

1986 REPORT OF THE WORLD WORKING GROUP ON CRANES

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The International Crane Foundation (ICF) and its hundreds of colleagues in many nations constitute the ICBP Specialist Group on Cranes. ICF includes a fulltime staff of 13 persons at our headquarters near Baraboo, Wisconsin, U.S.A. We are primarily supported by contributions from the general public. As well as maintaining a "Species Bank" of captive cranes, ICF staff travel to many nations where cranes are threatened to conduct field research, and public education programs and to encourage our colleagues in their efforts. Because cranes are large, visible, valuable and vulnerable birds, they have become effective ambassadors of wetland conservation and international goodwill.

The Canadian and United States Governments continue to lavish attention on the needs of the Whooping Crane (*Grus americana*), which, during the past four years, has increased from 117 to 164 birds. The traditional migratory flock that breeds in subarctic Canada and that winters along the coast of Texas has increased to 96. The Rocky Mountain population that originated by substituting Whooping Crane eggs into the nests of Sandhill Cranes includes 28 birds, but unfortunately they have not paired or reproduced. Forty Whoopers are held in captivity, 38 of them at the Patuxent Wildlife Research Center. Eggs from both the Canadian flock and the captive cranes are used in the cross-foster experiment in Idaho. Whooping Crane management in the U. S. A. is coordinated by Dr. *James Lewis* of the United States Fish and Wildlife Service. He works in collaboration with the Whooping Crane Recovery Team, whose members represent federal, state and private sectors. Similarly, the Canadian Wildlife Service administers a Recovery Team in Canada.

Although the Sandhill Crane may number more than one half a million individuals with more than 20,000 birds legally harvested by hunters each year in Canada, Mexico and the U.S.A. the subtropical subspecies, the Mississippi Sandhill (*G. canadensis pulla*) numbers fewer than 60 individuals. Their habitat is protected and managed to maximize productivity, and cranes reared at Patuxent are successfully released with the wild cranes to bolster their numbers. Another potential crisis for Sandhills concerns the availability of water and roosting sites along the Platte River in spring where the bulk of the northern population stages before continuing on to their breeding grounds. The Whooping Crane Habitat Maintenance Trust in Nebraska is effectively addressing these concerns.

Approximately 200 persons concerned with the welfare of North American Cranes met at Grand Island, Nebraska in March, 1985 to participate in a four day workshop, the proceedings of which is now available through the WCHMT.

Crane conservation efforts in Japan have been consolidated into the Special Committee for Protection of Cranes (SCPC) under the leadership of the Japan Wild Bird Society. SCPC has 22 official members, representing various conservation orga-

nizations and agencies. In 1985 meetings of SCPC were also convened in Izumi and Kushiro to discuss local problems facing the nearby cranes. ICF also has a branch in Japan that publishes a newsletter twice a year that is sent to about 150 members. More than 6,000 Hooded Cranes (*G. monacha*) and more than 1,200 White-naped Cranes (*G. vipio*) winter in southern Japan, while the sedentary population of Red-crowned Cranes (*G. japonensis*) in Hokkaido stands at 384 individuals. The expense of artificially feeding migrant cranes, the associated risks from disease, and the conservation of the breeding habitat of Hokkaido's cranes are the challenges for SCPC.

China has five endangered species of cranes: Red-crowned, White-naped, Hooded, Siberian (*G. leucogeranus*) and Black-necked (*G. nigricollis*). Crane conservation is a high priority for both the Ministry of Forestry and the Environmental Protection Agency. One or the other of these agencies in Beijing is responsible for establishing, then administering nature reserves in each province. During the past seven years, a network of wetland reserves has been set up to protect critical habitats of each endangered species of crane. Research and education centers are now being constructed at four of these reserves, the foremost of which is the magnificent headquarters for the Zhalong Nature Reserve. A Crane Working Group was established in 1984 with Mr. *Qing Jian Hua* of the China Wildlife Conservation Association as Director. Meetings of the Group have been convened in Nanjing in 1984 and in Sian in 1985, and twice a year the Group produces a newsletter, *The Call of the Crane*.

Approximately 500 Red-crowned Cranes breed in the three northeastern provinces of China, where five nature reserves cover their most important nesting habitat, wetland that is also shared with a lesser number of White-naped Cranes. Most of the 3,000 + White-naped Cranes that breed in China are assumed to inhabit narrow wetland walleys in the Daurian steppes and as yet a nature reserve has not been set up specifically for White-naped Cranes. More than 400 Red-crowned Cranes winter on the coastal wetlands of Jiangsu Province, while the 2,000 + White-naped Cranes winter on the mudflats of Poyang Lake in Jiangxi Province, in company with about 1,400 Siberian Cranes and 200 Hooded Cranes. Approximately 300 Red-crowned Cranes and 1,000 White-naped Cranes winter on the Korean peninsula, particularly in the vicinity of the Demilitarized Zone.

