International Crane Workshop Convenes in China
by Jim Harris
Education Director

In spring, the lowlands of northeastern China hold six species of cranes, more kinds of cranes than any other place on earth. This year, the wild flocks are being joined by crane biologists from over twenty nations. Two hundred delegates are converging on the city of Qiqihar for the International Crane Workshop (ICW) from 1 to 10 May.

International Crane Workshops have become almost essential in our conservation efforts. Because cranes migrate thousands of miles, their fate depends on many countries. Interest in cranes has grown throughout Europe, Asia, and North America, and is rapidly spreading through Africa and Australia. ICW is an unparalleled opportunity for crane scientists to share successes, discuss common problems, and coordinate multi-national projects.

The last ICW occurred at Bharatpur, India in 1983. We are still seeing the benefits. Delegates from Africa and Europe initiated Crane Working Groups for their two regions. Crane research and protection has prospered in many countries.

Also at the 1983 ICW, scientists from USSR, China, and Japan met for the first time, and planned an ambitious joint survey of the endangered Red-crowned Crane that nests in these countries. The count occurred in 1984, an unprecedented collaboration. The India meeting offered a chance for American and Iranian researchers to renew contacts — frequent letters have since maintained our shared interest in the tiny flock of Siberian Cranes wintering in Iran.

Perhaps the most dramatic crane event of the 1980s has been the extraordinary expansion of wildlife conservation in China, the country with the largest human population in the world and also the greatest share of cranes. A decade ago, the country had just a handful of wildlife refuges, but now the system includes over 300, including vast expanses of wetlands. The 1987 ICW is convening just 30 kilometers from Zhalong Nature Reserve, China's most important wetland for nesting cranes.

China's conservation initiatives serve as a
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This special issue is dedicated to Ron Sauery, ICF co-founder who died on January 7, 1987 after a short and sudden illness. Ron served as ICF's newsletter editor for the first five years, and his standards of quality still inspire us. He was a key figure in the 1983 International Crane Workshop in India, and was working on the China workshop at the time of his death. It seems highly appropriate that this Bugle is also a special issue for the 1987 International Crane Workshop: we are giving it to all 200 delegates. The extra costs for this full color issue have been met by Ron's parents, Norman and Claire Sauery.

The headquarters of Zhalong Nature Reserve houses a collection of 14 species of captive cranes. The 1987 International Crane Workshop is being held close to the vast wetlands of Zhalong. Photo by Sture Karlsson.
model for the rest of the world. But the human pressures continue to be intense even on the wildlife refuges. Recent changes in China have allowed the fishing communes to disperse, and the people have gone out into Zhalong to catch fish, cut the grasses, and otherwise harvest the riches of this wetland. As a result of increasing disturbance, Whooper Swans no longer nest on the reserve, only a few pairs of Oriental White Storks remain, and Red-crowned Cranes have fallen from 500 birds to just 180. Zhalong, and China more generally, serve as an inspiring and difficult example of the challenges of balancing the needs of people and cranes.

The 1987 ICW is focusing international attention on crane conservation at Zhalong. The workshop theme — working toward the co-existence of people and cranes — is of extreme importance if recent gains in China and elsewhere are to be maintained in the years to come.

We foresee many outcomes to ICW. Perhaps most important will be the strengthening of the regional Crane Working Groups. Presently nine Working Groups exist, some of them very informal; they involve nearly 800 conservationists. The regional groups are meeting twice at ICW, and then the final ICW session is devoted to a discussion of Working Group progress and plans. Increasingly the Crane Working Groups will provide leadership on behalf of the cranes. Cranes and their wetlands can only be saved by local action initiated from within the diverse nations where cranes are threatened.

ICW also launches an intense effort at planning and coordination, as ICF assists the Working Groups in compiling a world Crane Action Plan for the years 1988-92. The plan will help integrate activities, establish priorities, and assist with fund raising for high priority projects.

