

THE BUGLE



ECHOES OF EXTINCTION: THE THREAT OF HUNTING ALONG THE CENTRAL ASIA FLYWAY



Learn about the threat to Demoiselle and Eurasian Cranes in Pakistan, and the delicate balance between cultural traditions and conservation efforts. Plus, our vision for the next decade revealed, and the story of Russia's "Island of Hope."

In northeast Pakistan, keeping Demoiselle and Eurasian Cranes as pets has been a widespread practice for centuries. Many cranes with clipped flight feathers wander around the villages and nearby fields to the delight of passersby. George Archibald/International Crane Foundation

FIELD NOTES FROM THE PRESIDENT

ONEICF: VISION FOR THE NEXT DECADE

BY DR. RICH BEILFUSS, PRESIDENT & CEO

This summer I am delighted to unveil our new 10-year strategic vision for the International Crane Foundation. Our vision is deeply rooted in our shared values, hard-earned lessons, and collective strength as OneICF—our community of staff, directors, volunteers, and partners in more than 20 countries worldwide. Together, we have plotted a future where cranes, diverse landscapes, and healthy communities thrive together, and planned how we'll work to get there. Our vision is all about saving cranes AND so much more: revitalizing wild and working landscapes, improving conditions for lesser-known species, and helping communities improve their livelihoods and resiliency.



Photo by Mariah Lundgren

The past decade served as a strong foundation for our new strategic vision. Cranes are one of the most endangered families of birds on earth and face immense conservation challenges. Yet most of the world's cranes now have stable or increasing

populations. Whooping Cranes are steadily recovering from the brink of extinction, and Sandhill Cranes are back in our lives across the country. Four species of threatened cranes that traverse the East Asian Flyway—Siberian, Red-crowned, White-naped, and Hooded—are gaining ground. And we are slowly reversing the decline of cranes across an increasingly crowded Africa.

We recognize the need to double down for some species in peril. Demoiselle Cranes are vanishing due to excessive hunting in Central Asia and the Middle East, as you'll read in this issue of the Bugle. Blue Cranes are succumbing to changing landscapes in South Africa. Across much of their range, Black Crowned Cranes face chronic warfare and displacement. Yet in a world that has lost more than three billion birds over the past 50 years, crane conservation is a beacon of hope.

Among emerging threats, climate change is no longer a distant concern but an immediate, unrelenting challenge, especially where unsustainable land and water resources development has already degraded our natural world. From rising seas in Texas to shrinking glaciers in Asia, water stress affects cranes



Black Crowned Cranes, shown here over a village in Chad, face chronic warfare and displacement.
Rich Beilfuss/International Crane Foundation

and people alike. Our vision emphasizes climate-smart land use that bolsters wetland resilience, safeguards biodiversity, and builds community adaptability.

The global quest for a better standard of living means that energy development and resource mining will impact vital crane areas on every continent. Our vision focuses on nature-based solutions that provide viable alternatives to land conversion, ensuring communities and governments gain from increased employment, improved livelihoods, and natural resources directly associated with conservation.

The increasing dependence of cranes on agricultural lands poses many new challenges as well. As human populations expand, conflict between cranes and farmers is becoming more severe. We are committed to solutions that support wildlife and livelihoods, reducing crop loss and fostering peaceful coexistence. At the same time, we are advancing One Health strategies that link people, wildlife, and our environment to mitigate avian influenza, now a rising threat to cranes and many bird species worldwide.

Geopolitical instability—whether in Sub-Saharan Africa, Southeast Asia, or between global powers—threatens the continuity of conservation work. Our answer is to deepen local capacity. The foundation of our strategy is empowerment: of local NGOs, community leaders, and young conservation professionals who will carry the mission forward.

Our work is so important, and we're prepared to do whatever it takes to keep our commitments. As longstanding U.S. government funding investments change, exemplified by massive cuts to USAID and US Fish and Wildlife Service, our vision demands that our work speaks not only to concerned conservationists but to those who care about human development and life on earth.

