

The **Bugle**

Saving cranes and the places where cranes dance!

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November 2019

Forever?



Blue Cranes



Birds are disappearing. We can take beautiful photographs like these while they are still here, but there's no technology that can put them back into the landscape once they are gone. Read on to find out how we're preventing cranes from disappearing.

Photos by Mei Ciming



BIRDS ARE DISAPPEARING

But We Can Learn From Decades of Successful Crane Conservation

By Rich Beilfuss, President & CEO

4,550

Critically Endangered Siberian Cranes in China, the highest count ever recorded.

3,500

acres of invasive shrubs cleared from the Kafue Flats, Africa's most important wetland for Wattled Cranes and many other species.

30

years of conservation impact in Southeast Asia, leading to six new protected areas to secure Sarus Cranes and better livelihoods for the people who depend on these wetlands.

667

Whooping Cranes in the wild – continuing their remarkable comeback from as few as 21 in the wild in the 1950s.

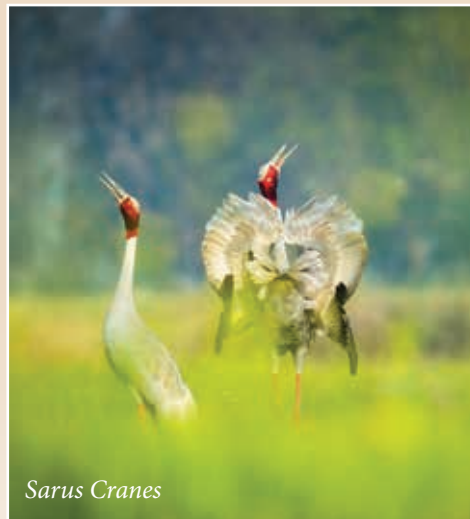
I love sharing numbers like these from our latest annual report, inspiring numbers reflecting the positive impact we achieve together, to save cranes and the beautiful places where cranes dance—places that sustain abundant wildlife and people.

But this summer has revealed some very alarming numbers, too:

3 billion breeding birds lost from North America in the past 50 years—with massive declines for common as well as rare species of sparrows, warblers, and many others.*

2.2 million acres of Amazon rainforest burned down, home to one in ten of every known species on Earth.

More than **400 parts per million** of carbon dioxide in our atmosphere, far surpassing the level of greenhouse gases that climate scientists agree is too high for our rapidly warming planet.



Sarus Cranes

These are staggering numbers for all who care about the diversity of life. More than 7.7 billion people now share our finite planet, and the need for sustainable pathways to our land, water, and livelihoods becomes more urgent each year.

But there are valuable lessons we have learned from 46 years of crane conservation, lessons that can give us hope and tools for a better future. As noted by Dr. Arvind Panjabi in the *Science* article, about massive bird declines, “When we’ve invested to combat declines for a particular group of birds, we’ve succeeded.” Why did Bald Eagles, Trumpeter Swans, and Whooping Cranes increase while so many other species declined? Because people committed to their future.

The remarkable recovery of the Endangered Whooping Crane shows us that we can bring back species from the brink of extinction—when we all work together for a common goal. But it is a cautionary lesson, too, because the recovery also teaches us that it is enormously challenging and expensive to reintroduce species that are lost from the wild—as evidenced by our efforts to restore the migratory Whooping Crane population that was lost to the