Significant in a different way will be the friendships established or renewed at ICW. People working with people continues to be the critical ingredient in the successes of conservation programs. In organizing ICW, we have repeatedly seen the intense desire of delegate after delegate to join this remarkable gathering, where all share a love and concern for cranes and also for our human future on earth.

ICF joins with the China Wildlife Conservation Association and the people of Heilongjiang Province in welcoming ICW delegates to Qiqihar.

Ron Sauey - Partner and Friend

By George Archibald, ICF Director

For sixteen years since our happy days together as students at Cornell University, Ron Sauey and I have worked side by side in making a dream come true through the birth and maturation of the International Crane Foundation. Our earthly partnership ended on Christmas Day when Ron suddenly, without warning, was inflicted with a cerebral hemorrhage.

His death on January seventh marks a tragic loss to his family, to his wide circle of friends, and to the welfare of endangered birds worldwide. Ron joins the ranks of so many of mankind’s outstanding contributors who died young. We are comforted, however, by the awareness that it is not the time we have on earth that is important, but the way we use that time. Ron’s years were well spent in making a contribution that transcended the material.

Ron and his twin brother, Don, were born in Chicago in 1948 to a first generation Norwegian, Norman, and a first generation Italian, Claire. Ron also had an elder brother, Norman Junior, and a younger sister, Mary Anne. The family moved to Baraboo in 1950 where Norman Senior had business interests.

Ron was always interested in nature. As a child he collected butterflies and with the guidance of his high school biology teacher, Gerald Scott, he channeled his natural history aptitudes to the study of birds. Recognizing and appreciating his son’s unique qualities, Norman and Claire built Ron an avairy in which he kept a collection of pheasants.

After Ron graduated from the University of Wisconsin with a B.S. degree in 1970, Owen and Anne Gromme encouraged him to pursue doctoral studies at Cornell University. It was in Ithaca, New York that Ron and I met in 1971. I was just completing my research on the behavior of cranes and was about to leave for field studies on Red-crowned Cranes in Japan. Ron and I hit the idea of starting a center for crane conservation, because of the endangered status of so many species and the need for international coordination in helping the migratory cranes.

Ron’s parents had a 65-acre Arabian horse farm near Baraboo, Wisconsin, but the long, cold winters prompted Norman and Claire to move the herd to horse country near Ocala, Florida in 1969, leaving the Baraboo farm vacant. Most cranes are cold-hardy birds, and Ron and I envisioned a captive breeding center for cranes on the Baraboo site. The family agreed, and since 1972 the farm has been leased to ICF for a dollar a year. In 1972 the Saueys supported the construction of 15 enclosures for captive breeding pairs and in 1973, through the invaluable assistance of attorney Forrest Hartmann, ICF incorporated as a non-profit organization.
For the past half-decade, Ron, Forrest and I met every Wednesday evening to discuss our work and to pay the bills. We operated on a shoestring budget, minus salaries, and the cranes responded by successfully breeding in captivity. Each year more visitors viewed the cranes and heard about our dream. Our membership grew and members received a quarterly newsletter, The Brogla Bugle, now The ICF Bugle, that Ron produced and in which his wit and remarkable writing skills were expressed. ICF had hatched.

In the winter of 1974, Ron began his doctoral research on the ecology and behavior of Siberian Cranes at India's Keoladeo National Park near Bharatpur — the only known wintering ground for the species at that time. In his eloquent and comprehensive doctoral thesis, Ron presented not only his research findings but almost everything known about Siberian Cranes. His thesis is monumental, and we trust it will soon be published for general distribution.

But Ron not only studied the cranes and wrote about them, he became involved in grass-roots conservation in India, Afghanistan, China, Thailand, and the USSR during his journeys to Asia over the next decade. Ron was ICF's expert on the Indian subcontinent and of course he was closely associated with projects we initiated in many other regions.

Ron was not only interested in cranes. From 1977-81, he was a two-term president of the Citizens Natural Resources Association, one of Wisconsin's oldest conservation organizations. He was a director of the Madison Audubon Society and Vice President of the World Pheasant Association. He kept a pair of Barn Owls in the silo on his farm, and the many young owls he fledged contributed to the State of Wisconsin's recovery program for this threatened species.

