

# THE BROLGA BUGLE

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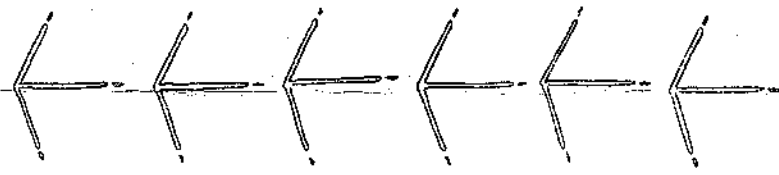
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International Crane Foundation Quarterly Newsletter

Volume 1, Number 1 — City View Road, Baraboo, Wisconsin 53913, U. S. A. — A Non-Profit Organization — Fall 1974

## MAKING TRACKS- news of the foundation



## Introducing the Brolga Bugle

I. C. F. is proud to present the first quarterly newsletter to its members and prospective members. *The Brolga Bugle* will appear once every season and will bring you up to date on the Foundation's activities as well as news of cranes from all over the world. The format for each issue will consist of five regular sections:

**MAKING TRACKS:** I. C. F. has accomplished a great deal in its brief two year history but not many people know the complete details. This section of the newsletter will provide you with current information on the progress of the Foundation.

Under this heading we will also report on any noteworthy happenings at the Foundation, briefly explain research projects, and inform you of future plans or problems. We intend to present anything here we think is pertinent and important for you to know.

**MILESTONES:** Perhaps the most exciting I. C. F. program for some of you is our effort to breed and raise cranes in captivity. We hope that this section will contain an abundance of good news in the years ahead.

~~We will also report on important breeding records for cranes from zoos and collections throughout the world.~~

**CRANES IN REVIEW:** The directors believe that one of the most important goals of the Foundation is to keep tabs on all scientific investigation on cranes from all parts of the globe. This section will list recently published books and scientific articles which deal with cranes or marshland conservation. If time and space permit, reviews of these papers will also accompany the titles.

**FEATURE:** Every issue will present a feature article which will be of interest to everyone. Anything pertaining to cranes will be fair game for the feature and we hope to get a whole spectrum of subjects both serious and light for this section.

This first issue features an article on the quarterly's namesake, the Brolga, by George Archibald. All members are encouraged to submit articles for publication in *The Brolga Bugle*, but the editor reserves the right to decline the use of all or part of the material.

**CONTRIBUTIONS:** The Foundation is always grateful for the support it receives from the public. We will acknowledge the contributors from the previous three months at the end of the newsletter.



Headquarters of the International Crane Foundation — Baraboo, Wisconsin

## Tour Hours Set At Directors' Meeting

The directors of the International Crane Foundation decided at a weekly meeting to inaugurate a regular tour schedule for those wishing to visit the facilities for breeding and raising cranes at Baraboo, Wisconsin. I. C. F. will now offer tours to small groups on Saturdays only at 9:00 a.m. and 1:00 p.m. Anyone who wishes to join a Saturday tour is requested to make reservations at least three days in advance.

The decision to set a regular tour schedule is the result of the great amount of favorable publicity that the Crane Foundation has received from the mass-media. This public exposure is turn has generated interest of nature groups, school classes, and private individuals alike who want to see and learn about cranes first hand.

The unpredictable Wisconsin weather dictates to some extent the length and thoroughness of the tours at the Foundation. Visitors usually receive a short introduction indoors on the biology of the crane family and the function and purpose of the Crane Foundation. The rest of the tour is conducted out-of-doors where cameras are welcome and indeed indispensable since many of the cranes are extremely tame and seem to enjoy tagging along with the guests pulling on shoelaces and buttons and generally making pests of themselves. Very often the cranes will launch themselves into the air and circle high above the wooded bluffs surrounding the Foundation's 65 acre headquarters only to land again at the feet of the admiring tour group.

Although the Crane Foundation is now designing a building for winter tours, construction has not yet started and tours are therefore impossible to conduct during the winter months.

# Students Conduct Research at I. C. F.

Last summer six graduate and undergraduate students from the University of Wisconsin system worked at the International Crane Foundation on various research projects involving cranes.

Karen Voss, a graduate student in Zoology from Madison, is studying the development of behavior in Sandhill Cranes both in the wild at a site just 17 miles from I. C. F. headquarters, and at the Foundation itself using chicks hatched artificially in incubators.

