Earth.

Healthy Indicators

Highly dependent on healthy wetlands and freshwater, cranes are excellent indicators for the state of our environment. To save the Wattled Crane, we are undertaking the largest wetland restoration project in Africa. We are removing thousands of hectares of invasive shrubs and improving water conditions in the Kafue Flats of Zambia to meet the ecological needs of cranes and many other rare and threatened species.

Goodwill Ambassadors

Traversing international boundaries and uniting people across countries, cranes are ambassadors for peace and cooperation. Sharing a passion for cranes, we bring together scientists and conservationists from North and South Korea, India and Pakistan, Russia and China – more than 50 countries on five continents.

Flagships for Conservation

Revered across much of the world, cranes are unique flagships for saving some of the most beautiful and diverse places on Earth. Our efforts to secure Poyang Lake in China benefit many species, including most of the world's population of Swan Geese, Yangtze dolphins, water deer, and not to mention the livelihoods for many people who also share this resource.



To save cranes, we have to solve conservation challenges of global importance – securing freshwater, adapting to changing climates, securing vital habitat, reducing power line collisions, and preventing illegal shootings – the stakes have never been higher.

For 45 years, the International Crane Foundation has been a trusted leader in conservation around the world, but we still have so much more to do. **To help us continue our important work, please consider making a donation today using the enclosed envelope.**

WAYS TO GIVE

Call: 608-356-9462, ext. 807
Donate at: savingcranes.org, or
Return the envelope in this issue!



To see if your employer will match your gift, go to www.savingcranes.org/support-icf/matching-gifts/



2018 Bird-a-thon!

Support our Co-Founder George Archibald and his team, *The Craniacs*, as they set out with binoculars in tow to see how many bird species they can spot in 24 hours! Pledge a specific dollar amount per species or make a fixed gift before the team heads out in mid-May. Funds raised support our work around the world. Pledges or fixed gifts of \$25 or more will receive a one-year membership. Questions? Please contact Jennifer Fiene at 608-356-9462 ext. 151 or email info@savingcranes.org. To donate, visit www.savingcranes.org/bird-a-thon/ or mail a check in the enclosed envelope.



Photos by Ted Thousand



Staff and volunteers during the early days

2018 CALENDAR OF EVENTS

We're celebrating 45 years of saving cranes this year, so please get off the fence and visit us in Baraboo! The first 45 visitors on Opening Day will receive a surprise gift.

Opening Day! | Sunday, April 15, 2018

Open daily from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Learn about cranes and our global conservation programs on guided tours. Explore nature trails, shop in our unique gift shop, and discover interactive exhibits.



Mother's Day Weekend | Saturday, May 12, and Sunday, May 13, 2018

Mom gets in FREE. Treat your mom to a relaxing day in nature with guided tours, family activities, and nature hikes. (\$9.50 value).

An Evening with the Cranes | Saturday, June 16, 2018

Enjoy a magical evening from 5 to 8 p.m. with refreshments and food from local restaurants, live music, and of course – cranes! Early bird tickets available beginning in February. Watch our website for details.

Cranes of the World Festival | Saturday, August 4, 2018

Bring the whole family to celebrate the 15 crane species across the globe. Enjoy guided nature walks, arts and crafts, and special educational programs throughout this fun-filled day.

Member Appreciation Day and Annual Member Meeting | Saturday, September 22, 2018

Your membership makes a difference, and we want to thank you for your support. Please join us from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. for an event with behind-the-scenes tours, special programs, and lectures – dedicated to you!



A trio of blue cranes fly gracefully along the neckline of our new women's long-sleeve t-shirt. This design is only available for a limited time – order yours before they fly away! Available in S,M,L,XL, \$32.95. To order, visit www.craneshop.org; or call 608-356-9462 ext. 135.



Annual Midwest Crane Count Saturday, April 14, 2018

Each year, over 1,000 volunteers travel to their local wetlands and birding hotspots to participate in this annual survey of Sandhill and Whooping Cranes. The crane count spans over 90 counties in six states of the upper Midwest including Wisconsin and portions of Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, and Minnesota. To learn more, visit our website at www.savingcranes.org/education/annual-midwest-crane-count/

Photo by John Ford



International Crane Foundation

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Saturday, June 16, 2018
Save the Date!

AN EVENING WITH THE CRANES

Early bird tickets now on sale on our website



Photos by Joel Sartore and Christina Beam.