Our creativity and our optimism are boundless. Our 10-year vision is a testament to what is possible when passion meets strategy, when global vision aligns with local action, and when an organization commits to a future where cranes, people, and wild landscapes thrive together. We go forward as OnelCF: determined, united, and inspired as ever.

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In a world that has lost more than three billion birds over the past 50 years, crane conservation is a beacon of hope.
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ICF staff and consultants discussing a wetland project with a conservation partner. International Crane Foundation

ECHOES OF EXTINCTION: THE THREAT OF HUNTING ALONG THE CENTRAL ASIA FLYWAY

BY WALI MODAQQI, CENTRAL ASIA PROGRAM COORDINATOR, AND
MAHENDRA SHRESTHA, VICE PRESIDENT OF ASIA PROGRAMS



Demoiselle Cranes in flight. Andrew Holman

There are 15 magnificent species of cranes found in the world, and three of them—the Siberian, the Demoiselle, and the Eurasian Crane—have used the Central Asian migratory route for their seasonal migration. The eastern population of Siberian Cranes enjoys small but growing numbers in the population that breeds in eastern Siberia and winters in China. However, the western population of the Siberian Crane that formerly migrated to Iran and India in the Central Asia Flyway has been extirpated, primarily due to killing during their long migrations. Demoiselle and Eurasian Cranes similarly face threats along the flyway due to mass killing and trapping. These species spend their winters in India, the Middle East and some African countries and then migrate to breeding grounds in the cold climates of Siberia, Mongolia, China, and other countries. Along the migration route, they fall victim to a cycle of poaching and trapping, especially in certain areas of Pakistan and some other countries.

The Eurasian Crane ranges widely from Western Europe to Eastern Russia, wintering from the south of Western Europe and Morocco to China. The global population is estimated to be as many as 500,000. While the Demoiselle population is also strong overall, globally listed as Least Concern, we have seen their numbers decline significantly. Today the European population is considered endangered due to declines from hunting during migration, with extirpations noted in Eastern Europe, Northwest Africa, and Turkey.

Killing and live capturing of cranes has been a traditional practice in several areas of Pakistan. While older hunting methods were once popular, they have now been replaced by more innovative and brutal techniques. Poachers often use trained cranes to attract wild cranes into traps and use MP3 players to play the cranes' calls. When the cranes come down, they are captured using weighted ropes thrown into the air or shot with firearms that are easily accessible due to the prolonged conflict in Afghanistan. The captured birds are usually sold in large markets in Sindh, Punjab and Balochistan provinces.



This is not just a local issue—it is a national, regional and international problem. Pakistan is a signatory to international treaties, such as the Ramsar and Bonn conventions, that mandate the protection of migratory species. However, implementation of these agreements remains weak. For example, although the Balochistan Wildlife Protection Act 2014 indicates fines and imprisonment for crane hunting, poaching continues, often due to corruption and lack of political will.

Urgent action is needed to protect these cranes. Recent studies during the 2024 spring migration season showed that up to 2,460 cranes were killed in one season in Pakistan, and another 250 were captured alive. There are reports of significant decline in population from the breeding habitats. This unsustainable and inhumane trapping poses a grave threat to the survival of these migratory cranes, which are already facing challenges including habitat loss and climate change.

To address these issues, wildlife departments in four provinces of Pakistan have initiated measures to reduce hunting and smuggling. With the support of the International Crane Foundation, these departments have established inter-provincial coordination to prevent poaching and smuggling of cranes during and after the migration season. In 2025, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province put a complete ban on hunting cranes with firearms, allowing local residents to use only traditional trapping methods. They also reduced the duration for setting up trapping camps from three months to one month and delayed the issuance of trapping licenses for such activities. However, the

effectiveness of these measures remains uncertain, as enforcing these regulations in remote areas is difficult.