John Baldwin, another graduate student from the U. W. at Madison, is working on the physiological development of sandhill crane subspecies from the time of hatching until maturity. John is currently negotiating with the Cuban Government to import 10 eggs of the rare Cuban Sandhill Crane, *Grus canadensis nesiotis*.

Three undergraduates at the University of Wisconsin are recording and analyzing the behavior of cranes at the Foundation. Jim Bruske-witz is studying the African Crowned Cranes, Robin Squier is working on the ethology of the Demoiselle Crane, and Debbie Worcester is com-

paring the behavior of the Sharp's Sarus Crane with that of the Brolga. All three students hope to eventually study their respective species in the wild.

Photoperiod responses in Hooded and Common Cranes are the subject of a research project by Greg Curless who is a graduate of the U. W. at Stevens Point.

There are several other projects in Wisconsin and neighboring states which also receive the assistance of I. C. F. One of the most important of these is the work of Tom Howard who is a graduate student at Stevens Point. Tom is collecting blood samples and banding Sandhill Cranes in central Wisconsin. Information that Tom gathers may be extremely important in devising a

reintroduction program for the Whooping Crane in Wisconsin.

The work of these students and other crane researchers in the U. S. and throughout the world is crucial for the development of adequate measures to conserve and protect cranes. In its organizational charter, the International Crane Foundation sets as the first of its five main goals the promotion and support of research on the biology of cranes both in the wild and in captivity. As a part of this effort the Crane Foundation is anxious that its large collection of captive cranes is used to advance man's knowledge and understanding of the crane family. Sound conservation schemes and techniques will come only through a thorough knowledge of all aspects of crane biology.

The Brolga Bugle will report in more detail the findings and progress of these studies and their implication for cranes in future issues.

## feature . . . . The Australian Brolga- Crane of the Desert

by George W. Archibald

A great glowing sun beats down unmercifully upon a baked and burnt land. As I trudge along almost exhausted by the heat and rough ground. I see in the distance the object of my search -- several hundred tall and elegantly slender birds weaving eerily through the heat rays. Although I'm sure they haven't spotted me yet, they are suddenly in the air and forming a great and ever enlarging circle as they follow a thermal high into the cloudless sky. While they are still in binocular range, I watch their huge wings banking effortlessly on the invisible support of the column of warm air. Soon they will disappear into the glare of the zenith and perhaps I won't see them again until mid-afternoon when they return from great heights to visit their favorite waterhole or feeding area in the midst of the bleak sands of the Australian interior.

There were many times as I walked in that God-forsaken land that I asked myself what I as a crane biologist was doing so far from water. After all, cranes are supposed to be marshland birds! Well, just as Australia has produced more than its share of strange and wonderful mammals, it has also developed the Brolga, the crane of the desert.

My reason for being in the Great Gibson Desert of Australia in the summer of 1972 were twofold: I wanted to learn first hand how one of the world's largest cranes managed to survive the nine-month dry season on the great-deserts of

northern Australia, and I also wanted to bring back three pairs of these unique cranes to the International Crane Foundation.

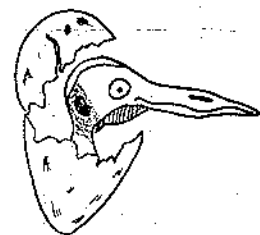
The Brolga does look like a crane -- it is about five feet tall with a head that is bare of feathers but ornamented with a gray skullcap and a band of red fleshy caruncles. The rest of the bird is basically a pearly gray in color although its primary and secondary wing features are darker gray and make a conspicuous contrast when the cranes are in the air. During the "Dry" which lasts about nine months, these cranes congregate in flocks of many hundreds of birds at several agricultural stations in northern Australia. Pickings are slim in the desert and the Brolgas make the best of a bad situation by raiding the great sorghum fields which the Australians, Americans, and Japanese grow through the use of irrigation channels.

The Ord River Agricultural Development Site was the place that I chose to work at. It consists of a huge dam which traps the deluge of rain accuring during the rainy season and converts it into a reservoir of water over 800 square miles in extent. North of the dam is 58 square miles of agricultural land which is planted with sorghum and cotton.

At the Ord Site there were more than just Brolgas cashing in on agricultural abundance amidst the sands of the Gibson Desert. Thousands of Magpie Geese, Plumed Tree Ducks, and Corella Cockatoos shared the sorghum with the stately Brolgas.