Ron was a Renaissance man with a passion for classical music, literature, art and quality friendships. He played the piano well, was a gourmet cook and jogged vigorously and regularly to offset the gain from his kitchen. High points in his life included a visit to the home of Chopin in Poland and expeditions to the Galapagos and Bhutan to follow the trails respectively of Charles Darwin and the Black-necked Crane.

His friends included a colorful cast, among them the Soviet Union's foremost ornithologist, Professor Vladimir Flint; India's conservation patriarch, Salim Ali; and Emmy Award-winning film-maker, Belinda Wright. Ron enjoyed the distinction of having a Siberian Crane named "Aeroflot" hatch on his lap while he was transporting eggs of the species from the Soviet Union to Wisconsin during the summer of 1978.

For us who were close to him, Ron's passing leaves a gaping void that will never be filled: his charming personality, his knowledge, his common sense and wit, and his passion for quality in his work and in personal friendships.

As a tribute to Ron, his colleagues in North America are dedicating the Proceedings of the 1985 Crane Workshop held in Nebraska to him, and his colleagues worldwide salute him through the dedication of the Proceedings of the International Crane Workshop that convened in India in 1983. At ICF headquarters, visitors will soon be able to appreciate a variety of plants and birds along the Ron Sauey Nature Trail (sponsored by the Madison Audubon Society). Two funds — the Ron Sauey Fund for International Conservation (from memorials received at ICF for Ron) and the Dr. Ronald T. Sauey Foundation (set up by the immediate family) — will generate funds through which Ron's quest for conservation worldwide will be perpetuated.

Ron and I shared a dream that we were privileged to see molded into a reality, a reality that far exceeded our expectations. ICF is now blessed with the gifts of a talented staff and a membership of over 4,000 individuals who share the dream that Ron and I conceived on a cold winter day in a pub in rural New York in 1971. Through their work and support, and the efforts of generations to come, Ron and the ideals he advanced will attain an immortality.

As a Christian, I have faith that Ron is in another world, perhaps studying some ancestral crane with Chopin. I have confidence that we will meet again some day. This assurance brings great comfort when the myriad of details, the decisions, and the personal sentiments are no longer shared with a beloved friend. Ron is sorely missed, and will not be forgotten.

In 1978, Ron Sauey arrives at the airport at Madison, Wisconsin with crane eggs fresh from Siberia. George Archibald shares his concern over a chick, named "Aeroflot," that hatched at 30,000 feet over Cleveland, Ohio. Photo by John Canfield.
Indian Memories

by Belinda Wright

On the plains of northern India, near Bharatpur in the State of Rajasthan, lies Keoladeo National Park. Keoladeo is a gem, albeit a small one: 11½ square miles of marsh and woodland that are a haven for 374 species of birds.

Over the years Keoladeo has become India’s best known wildfowl refuge. In winter, thousands of migrating birds fly in from northern Asia to escape the harsh cold. Among them is one of nature’s most magnificent creations, a bird that makes an incredible biannual journey of over 4300 miles from its nesting area in the remote Russian tundra – the Siberian Crane. The British ornithologist Allan O. Hume studied the species in the 1860s and affectionately referred to the Siberian Crane as the “lily of birds.” Over a hundred years later, another ornithologist arrived in India to undertake the first study since Hume. Ronald Saeuey was to become just as captivated by the Siberian Cranes and also one of Keoladeo’s most tenacious supporters.

In 1974, the year Ron first came to Bharatpur, Keoladeo was badly in need of supporters. The refuge was then classified as a wildlife sanctuary, but had no long-term legislative protection. Up to 10,000 water buffalo and cattle grazed daily inside Keoladeo. People from the surrounding villages increasingly stripped this tiny oasis of wood, their major source of fuel.