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Whooping Crane

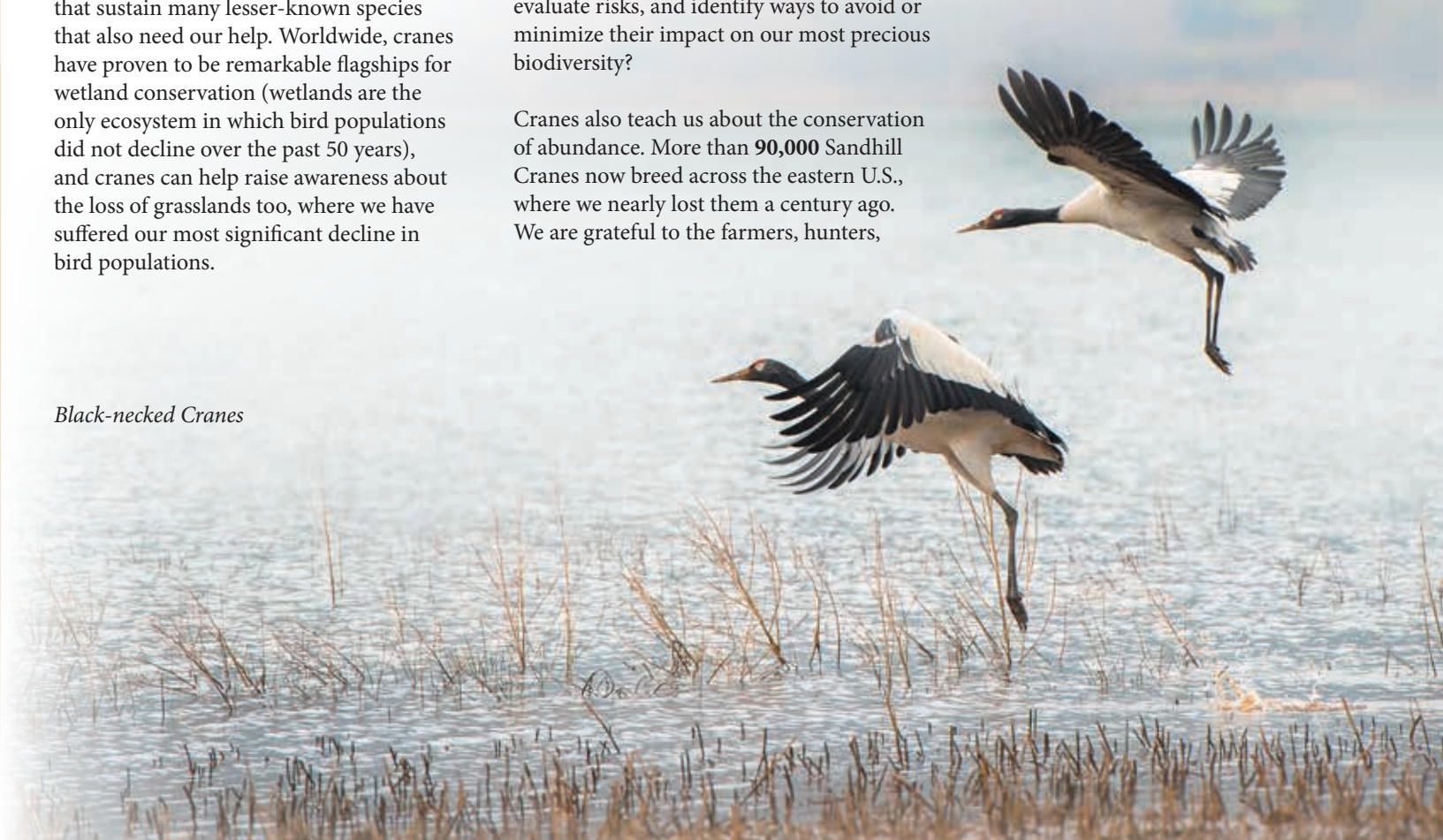


Photos by Ciming Mei

Eastern U.S. more than a century ago. It is much more cost-effective and successful to protect species in the wild in the first place.

We’ve learned that big, beautiful, charismatic species like cranes can play a vital role in helping us secure ecosystems that sustain many lesser-known species that also need our help. Worldwide, cranes have proven to be remarkable flagships for wetland conservation (wetlands are the only ecosystem in which bird populations did not decline over the past 50 years), and cranes can help raise awareness about the loss of grasslands too, where we have suffered our most significant decline in bird populations.

Black-necked Cranes



Consider the Sarus Crane, the world’s tallest flying bird and a sacred species across its range in South and Southeast Asia. In Vietnam and Cambodia, Sarus Crane conservation led to the protection of the last remaining wetlands and grasslands of the Mekong Delta, creating a new safe haven for many threatened species.