Unlike the farmers who were attempting to make a living off the land, I was amused to watch the different strategies of sorghum exploitation developed by the different species of birds. The cockatoos with their powerful beaks decapitate the seed head from the ripe sorghum plant and fly to a eucalyptus tree where they hold the head in one foot like an ice cream cone and take a few bites out of it. They quickly drop the major portion of the sorghum head, however, and fly back to the field for another. The Magpie Geese are very primitive geese with only partially webbed feet that permit them to roost in trees. Their technique at feeding on sorghum is to approach the tall plant like a tree roost and in the attempt to land on the slender plant they inevitably crush it to the ground and devour what they want. At night the fields are filled with the whistlings of the Plumed Tree Duck, a nocturnal bird, which moves in to clean up whatever the cockatoos and geese happen to leave. The next morning just after sunrise, the Brolgas leave their roost in the desert and fly . . . you guessed it . . . to the

Continued on page 3



## MILE- STONES

### A "Whoophill" at Patuxent

Dr. Ray Erickson, who heads endangered species research at Patuxent Wildlife Research Center wrote early last summer that Patuxent biologists produced history's first known Whooping Crane-Sandhill Crane hybrid.

Although the captive Whooping Cranes at Patuxent have not yet laid eggs, biologists for several years have collected viable semen from a captive male Whooping Crane known as CAN-US, a wild-caught bird.

This spring researchers artificially inseminated a hen Sandhill Crane with CAN-US' semen which resulted in one fertile egg. This egg was successfully hatched in an incubator at Patuxent and one healthy "Whoophill" emerged.

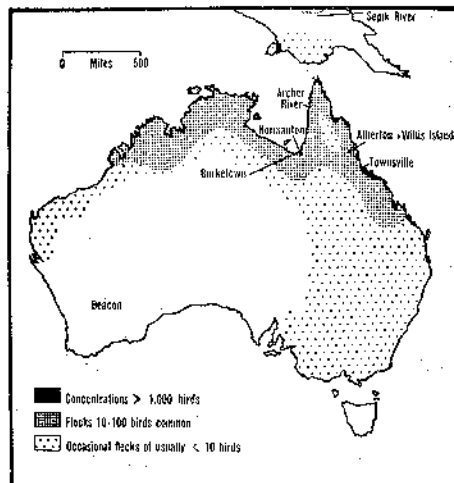
George Archibald who recently saw the hybrid says it is a robust and sturdy crane that is beautifully patterned with brown and white. Next year, however, the plumage may be even more distinctive because the bird will begin to assume the adult features. It will be fascinating to observe what the mixed parentage will produce in the adult bird.

The Whoophill at Patuxent is not simply the product of someone's whimsical sense of curiosity but may be important in the future of the Whooping Crane in the U. S.

Dr. Erickson comments that the current plan to put Whooping Crane eggs into the nests of Wild Sandhill Cranes in an attempt to reestablish the Whooping Crane as a breeding species in the U. S. may result in the pairing of Sandhill-raised Whoopers with other wild Sandhills. The resulting hybrids will only be recognized as hybrids if wildlife biologists know what to look for. The captive Whoophill at Patuxent will serve just this purpose.

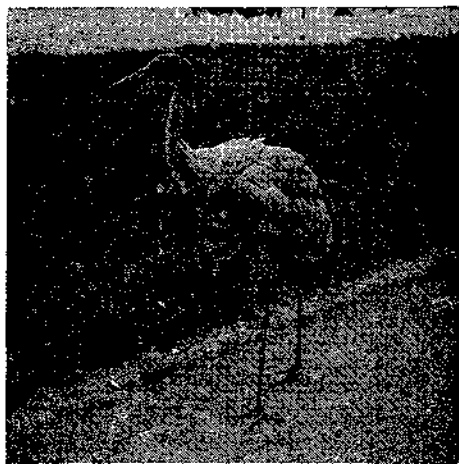
### Gift or Loan of Birds

Brookfield Zoo, Busch Gardens—Tampa, Elmer Heft, Honolulu Zoo, Lincoln Park Zoo, Milwaukee County Zoo, New York Zoological Society, Oklahoma Zoo, Philadelphia Zoo, San Antonio Zoo, San Diego Zoo, Dan Southwick, Henry Vilas Zoo.