The situation for Demoiselle and Eurasian Cranes in Pakistan highlights the delicate balance between cultural traditions and conservation efforts. Although hunting is a rooted aspect of local culture, the survival of these magnificent birds depends on a cooperative commitment to their protection. Without stronger law enforcement, increased public awareness, and greater international cooperation, the calls of the Demoiselle Crane and the Eurasian Crane—just like the call of the Siberian Crane—may soon be silenced forever.



Demoiselles Cranes found shot in Pakistan. Shahid Iqbal



Demoiselle Cranes at a bird market in Kabul. Ayob Alawi

THIRTY YEARS OF THE ISLAND OF HOPE

BY SERGEI AND ELENA SMIRENSKI, MURAVIOVKA PARK CO-FOUNDERS

In 2024 we celebrated 30 years in the life of a crucial protected area for cranes in Russia, Muraviovka Park. The park has become so beloved by the people who live near it that they call it “the island of hope.” Many area residents learned of the threats to cranes and wetlands because of the park and have become wildlife protectors. The annual summer camps we’ve held at the park since 1994, mostly led by teachers and educators from Wisconsin, have inspired similar camps and schools in China and South Korea. Muraviovka Park has spread its illuminating model of conservation far beyond its own borders.

Moscow State University ornithologist Sergei Smirenski had conducted field studies of birds in the Russian Far East since the early 1970s. In 1981, Sergei accidentally discovered excellent breeding grounds of Red-crowned and White-naped Cranes in Muraviovsky Game Refuge near Muraviovka Village in the Amur Region of eastern Siberia. He also learned that the local government began implementing its plans to reclaim these wetlands for agriculture.

Setting up a strictly protected area run by the government was out of the question, because these lands were heavily used for agriculture and recreation activities. After an initial gift of funds from a Japanese firm called POP International, it still took years to complete the process of the official registration of Muraviovka Park with the regional government. In 1994, we signed a lease for 50 years for 12,850 acres of wetland and cropland. Jim Harris, then ICF Senior Vice President, and George Archibald, ICF Co-Founder, joined the park’s Board of Trustees. Muraviovka Park was the first privately run wildlife protected area in Russia since 1917. Despite its very challenging situation,



Siberian Crane in Yakutia Russia. Sergei Sleptsov



New Muraviovka Park Director Evgeniy Lisitsyn (left) and Researcher and Curator of Birds Anton Sassin (right) at the new crane pen in September 2024. Photo courtesy of Muraviovka Park

Spring at Muraviovka Park. George Archibald/International Crane Foundation



Red-crowned Crane Snowflake on her fifth (and third productive) nest, which she and her partner built about six miles north of the park border in May 2025. Photo by Anton Sassin

the park is now supported by the sublease of its arable lands, nature tourism, and donations from Russian organizations, businesses, and individuals. In 2008, the park was expanded to 16,061 acres and the lease extended to the year 2058.

Muraviovka Park is extremely important for cranes and many other plants and animals. In 30 years of studies, we’ve documented more than 700 species of plants and more than 300 species of birds, including all seven species of Russia’s cranes. We also found the highest density (up to 70) of nests of the White-naped Cranes within the species distribution range.



Sergei Smirenski releases one-year-old Red-crowned female Snowflake, raised in the park’s pen by parents, into the park’s wetlands in May 2021. Photo by Anton Sassin

In August 2023, Evgeniy Lisitsyn became the park’s new director, proving himself an experienced manager and organizer. Soon he hired Anton Sassin, a junior professor at Amur Agricultural University and our long-term partner, as the Researcher and Curator of Birds. Despite the difficult political situation and a series of setbacks, with the dedicated and experienced new local leadership and with growing trust and support from local communities, the Park is now experiencing its revival.