Cranes teach us important lessons about the risks of climate change—and why we should care and take action. In Texas, rising seas and frequent droughts threaten the coastal marshes used by Whooping Cranes. In Asia, melting polar regions submerge the arctic marshes where Siberian Cranes breed while retreating glaciers no longer feed water to the high-altitude wetlands that support Black-necked Cranes. In Africa, reduced water inflows and increased evaporation lead to water stress, fires, and invasive species that threaten Wattled Cranes, Grey Crowned Cranes, and other wetland life. We don’t know if climate change will drive any of these species to the brink of extinction—but for every crane species, on five continents, the risks are very high.

Shouldn’t we apply the same principles of risk management that we apply to our businesses? Shouldn’t we forecast and evaluate risks, and identify ways to avoid or minimize their impact on our most precious biodiversity?

Cranes also teach us about the conservation of abundance. More than **90,000** Sandhill Cranes now breed across the eastern U.S., where we nearly lost them a century ago. We are grateful to the farmers, hunters,

and wetland lovers who committed to their recovery. But abundance cannot be taken for granted, as we learned from the extinction of the Passenger Pigeon, once the most abundant bird in North America. We’re reminded of this again in the new *Science* study about the steep decline since 1970 of many abundant bird species. Abundance requires a new set of conservation tools. We are working to ensure that cranes are living in harmony with farmers by developing a deterrent to crop depredation by cranes. We must make sure that the zeal to hunt Sandhill Cranes, or the poor placement of power lines they often collide with, does not damage their storied recovery. And we must be wary that more frequent and prolonged droughts in the changing climate of the western U.S. could quickly reverse the fortunes of Sandhill Cranes and many other birds.

The challenges we face are daunting, but we can learn from success and deepen our impact. Thank you for supporting our efforts to combat the global decline in birds, the loss of their precious habitats, and the impacts of climate change. When we care enough to engage and act, we can make a real difference for cranes and all life on Earth.

*Rosenberg, Kenneth V., et al. "Decline of the North American avifauna." *Science* 366.6461 (2019): 120-124.

What a Difference a Year Makes

Darcy Love, Site Renovation Project Manager

Nearly one year has passed since breaking ground on our \$10.4 million site renovation. The transformation is truly extraordinary. The new exhibits are large, inviting spaces with ponds for our wetland-dependent cranes. Six large murals are steadily emerging, featuring scenes from regions that cranes call home. Since the dawn of time, cranes have touched the human spirit, and this connection is captured at our new Cranes and Culture plaza. Visitors will enjoy an oasis highlighting the spiritual and