At the same time the plight of the Siberian Crane had reached alarming proportions. One of India’s rarest winter visitors was on the verge of becoming a statistic. Over the next ten years Ron returned to India six times to collect data on this endangered bird. He was to see his beloved feathered friends plummet to a mere 33 individuals and, with ICF, was to play a major role in turning this tide of disaster.

Stan Breeden and I were on assignment for National Geographic Magazine when Ron first arrived at Keoladeo. We returned one afternoon to Shanti Kutir, the forest rest house at Keoladeo, to spend a few more weeks there photographing. Habib the cook greeted us with great excitement. “There’s a new sahib here! He doesn’t speak Hindi but he thinks my cooking is first class.” Habib went on to tell us that this young American was very friendly but a bit strange for he spent all day sitting in the middle of marshes. That evening I also learned that the new visitor was having problems with a certain official with whom I had long been at loggerheads. A comrade in arms I thought, and walked off to meet him.

Ron’s face lit up with surprise as he opened his door to another pale face, and a wild-looking, gesturing lady at that. We were soon engrossed in an animated conversation that went on till the wee hours. “I have found a soul mate,” he prophetically told me at the end of that first meeting. Thus started our magnificent, enduring friendship. Over the years we crossed geographical chasms to keep in close contact, and in between we exchanged copious, epic letters. Ron and his home in Baraboo became my place of peace in an otherwise hectic world.

But I have gone ahead of my tale. A few hours later it was business as usual for Ron. Early every morning his alarm clock would rudely herald a new day at 5 A.M. Shivering in the 40 degree cold he would stumble out in the dark to his bicycle, and armed with a telescope, binoculars, and a pile of other paraphernalia would bicycle bravely off into the moonlight to his “home” on the marshes.

His destination, a hundred yards from the nearest dry land, was a small flimsy platform surrounded by a bamboo framework and mounds of vegetation. From the distance it was a barely visible dot in a great sea of marsh. I always marvelled at the way Ron would hesitantly step off the dike into the cold, sinister-looking water. As the sky filled with the red glow of dawn, his plodding splashes would sparkle with color. He made a strange but distinct silhouette of a man laden with his tools.

Ron would sit in his tiny, cramped hide for six hours at a time. As the sun crept over the horizon, the crescendo of chattering birds would grow more often than not be interrupted by the “strange and beautiful harmony” (to use Ron’s words) of a pair of Siberian cranes calling overhead. With a swish of wings they would land near his hide. As the morning progressed, more and more “Sibes” would arrive to spend the day feeding in the marsh. Ron would record their behavior, concentrating on the cranes’ social structure and what kinds of food they ate.

Occasionally his concentration would be broken by a friendly White-breasted Kingfisher that regularly used Ron’s hide as a feeding perch. Bits of fish and frogs would shower through the hide as the kingfisher mercilessly whacked his prey against the bamboo frame.

By early March there would be an air of agitation amongst the Siberian cranes. It was time to depart from Bharatpur, to start the long hazardous journey to their nesting grounds on the Siberian tundras. I remember one year standing on a dike with Ron as the cranes circled higher and higher. Their mournful harmony drifted down to us in a poignant farewell. We watched in silence until the specks grew smaller and then disappeared.

The departure of the cranes would also
Ron’s good humor was infectious, his open nature so endearing. His love for India, and Keoladeo in particular, brought him friendship from many spheres. But perhaps more importantly his enthusiasm made people stop and think about what he was doing and why. Directly or indirectly he brought Keoladeo’s plight to the fore - from the most junior forest guard to the Prime Minister of India.

From 1981 to 1982 Ron served as a member of a special committee evaluating the status of Keoladeo. In 1982, to our great joy, Mrs. Gandhi, the Prime Minister of India, declared Keoladeo a National Park. Grazing was banned and the building of a wall to surround the entire park nearly completed. Keoladeo’s problems were by no means over but Ron had helped to turn the tide and slowly, ever so slowly, the numbers of Siberian Cranes that visited Keoladeo started to increase.