Since 2019, Anton Sassin has been conducting drone surveys of cranes and storks in the southern part of the Amur Region and placing tracking devices on wild and captive-bred cranes. His research proved the success of our program to replenish the wild population of Red-crowned Cranes by raising chicks in captivity with their parents and releasing them into Muraviovka wetlands. In 2025, aerial surveys found six nests of Red-crowned Cranes in the park, twice as many as before the COVID-19 pandemic. We also documented 60 White-naped Crane nests—the highest nest density in the entire breeding range of this species.

Unfortunately, in May 2025, the park suffered a huge wildfire that destroyed three nests of Red-crowned Cranes, several nests of White-naped Cranes, and three stork nests, as well as photo and video traps set up around the park. An appeal for help posted on social media and broadcast on Russian National TV had an immediate result: friends of the park from across Russia began donating funds toward restoration. Despite this recent tragedy, the staff of our “Island of Hope” is optimistic about the future.

REMEMBERING IRAN'S MOTHER OF CRANES



Ellen Vuosalo in a still from "Mother of Snow Cranes." The documentary, directed by Iiris Harma and selected for the Helsinki International Film Festival in 2024, tells the story of her life. Kurkien Aiti

“The Caspian lowlands of northern Iran once provided wetland refuge in winter for flocks of Siberian Cranes until the 1920s. Unseen by ornithologists for the next half century, hopes for this most western flock soared in 1978 with the discovery of a group of 12 cranes inside a no-shooting waterfowl trapping area in Mazandaran Province. After the collapse of the USSR in 1990, food shortages for humans near wetlands used by migratory birds along the migration route may have been the cause of the decline of the population. For another half-century, a remarkable journalist, teacher, and conservationist studied the cranes, promoted their conservation, and documented their attrition to a single survivor last seen during the winter two years ago. The International Crane Foundation and a host of colleagues within the former range of these western Siberian Cranes (Iran, Azerbaijan, Russia) honors the memory of Ellen Vuosalo Tavakoli, who passed away in Mazandaran, Iran, earlier this year.”

- Dr. George Archibald, ICF Co-founder

Born in Canada in 1931 to a family of Finnish immigrants, Ellen Vuosalo studied zoology at a university in the U.S. There she met her Iranian

husband. They soon had three children. As a working mother who also aspired to continue her studies in journalism, Ellen faced many hardships and lacked sufficient support from her husband. When she decided to divorce, her husband took the children to Iran, possibly to avoid the legal process in the U.S. Ellen then followed her children to Iran. After the 1979 revolution, Ellen's husband returned to the United States, while Ellen chose to stay.

She taught at the University of Tehran and later at Mazandaran University. She also spent a great deal of time traveling across Iran, exploring its diverse and fascinating natural and cultural landscapes. She wrote numerous articles to raise awareness and advocate for nature conservation, and published books on mangrove forests, coral reefs, and the migratory birds of Qeshm Island. Since the early 1980s, her research and advocacy focused on endangered Siberian Cranes. In the late 1990s, Ellen founded the Mazandaran Crane Conservation Association. By building strong relationships with farmers, she successfully engaged them in crane and wetland conservation efforts. Her six decades in Iran fostered deep and long-lasting connections with the Iranian people. This was reflected in the respectful funeral held for her in Mazandaran after her passing on Jan. 19, 2025. In Iran, she is remembered as the “Mother of Cranes” for her invaluable work in raising awareness and promoting crane conservation.

Adapted from “Mother of Cranes” (in the memory to Ellen Vuosalo) by L. Poulak, Mazandaran Crane Conservation Association



Oyster mushrooms. International Crane Foundation

SAVING CRANES, TRANSFORMING COMMUNITIES

In the Rukiga district of southwestern Uganda, Grey Crowned Cranes and people are increasingly in competition. Farmers strapped for arable land have encroached more and more on the Rushebeya-Kanyabaha wetlands that thread through the area—wetlands Grey Crowned Cranes need for survival.