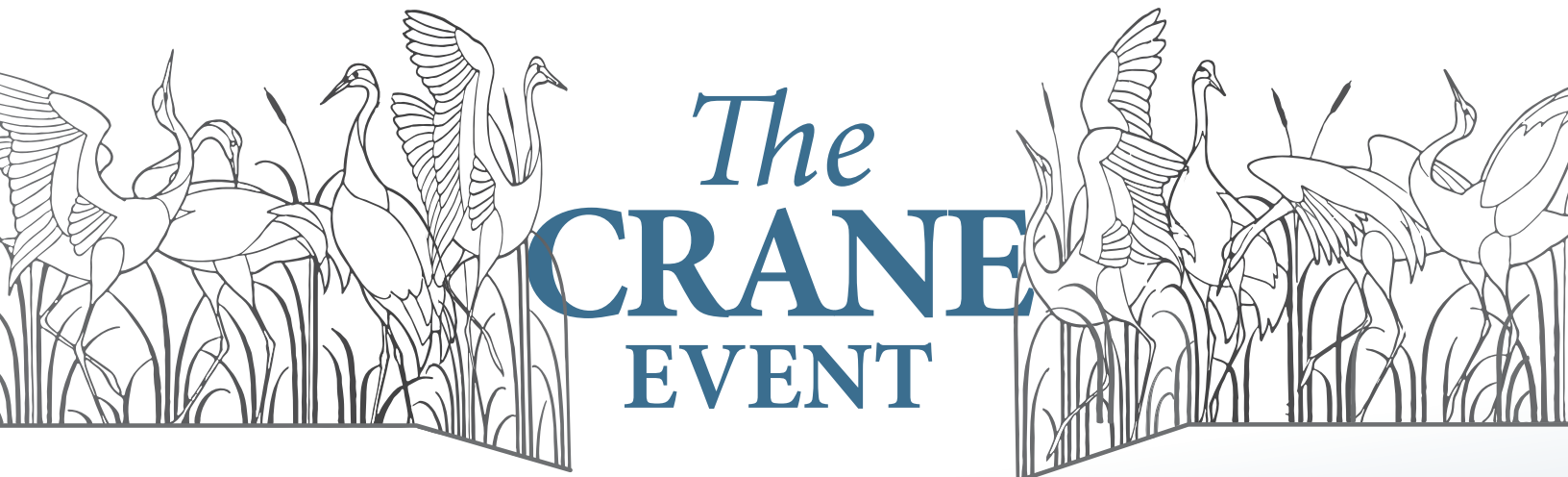
artistic expressions of the many cultures that co-exist with cranes. The natural materials used to construct our new George Archibald Welcome Center evoke a sense of place and history. Wood ceiling and beams from Wisconsin forests and stone walls are harmonious with the surroundings. And soon, we will fill our new spaces with engaging and interactive exhibits about our global work. We can't wait for you to take flight with us!



Drone photo taken November 2018



Drone photo taken October 2019



The CRANE EVENT

The gates will open to our amazing new visitor experience on **May 2, 2020!**

We can't wait for the new **George Archibald Welcome Center** to be your gateway to a journey around the world.

Over ten acres of new exhibits and experiences for all ages.

- Guided and Group Tours
- Nature Trails
- Zen Garden
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Visit any time during our 2020 season and whoop it up with a **Grand Opening Celebration** on Saturday, May 2, 2020.

Open daily May 2 to October 31, 2020.

Discover. Care. Act.
at the
International Crane Foundation

608-356-9462
www.savingcranes.org

A New Crane Festival in Western Kenya

Crane festivals are a fantastic and fun way to raise awareness and pride for cranes and local wetlands. In September, our team in western Kenya launched a new festival in Kakamega County celebrating Grey Crowned Cranes. Five hundred people were in attendance!

Many people from nearby communities gathered in preparation for the big day, including representatives from Saiwa, Kingwal, and Sio Siteko. These are our main project areas around the wetland ecosystems we are working to conserve.

Priority species in Saiwa Swamp include Sitatunga, Debraza Monkeys, and Grey Crowned Crane. Saiwa Swamp is an important breeding and roosting area for the cranes. The land around the swamp is being used for settlements, crops, and livestock. The human population there has grown rapidly and resulted in the division of land into very small acreages for each family. This leads to the draining and cultivation of the wetland to supplement subsistence food production and consequently, wetland encroachment.

Sio Siteko wetland is a transboundary wetland extending to the Kenya-Uganda border. Sio Siteko wetlands are a rich fauna and flora repository. The wetland is also an Important Bird Area for more than 300 bird species, including several globally threatened species. Aside from its rich biodiversity, Sio Siteko provides valuable ecosystem services, including storing and purifying water that flows into Lake Victoria. Sio Siteko is not currently designated as a protected area.

Kingwal is a vast high-altitude wetland home to over 1,000 Grey Crowned Cranes.

The major threats facing cranes in these areas are:

- Increased population growth leading to intensive agriculture. Losing the buffer zone around the wetlands causes erosion of the river banks.
- Sedimentation and increased fertilizer deposit into the wetland that eventually leads to the proliferation of invasive species that displace native reeds.
- Overgrazing, sand harvesting, brickmaking, and drainage causing disturbance to the wildlife.
- Crane egg poaching and illegal domestication.