The Black-necked Crane is endemic to the Tibetan Plateau where as few as 700—900 individuals may survive. The two largest known flocks on their wintering grounds in China and Bhutan each number about 300 birds.

Since 1980 the Crane Working Group of the USSR, including more than 200 professional and amateur ornithologists, under the direction of Dr. *Vladimir Flint*, has influenced their government to protect more than three million hectares of wetlands for the four endangered species of cranes native to the Soviet Union. The Group has met four times nationally and four times locally and has published five books on cranes. The Group was surprised by the discovery of 1,400 Siberian Cranes in China, for only about 200 birds were estimated to breed in the tundra of Yakutia. The Soviets are now searching for the missing Siberian Cranes and undoubtedly more land will be protected as a consequence of their work.

In 1983 the Government of India, ICBP, and ICF cohosted an International Crane Workshop in Bharatpur, India. About 170 people from 24 countries participated. The event marked the historic meeting of Russian and Chinese colleagues. The Workshop also gave birth to Working Groups for Africa, Europe, and for Black-necked Cranes. The Proceedings of the Workshop is now being published by ICF.

The Working Group on African Cranes is headed by ICF and Dr. *Emil K. Urban*. The Group met in Francistown, Botswana in April, 1985 in conjunction with the Pan African Ornithological Congress. Crane counts are underway in Kenya, South Africa, Uganda and Zimbabwe, and in the near future major research undertakings are planned for Botswana, Tanzania and Zambia. ICF publishes an annual newsletter, *The Crowned Crane*, which is sent to 123 members in 42 nations.

The Working Group on European Cranes, under the leadership of Dr. *Joost van der Ven* had its next meeting in Hungary in 1985 and was attended by 57 delegates from 20 nations. European countries are joining forces to study the abundant Common Crane (*G. grus*) and to stress the importance of saving the relict flock of Demoiselle Cranes (*Anthropoides virgo*) in Morocco.

The Crane Study Group of the Indian subcontinent met in New Delhi in February, 1986 with representatives from India and Bangladesh. The Group is led by Mr. *Prakash Gole* and their objectives are (a) to work with Afghanistan, Pakistan and the USSR on the crane hunting problems in the Hindu Kush, (b) to join with the military in conserving the small population of Black-necked Cranes that nest in Ladakh, and (c) to monitor the numbers of Sarus Cranes (*G. antigone*) outside of protected areas.

Each spring and autumn thousands of Demoiselle Cranes and Common Cranes, and fewer than 40 Siberian Cranes migrate through Afghanistan and Pakistan where they are hunted. In recent years Pakistan has established laws that forbid the hunting of Siberian Cranes and curb the harvest of the other species. Crane hunters are now encouraged to band and release the cranes that are live caught.

Southeast Asia and Australia are home to the little-known Eastern Sarus Crane (*G. a. sharpii*), a bird that apparently has been extirpated from southern China, the Philippines and Thailand, and may be gone or rare in Burma, Cambodia, Laos and Viet-Nam. Surprisingly the Eastern Sarus is increasing in northern Australia and thus the source of birds for reintroduction into countries from which they have been extirpated. In 1984 ICF presented to the Queen of Thailand, six birds that originated from eggs collected in Queensland. A Sarus Crane Working Group has been organized in Bangkok and their goal is to reestablish cranes into areas of recent habitation as local conditions allow.

Members of all Crane Working Groups receive ICF's quarterly publication, the *ICF Bugle*, a vehicle for communication and encouragement among crane enthusiasts worldwide.

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A Világ Daru Munkacsoportjának 1986. évi jelentése

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A szerző sorra veszi a világ veszélyeztetett darufajainak állományviszonyait, majd ismerteti a darvak védelmére megalakult területi munkacsoportokat és azok tevékenységét.

A legkritkább faj, a lármás daru (*Grus americana*) állománya az utóbbi négy évben 117 egyedről

164-re emelkedett. Kínában az egyik telelőhelyen 1400 szibériai darut (*Grus leucogeranus*) számoltak, ami jóval nagyobb fészkelőállományt sejtet a Szovjetunió tajgaövezetében, mint eddig hittük.

Legtöbb területi munkacsoport 1984-ben vagy 1985-ben értekezletet tartott. Ilyenek voltak Szovjetunióban, Japánban, Kínában, Indiában, Botswanában, az USA-ban (Nebraska) és Magyarországon. Thaiföldön megkezdődött a keleti antigone daru (*Grus antigone sharpii*) visszatelepítése.

A világszervezet a negyedévenként megjelenő lapjában, az *ICF Bugle*-ban adja közre híreit, amely tájékoztatja és tovább ösztönzi a darvak védelmében lelkesen tevékenykedő munkatársakat.