Distribution of the Brolga, *Grus rubicunda*  
After Hugh Lavery and Gavin Blackman

# CRANES Fly From Sweden - AS EGGS!



European Crane Hatched at I. C. F.  
About Four Months Old

This spring the International Crane Foundation successfully imported six European (Common) Cranes from Sweden to the Foundation's captive propagation center in Wisconsin before the cranes had as much as a glimpse of their native land. The cranes were shipped in nature's most sophisticated packaging design — the egg. By importing the eggs of this common species of crane, the Foundation demonstrated that the intercontinental transport of crane eggs is feasible and undoubtedly the most effective and desirable method to import and export cranes over large distances.

The importation of these Common Cranes was the result of a great amount of precise team

work between the staff of the crane foundation and three Swedish conservationists. Dr. Victor Hasselblad, developer of the famous Hasselblad cameras, Dr. Olaf Swanberg and Mr. Nils Wellberg were instrumental in collecting the six eggs from the nests of wild Swedish birds and coordinating the transfer of the eggs from the estate of Dr. Hasselblad to a Scandinavian Airlines flight to Chicago.

The eggs were shipped in a special box equipped with many layers of insulation and a hot-water bottle. Scandinavian Airlines was so intrigued with the project that the eggs were taken directly to the cockpit and carefully protected from the rough handling that most baggage receives.

Twenty-one hours after the eggs were removed from the incubators at Hasselblad's estate they were in a van being driven down the Wisconsin interstate to Baraboo where a warm incubator awaited the precious cargo.

When I. C. F. staff removed the wooden top from the egg crate, a gentle-peeping sound could be heard within and a hasty search showed one egg was already pipped (i.e. cracked by the chick) and several hours later the first crane (named Olaf) hatched and began its life at I. C. F. Within a week and a half, Victor, Thor, Nils Droopy and Inga also hatched and are today thrilling visitors to the Foundation with their spectacular flights over the woods and bluffs surrounding the Crane Foundation.

In the future I. C. F. hopes that it can import other species of cranes to the U. S. in the same fashion avoiding the problems of injury or death to adult birds during shipment and the necessity of quarantining birds for 30 days in government stations.

sorghum field where they pull the plant up by the roots adding the final touch to the agricultural nightmare.

By ten a.m. the Brolgas have had their fill and move to the irrigation channels for a drink. There they also preen, bask in the ever-increasing heat and then become restless. Normally a few cranes will soon launch themselves into the air, more follow at intervals, and soon the whole sky is filled with Brolgas. The scene is a true aerial ballet with birds climbing skyward on thermals and becoming finally pillars of Brolgas floating up and down on layers of hot air. Softer and softer their voices become as they gain altitude and finally vanish into the blue sky. They leave therefore the hot surface of the earth where the ground often reaches 120°F. at midday and escape to the cooler climes of higher altitudes. I have often wondered just what the Brolgas do way up in the heavens; I imagine they soar around in the cool air looking over the vast brown landscape below, drift, and call and perhaps meet the great Wedge-tailed Eagles and Black Falcons which similarly exit the earth during the hot midday hours. Throughout this portion of the day, the world loses the Brolga — not even their raucous calls can be heard.

By four o'clock the Brolgas return to the earth where they often pay a visit to the sorghum fields again. There they trumpet, dance in their peculiar fashion, or simply rest. At night the Brolgas don't follow the accepted fashion of other cranes to roost in open water. Instead the Brolgas stay together at night on the ground in tight flocks. In Australia open water is to be avoided at night. Many times while I walked along the Ord River at night my flashlight would reveal dozens of red eyes gleaming hungrily from the dark waters — crocodiles!

Brolgas are extremely wary and wild birds undoubtedly because farmers shoot at or attempt to frighten the birds from their fields. As I drove my jeep along the open fields, the thousands of Brolgas just stood and watched. But if I stopped and moved my hand the slightest amount, the air shook with the vibrations of countless eight-foot wing spans. The Brolgas reacted differently if they were deep within the 10 foot high fields of sorghum. Then a beep from the jeep's horn would elicit a low alarm call from the sentinels posted at the edges of the field. The Brolgas within the field would not fly from where they were, however, since they could conceivably damage their wings by striking the tall stiff sorghum cane. Instead the cranes would line up at the end of each row and fly out single file from the field. I could never see what was actually occurring within the sorghum patch, but it amused me to imagine these great birds pushing and shoving to reach the edge of the row, and then waiting in line to take off.