We held pre-event activities, including tree-planting at Saiwa, Tulon, and Sio Siteko. Together with the communities, we planted indigenous trees on degraded areas on the banks to rehabilitate the wetlands. The festival day began with a band procession. There were many speakers, including area chiefs, and the guest of honor, the County Executive Committee member of Water and Natural Resources. The area chiefs were our hosts. They urged us to keep working in these areas. Our team spoke to the community about the wise use of wetlands and being good stewards. They were encouraged to protect wetlands as a vital ecosystem for both cranes and humans. Everyone present enjoyed entertainment from local dancers.



Balerion Spreads Her Wings!

By Hillary Thompson, Crane Analyst



Balerion, or 79-19, with pair 67-15 and 3-17 at White River Marsh, Wisconsin.

Photo by Doug Pellerin

Earlier this spring, a Whooping Crane chick named Balerion hatched at the International Crane Foundation. She was raised by a seasoned pair of adult Whooping Cranes at our captive breeding facility, Crane City. She spent the summer with them – learning how to be a Whooping Crane. When Balerion was old enough to fly, she got the green light for release into the wild from our veterinary team. Next came the scary (for us) but exciting (for her) day when Balerion had the chance to spread her wings. We released her at White River Marsh in Wisconsin near a pair of adult Whooping Cranes, 67-15 and 3-17.

The wild pair approached to inspect this new crane, who seemed to appear out of nowhere. With fingers crossed, we watched the interaction. To our delight, they decided to take her under their wings. Now, we see them together regularly. In fact, we hardly ever see them apart. Balerion, now known as 79-19, has been stretching her wings, learning to fly, and is getting ready for migration. We hope the pair will take her south, and we are excited to see where they turn up next!

Accomplished, grateful, motivated.

Looking back on the past year, these are our sentiments. Your contributions to the International Crane Foundation resulted in amazing accomplishments.

Here are just a few:

- 34 priority stopover sites for migratory cranes identified and monitored by our team in China
- 100,000 indigenous tree seedlings produced and distributed to 40 farmers and 10 schools for wetland restoration in Kenya
- 2,000 women in rural communities in Cambodia increased their household incomes from crane-conservation handicraft business
- 34 new Crane Custodians monitoring Grey Crowned Cranes to enhance breeding success in Kabale, Uganda
- Engaged over 17,000 people at 193 outreach events in 11 states in North America for Whooping Cranes and Sandhill Cranes
- Provided 23,500 pounds of crane food for our captive flock



We are so grateful for your support that made all this possible, but there are still many sites to protect, trees to plant, and cranes to feed, and it won't happen without you. **Please use the envelope in this issue for a donation now at year-end to carry the momentum into the new year.**

WAYS TO GIVE

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



Are you looking for a unique gift?



Share your love of cranes with your family, friends, and colleagues by giving them a **gift membership**. Members receive exciting benefits, including free admission to our newly renovated site, opening May 2, 2020! Whether you purchase your gift membership online or by phone, we can customize your special gift. To ensure holiday delivery, please order by December 16. Call 608-356-9462 ext. 807.

Show the animal lover in your life how big your heart is with the gift that supports animal care every day. **You can help us care for our cranes by adopting a crane species!** Your \$100 adoption will provide food, veterinary, and keeper care for one year. Savingcranes.org/support-icf/adopt-a-crane

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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