When farmers use the wetlands, nesting cranes are vulnerable. That's why the International Crane Foundation and our partners help people in Rukiga find alternatives, so they don't need to enter the wetlands in nesting season. Women's groups in the area had a suggestion to help their families and help cranes—they asked for assistance to start growing mushrooms. Mushrooms can be grown in little space, and they mature quickly and provide fast and reliable income. Through the partnership, they learned new skills, found a receptive market, supported their families—and allowed cranes to thrive.

When we help people grow crops without disturbing the wetlands, we help maintain an ecological balance that ultimately benefits people, the land, and wildlife. We've created a model where conservation and community development reinforce each other.



Grey Crowned Crane in Uganda. Diana Boon /International Crane Foundation

We're visionaries of community-based conservation.

And we do it through the support of people like you. Join us in saving cranes, helping communities, and protecting the environment. Give a gift today.

YOUR GIFT MAKES A DIFFERENCE

- **Return your gift in the enclosed envelope**
- **Savingcranes.org/donate**
- **608-356-9462 ext. 807**



TURN YOUR DREAM INTO YOUR LEGACY



Demoiselle Cranes and chicks. Ciming Mei

International Crane Foundation Co-founder George Archibald was once described as a “determined dreamer.” As a young graduate student, George not only dreamed of saving all 15 species of cranes, but he sparked the dream in so many others. It takes

the determination of all of us to make the dream of saving cranes, and the places they call home, a reality. **Turn your dream into your legacy by including the International Crane Foundation in your will or estate plans.**

TURNING THEIR DREAMS INTO THEIR LEGACIES...



Suzanne Johnson & Steven Johnson

**Santa Barbara, CA
(Previously Denver, CO).
Crane Legacy Society Members
36 years**

Nearly 50 years ago, a White-naped Crane at the Denver Zoo bugled as we walked by, and we fell in love. Soon after, we “adopted” that crane and arranged for a mate to be brought in. We have been long-time supporters of cranes and ICF, visiting Baraboo on several occasions and intermittently hosting George Archibald when he was in Colorado.

We support ICF because of the focus on science to guide its projects toward the best results. ICF emphasizes the need to support the local communities, people, and environments that cranes rely on. We love seeing the results of summer projects completed by the Conservation Fellows at ICF, whom we support through our Conservation Fellowship Endowment. We see the value in our legacy donation, as it provides funds that are needed for project success and supports the development of future conservation leaders. We want to see ICF continue its important work for generations of people—and cranes—to come.



Geri Murray

**Chicago, IL
Crane Legacy Society Member
16+ years**

When I first discovered the International Crane Foundation on Shady Lane, I knew right away that I wanted to include it in my estate planning. ICF does so much in the world to help crane species survive and thrive, to educate people about these magnificent birds and their cultural significance, and to teach those who live near these birds how to make a living in harmony with them while protecting crane habitat and the environment. As a school librarian, I often shared my excitement about ICF and its mission with students, especially the year I adopted Whooping Crane Seurat. I cherish my ICF visits, especially on Member Appreciation Day, when I can connect meaningfully with those who love, support, and work with cranes. Through planned giving, I’m happy I’ll have a positive impact on cranes and the environment well into the future.

CREATE YOUR LEGACY

JOIN THE LEGACY CHALLENGE

BY JUNE 2026



George Archibald at ICF in 1982 walking with Tex, the captive Whooping Crane who was key to conserving the genetics of the species. International Crane Foundation

In preparation for George's upcoming 80th birthday, ICF is celebrating the crane conservation legacies of determined dreamers like you and George with a special Legacy Challenge. Join this limited time Legacy Challenge by including the International Crane Foundation in your will or estate plans. Your legacy gift protects cranes for the future, and with this challenge, it protects cranes today too! For each household who creates a legacy gift for cranes, a challenge donor will give a gift of \$1,000 to the International Crane Foundation in your honor, to protect cranes now.