It took me two months to catch the six Brolgas. When I finally reached the port city of Darwin to fly them home, I learned that there was an import ban on all exotic birds in the U.S. and the Brolgas had to be shipped to the South Perth Zoo where they were under the excellent care of Tom Spence, the director of the zoo. It wasn't until March of 1974 that the Brolgas arrived in Baraboo. They are all alive today and in perfect condition. I. C. F. is extremely proud to be the caretaker of the only pairs of Desert Cranes outside of Australia.

## Milestones . . .

### Rare Hybrid at Pretoria, South Africa

The Pretoria News announced last spring that two cranes owned by Dr. J. Palmos of Hercules, Pretoria had successfully paired, mated, and hatched a healthy chick. While crane breedings are always newsworthy, this particular breeding was extremely unusual. The father of the light brown chicks was a Stanley Crane, *Anthropoides paradisea*, while the doting mother was a South African Crowned Crane, *Balearica regulorum*.

As far as I. C. F. can determine this is the first hybrid ever produced between these two species of cranes. Even more importantly, this is the first hybrid between the two major sub-families of cranes, the Balearicinae and the Gruinae.

As the chart below diagrams in detail, the crane family has two main divisions, the sub-families Balearicinae and Gruinae. Taxonomists have set up these divisions because of the extreme distinctiveness of the crowned cranes from the other "typical" cranes.

The two species of crowned cranes apparently have the oldest ancestry of the crane family; fossil crowned cranes have been found as far back as the early Eocene more than 60 million years ago.

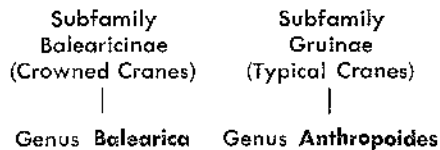
Besides their strikingly beautiful head ornaments, crowned cranes have several other unique features that distinguish them from other cranes including a three-egg clutch, a tendency to nest colonially instead of territorially, and the habit of roosting in trees.

Their early origin and their "un-crane-like" behavioral and physiological traits suggest that

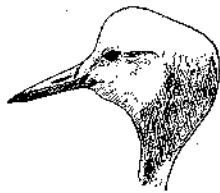
crowned cranes might be similar to the early ancestors of other existing crane species.

The hybrid at Pretoria is a very unusual bird, therefore, and I. C. F. has already made an effort to contact the owner and secure more information on it. A behavioral study of this hybrid would be fascinating and might shed light on the origins of the entire crane family.

#### FAMILY GRUIDAE



*Balearica regulorum*  
(East African Crowned Crane)



*Anthropoides paradisea*  
(Stanley Crane)

### Contributors of Labor or Materials

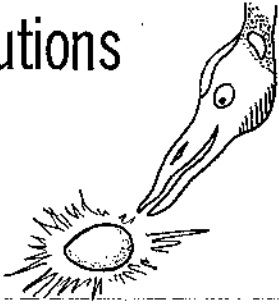
George Allez, Margaret Bachler, Bob Bruskevitz, Frank Vincent Femali, Flambeau Products Corp., Kathryn Green, Anne and Owen Gromme, Glen Herndon, Humane Equipment Co., Jung Seed Co., Herb and Helen Malzacher, Mike Mossman, Chuck Nelson, Marie Oesting, Portage Industries Corp., Joyce Powers, Ross Floral Shop, Ryder Truck Rental, Galdys and Gerald Scott, Jim Tear, Dana Weis, Loni Weis, Vicky Weis, Katy and Frank Wenban.

# CASEY and GRANNY WEDDED

Earlier this summer Casey, I. C. F.'s lone male White-naped Crane, and Granny, one of our three female White-napes, were officially declared paired and allowed to connubially share the same pen.

Casey is one of the Crane Foundation's most illustrious citizens and a favorite of almost everyone who visits the Foundation. He is on loan to I. C. F. from the San Diego Zoo who informs us that Casey originally came to the U. S. from Japan in 1940.

## Contributions



His date of importation makes Casey by far the oldest crane at the Foundation and it also gives Casey several years on all of his human keepers. No wonder he seems to have nothing but disrespect for the staff and threatens everyone with his elaborate postures and displays.