Ron touched the soul of all who knew him. For someone to die so young is extraordinarily painful but how wonderful it is that he accomplished so much. Ron’s memory, his life and his works, will serve as an inspiration to us all.
Wetland Values for People

by Norton H. Nickerson

Protecting cranes depends upon protecting their wetland habitats. As human populations increase, it becomes more difficult to preserve wetlands for wildlife values alone. All crane conservationists should become familiar with wetland values for people. These human values are often critically important, as we try to persuade others to protect wetlands from destruction.

Norton Nickerson is Professor of Environmental Studies at Tufts University in Medford, Massachusetts U.S.A. At ICF's invitation, he is speaking on wetland values at the International Crane Workshop.

The deep water parts of our landscape, those ponds, lakes and streams that sparkle in the sunlight, have always attracted humans. Not so with our shallow water ecosystems, the pond and lake fringes, river bottomlands and swamps, bogs, fens, sedge meadows and marshes — all called "wetlands." These places have been widely regarded as slippery, smelly and suspicious, and are still misunderstood to this day.

Wetlands, created by water standing on land for all or part of each growing season, have their own characteristic flora and fauna. We recognize that wetlands serve as home for migratory birds and for that reason alone deserve great respect and protection. But most people, when asked, say that as far as they know, waterlogged real estate is essentially worthless.

If, however, we look at wetlands as functioning biological systems, we soon discover that they are just as wondrous as our tropical forests or coral reefs. They are quiet places in our chaotic world, offering sanctuary to a variety of birds and other animals during extremes of climate, and provide much-needed solace to human visitors.

Water, of course, is paramount. Without it, there can be no wetland. Some wetlands, like most prairie “potholes,” are collectors, and receive water as runoff from higher elevations, much like an oversized puddle. Other wetlands are sources of water bubbling up from below the soil surface. Both types develop anaerobic peats and mucks, where bacterial decay creates the characteristic sulfide (rotten-egg) odor that some people dislike.

Wetlands are fertile areas, chiefly because they catch nutrient runoff from many different sources. They rank among the highest of the world's ecosystems in the overall production of living organisms. They are vital links in our freshwater storage and supply systems, absorbing water in times of flooding and then slowly releasing it during drier periods.

Many wetlands abate pollution; they filter nitrate-laden waters, and their vegetation absorbs nitrogen and phosphorus. Their detritus (fine organic matter) adsorbs heavy metals and pesticides, effectively removing them and cleansing the waters. Recent research confirms that wetlands are also capable of removing nearly all coliform bacteria and enteroviruses from secondarily-treated human sewage. This work points to the use of these landforms for improving the surface water quality of many areas at minimal cost. We can really refer to wetlands as "nature's vacuum cleaners."

In spite of the remarkable roles that wetlands play in keeping our environment habitable, we know very little about how these processes of denitrification and removal of various toxins are accomplished. We do know that without wetlands, surface waters such as lakes receive essentially no cleansing or silt removal, that more and more floods occur with more disastrous consequences, and that many water-dwelling animals, especially fish and birds, decrease in number.

Because of all these benefits for people, wetlands are often more valuable than the farmlands that could replace them. Organiza-
ICF Members Needed to Count Cranes in China

ICF is again organizing an expedition to Poyang Lake Nature Reserve in southeastern China. Volunteers are needed to count cranes and present education programs in schools and villages. The trip is a special opportunity to experience the people and landscape of a remote region of China, and to assist in efforts to preserve the Extraordinary wildlife. Tentative dates are February 22 to March 12, 1988.

Poyang Lake, one of Asia's most important wetlands, is the winter refuge for 95% of the world population of endangered Siberian Cranes. ICF also monitors three other crane species and a host of other water birds. The schedule includes optional visits to two additional nature sanctuaries featuring mangrove swamps and mountainous forests.

All costs are tax-deductible. For more information, contact Jim Harris at ICF. No scientific background is necessary, only a willingness to work and to learn.