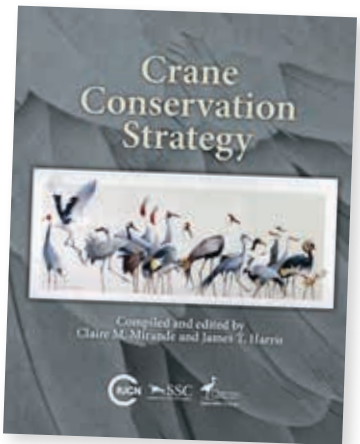
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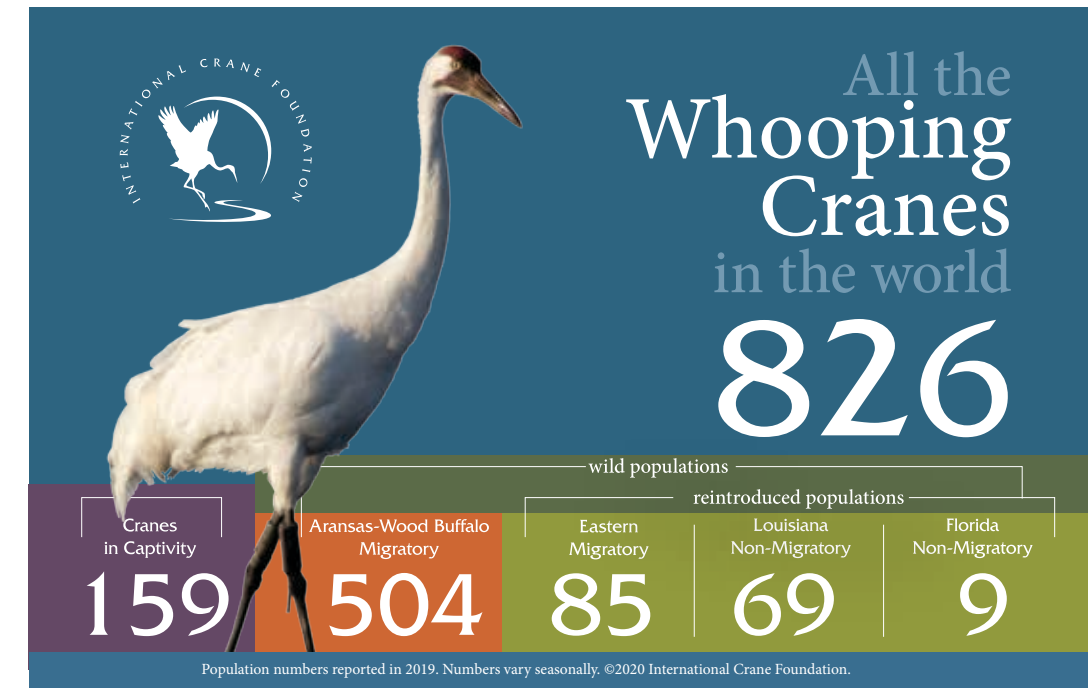
Landmark Volume on Cranes Published!

We are happy to share the news that the *Crane Conservation Strategy* has been published. This landmark volume provides a wealth of information to guide conservation of the world's fifteen species of cranes and their ecosystems. It reflects the work and knowledge of dozens of devoted colleagues in the international IUCN SSC Crane Specialist Group, under the leadership of the International Crane Foundation. It updates and builds upon the group's first report, *The Cranes: Status Survey and Conservation Action Plan* (1996).



The Strategy charts a comprehensive course forward for crane conservation and synthesizes information on the challenges and opportunities that face cranes. Crane Specialist Group members and other scientists from around the world contributed to sections, provided information, and conducted reviews. Altogether, 31 section authors from the Crane Specialist Group and 191 others reviewed or contributed to the development of this strategic plan.

To reduce our carbon footprint and promote broad circulation, electronic versions of the book are available free of charge at www.savingcranes.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/crane_conservation_strategy_web_2019-1.pdf



Each year we update this infographic to give an overall picture of each Whooping Crane population. We have gotten used to the number slowly increasing each year, but this year it didn't. There are a variety of reasons for this, the main one being that birds that have been missing in the wild for an extended period were finally taken off the roster and presumed dead. The captive population is aging, so a decrease in that number is natural. And the threats that face Whooping Cranes every day – predation, power line collisions, and illegal shootings account for other losses. Once again, we are reminded that species recovery is fragile, indeed.



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Our hand-made origami crane zipper pulls are sure to brighten your day! Each pull features a folded crane embellished with beads and a charm. \$4.95



Handcrafted from Fine Silver clay, this pendant depicts the Big Crane petroglyph. Signed by the artist and marked .999 FS - Fine Silver. It measures $\frac{7}{8}$ x $\frac{7}{8}$ " and comes with 1 mm black cord, ready to wear. \$45