This spring two of the White-Naped Cranes at I. C. F. laid eggs. Unfortunately Casey proved too irascible for either lady and all the eggs were infertile. It was a great disappointment to everyone at the Foundation because the White-naped Crane is a very rare species that has declined critically in numbers since World War II. Today we know of only 1000 birds that winter in Japan and South Korea.

In July the staff began to notice that Casey showed increasing interest in Granny, the White-naped hen in the adjoining pen. After several trial joinings which seemed to be friendly, the two cranes were allowed to remain together. They are still together today and seem to be solidly mated. Perhaps next year Granny and Casey will present I. C. F. with many priceless fertile eggs. But, while we are always optimistic, we are firm believers in the old adage: DON'T COUNT YOUR WHITE-NAPES . . . . .



Casey and Grany Giving Unison Call — Sept. 1974

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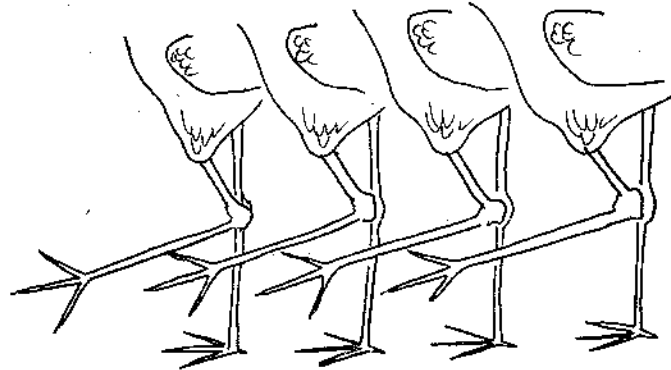
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## CRANES IN REVIEW



## Walkinshaw Travels the World To Write Book

In 1973 Winchester Press published Dr. Lawrence H. Walkinshaw's *Cranes of the World*, the most complete and comprehensive text on the entire crane family ever written. The book is divided into 15 chapters — one chapter on each crane species. Within the chapters Dr. Walkinshaw discusses the breeding biology, distribution, abundance, and history associated with each species and provides the reader with photographs of the cranes in their natural habitats.

In a recent interview Dr. Walkinshaw explained the history behind the book itself. *Cranes of the World* represents over forty years of travel, study and correspondence with crane experts all over the world. Dr. Walkinshaw's first interest in cranes was awakened by the strange and discordant voice of the Sandhill Crane, a bird which he subsequently spent decades studying in the field and knows better than anyone alive. In 1949 Walkinshaw published *The Sandhill Crane* which is still the major document on that species of crane.

After Walkinshaw published his *Sandhill Crane* book he turned his attention to the other fourteen species of cranes. In 1961 Walkinshaw and his wife began a series of trips which eventually took them around the world and resulted in Walkinshaw's seeing every species and subspecies of crane in existence — with one exception, the Black-necked Crane of central China and Tibet. Walkinshaw regrets to this day that he

didn't have an opportunity to visit Tibet before the country became closed to western travel.

*Cranes of the World's* unique value lies in the insight and experience of its author and his workmanship and scientific attention to detail. Students of crane biology will find Walkinshaw's bibliography and references to crane experts all over the world indispensable while those who are simply fond of birds will gain appreciation for the variety and beauty of the large and splendid cranes.

## I. C. F. To Publish Book on Research

In the near future the International Crane Foundation will publish a book called *Crane Research Round the World*.

According to the book's editor, Dr. Marie Rowlands Oesting, *Crane Research* will consist of many scientific papers and research reports which have not been published previously. There will be, for instance, an up-to-date account on all six subspecies of the Sandhill Crane, *Grus canadensis*.

In addition to these new papers, *Crane Research Round the World* will also contain English translations of manuscripts on cranes previously published in other languages. These translations are the result of the skills of Dr. Oesting and other volunteers who have worked over a two year period translating German, Russian, Italian, and other languages into English.

It is hoped, says Editor Oesting, that this volume will stimulate continued interest in crane research and will also prevent duplication of effort in understanding and conserving the world's magnificent cranes.

neck, Pat Ware, Gertrude Weaver, Mr. and Mrs. Frank Wenban, Margaret Wernecke, Evelyn Werner, Westside Garden Club, J. Nash Williams, Thyria Williford, Patricia Wilmet, Richard Wilson, Wisconsin Audubon Council, Robert Wizeman, James Wright, Mrs. J. Young, Theodore Zillman.