JOIN THE CHALLENGE...

1. Create a legacy gift for cranes in your will or estate plans

You can include cranes in your will, name the International Crane Foundation as a beneficiary of a retirement plan, or create a legacy gift that provides you lifetime income.

2. Tell us about your legacy gift

Let us know you included cranes in your will or estate plans to qualify for the \$1,000 challenge gift to be released to ICF's annual fund.

3. Celebrate your conservation impact

We will celebrate your role in the future of cranes by including you in our Crane Legacy Society.

Contact us to learn about the Legacy Challenge or to share the good news that you have created your legacy gift!

Hannah Field, Planned Giving Officer
hfield@savingcranes.org
 608-356-9462 ext. 117
Savingcranes.org/legacy

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The Bugle is the triannual newsletter of the International Crane Foundation. The organization was founded in 1973 by Ronald Sauey, Ph.D. (1948 - 1987) and George Archibald, Ph.D.

Editor: Angela Woodward

Bugle comments or questions? Please email Bugle@savingcranes.org or send mail to P.O. Box 447, Baraboo, WI 53913. To become a sponsor of this publication, please contact the editor. Memberships make our work possible. Please join or give a gift membership. Email membership@savingcranes.org if you have questions about your membership.

Membership Annual Rates:

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THE ART OF DANCE



You'll love this new, exclusive artwork, created for the International Crane Foundation by Cindy Lindgren, depicting the playful, elegant dance of the Whooping Crane. Print measures 8"x10" and is also available on cards, magnets, and more.

Your purchase directly supports the work of the International Crane Foundation to save cranes and the places where cranes dance.

See our full selection of designs at

craneshop.org

608-356-9462, ext. 171

MEMBER APPRECIATION DAY

Thank you, members! Mark your calendar for our annual **Member Appreciation Day on Saturday, Sept. 27** from 9 a.m. until 5 p.m. at the Crane Discovery Center in Baraboo, WI. Learn how your membership saves cranes and their habitats through talks and presentations by our talented staff, experience the cranes of the world, take a walk on our restored prairie, and join special behind-the-scenes opportunities offered exclusively for members.

Visit savingcranes.org/member-day to learn more. Questions? Contact Membership Manager Jennifer Fiene at **608-356-9462** ext. 151 or membership@savingcranes.org.

Thanks to our 2025 season lead sponsors:

Leiden Conservation Foundation, Patti Manigault, Prairie Nursery, and Viking Village Foods.

Please also save the dates for our 2025 Crane Chats!

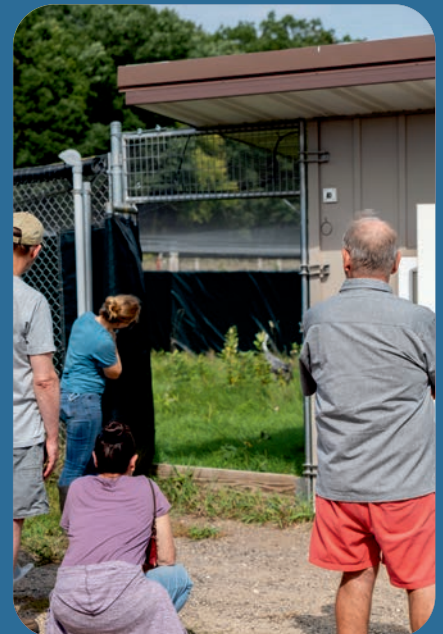
Oct. 14 Morton Arboretum, Lisle, IL

Oct. 15 Cool Creek Nature Center, Carmel, IN

Oct. 16 Valparaiso University, Valparaiso, IN

Oct. 17 Monona Terrace, Madison, WI

To learn more and register, visit savingcranes.org/midwest-crane-chats



Members touring our breeding facility Crane City at Member Appreciation Day 2024. Hannah Jones/
International Crane Foundation