ICF Establishes the Ron Sauey Fund for International Conservation

Ron Sauey's friends live all around the globe, a great many of them conservationists whom Ron helped alert to the plight of cranes and their vanishing wetlands. Even in ICF's early years, Ron saw the critical difference that a few dedicated people could make, especially people living in regions where cranes are in trouble. He helped to build a network of committed crane lovers, and kept us going, sometimes when there was little reason for optimism.

Ron also knew that conservation work needs money. He often helped ICF with fund-raising activities, and one of his last contributions was the creation of a fund-raising brochure stressing international needs for crane conservation.

Ron's vision and commitment made ICF's international achievements possible. In his memory, ICF is therefore creating the Ron Sauey Fund for International Conservation. Over the years, the Ron Sauey Fund will provide the encouragement and backing so necessary to halt the decline of cranes and other wetland birds.

Interest generated from the Fund's assets will be distributed by ICF to advance projects involving the many countries where conservation funds are so limited, where timely support can make such a difference. Grants may support field research, public education, management efforts, or study visits to ICF. In making grants from the Fund, ICF will give preference to projects related to Ron's special interest: crane conservation in India and the protection of the Siberian Crane.

We invite Ron's friends and colleagues, and all ICF members, to help us in establishing the Fund. We enclose an envelope in this issue of the Bugle, that you can use in making a tax-deductible contribution. The Fund will give ICF the capacity to help those dedicated conservationists who are ready and eager to work, if only given the chance. Ron worked many years to give them that chance.

CONTRIBUTIONS

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Save Saturday, September 26, 1987: ICF's Annual Meeting

See your next newsletter for details.
“A Thousand Cranes” Video Available to ICF Members

by Erik Brynildson
ICF Education Associate

“A Thousand Cranes,” an hour-long documentary, premiered last August on BBC and again in February of this year on American national television. The film told millions of viewers the story of ICF Director Archibald’s effort with Soviet ornithologist Vladimir Flint to save the endangered Siberian Crane in western Asia.

Archibald met Flint in 1976 to discuss what could be done to preserve these rare white birds. They agreed to establish a captive flock. Because ICF had successfully raised other species of cranes in captivity, the two men decided that Archibald would take Siberian Crane eggs back to Baraboo, Wisconsin.

But, as Flint says in the film, “That was not an easy problem.” He didn’t know exactly where the nests were. He and his staff searched the tundra region of northern Siberia in a military helicopter until they found four of the precious eggs.

The film continues with the second half of the project, taking eggs laid by ICF’s captive flock back to the wilds of Siberia. The two ornithologists hoped to duplicate a foster parent program pioneered by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and the Canadian Wildlife Service for North America’s Whooping Crane. The film details the painstaking process of transporting the fragile eggs from Baraboo to Siberia and then locating suitable Common Crane nests with mothers that would accept the eggs as their own. The chicks would then learn to follow the shorter and safer migration route of the Common Crane parent.

In documenting the decade of scientific work, the film emphasizes the importance of developing personal and professional relationships to ensure the survival of our planet in the nuclear age. George Archibald says, “I would love for people to see that Americans and Soviets can work in harmony and enjoy each other’s countries. You always hear about the bad things, but it’s not all bad. I hope there will be more of these kinds of exchanges so the world will be a little safer place.”

“A Thousand Cranes” offers the viewer a unique combination of elements — fascinating wildlife adventure, spectacular landscapes, the powerful symbolism of cranes, and the heartwarming story of international friendship. It is a highly acclaimed work and has already received many positive reviews, including one from Raisa Gorbachev.

The film’s producer Brian Kahn, president of Artemis Wildlife Foundation, wishes to maximize the film’s distribution among conservationists. We are therefore able to offer VHS video cassettes of this film at a special price of only $30 postage-paid. We hope our members will show the video to friends and organizations in their local areas.

To order your video copy, please mail your check to ICF, E-11376 Shady Lane Road, Baraboo, Wisconsin 53913. Attention: Marion Hill.