Perfect Attendance

By George Archibald

Mary Wickham has served as ICF's Chairman of the Board of Directors for 23 years and has never missed a meeting. On January 13, 2001, she was voted Chairman Emeritus and I was elected the new Chairman of the Board. Mary pledges always to remain an active board member and retain her energy, enthusiasm, and service to ICF. In my new position, I have a lot to learn from Mary's example.

I met Mary and her husband John through their close friends, wildlife artist Owen Grummet and his wife Ann. John was a lawyer in Janesville, Wisconsin, and Mary was his able legal assistant and the mother of their four children. The Wickhams loved wildlife and wilderness, and the Grummezes knew that they would enjoy meeting the young co-founders of ICF. In 1973 the Grummezes brought the Wickhams to the Snowy site in Bamboo.

They took a tour and soon embraced ICF's worldwide mission to help the cranes.

For the next five years, ICF grew through the help of volunteers, public visitation, and guidance from its Board of Directors. By 1978 we realized that the board needed to be expanded and a meeting was called with about 20 of our major supporters. Mary led that meeting, and the board grew to eighteen members of ICF, a huge thanks for all you have done to make this world a safer place for cranes and that cranes embody.

Crane Fest 2001

Don't miss the third annual Crane Fest at ICF.

May 12 from 9 a.m. – 5 p.m.

Food, building birdhouses, dancing, migration games, and lectures, art, folklove and more!

Check www.stockcrix.org for details.

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the Last Hope Pair.

In one sense, Mr. Sharma is correct. However in a greater sense, "given up" is not what we feel. We are watching and feeling a change in the world. It is a sadness about to happen, next year or the year after, an eternal passing.

This central flock will leave its landscapes emptier – as Aldo Leopold wrote in Wisconsin, "The sadness discernible in some marshes arises, perhaps, from their once having harbored cranes. Now they stand hallowed, adrift in history." But we are doing what we can to protect this flock's wetlands and other cranes of the flying, so that one day Siberian Cranes may return. And we are learning elsewhere in Asia and America how to restore crane populations to the wild.

The Wisconsin marshes, fifty years after Leopold, have their Sandhill Cranes back, and we are preparing to reintroduce the Whooping Crane. The Last Hope Pair reminds us to redouble our efforts for Poyang and a thousand places where there is still time and hope for cranes. Action and hope and a great affection for the crane landscapes unite us and our legion of crane people around the world.

Together we pause in our far scattered places to remember and feel for the Last Hope Pair.
percent per year. In 1099, television came to Bhutan. And as health centers throughout the Kingdom reduce infant mortality, there are more people to share the bounties of nature. The Bhutanese are painfully aware of the effects of overpopulation on the nearly deforested slopes of neighboring nations. To protect Bhutan’s bountiful riches, a law was passed that sixty percent of the Kingdom must remain forested. And a non-governmental organization, the Royal Society for the Protection of Nature (RSPN) was established to promote the continued involvement of local people in conservation.

During the past five years, ICf has worked with RSPN to study and protect the Black-necked Cranes and their habitats in Bhutan. Phobjikha Valley, just east of the capital Thimphu, provides a home in winter for approximately 200 cranes and for approximately 4125 Bhutanese farmers and students. There is no electricity and consequently there are no power lines with which the cranes might collide and perish. But eventually modernization will arrive, and with it will come new challenges. RSPN is proactively initiating local industries such as weaving and sponsoring an annual Crane Festival where these groups are marketed. The Crane Festival is always held on the King’s birthday, November 11, after most of the cranes have arrived. Approximately 5000 people, some from neighboring valleys, walk into the large open field that separates the Phobjikha Primary School from the wetlands. With the cranes nearby, the local people sing, dance, and compete in the national sport, archery.

Just over the Himalayas is southern Tibet, an autonomous region of China, about 4000 Black-necked Cranes spend the winter along several wide valleys where they also benefit from the protection of the local people. Traditionally Tibetan farmers produced barley every summer. In winter, the cranes found waste grain in the harvested fields. But new farming practices in Tibet, whereby harvested barley fields are plowed, or are plowed into winter wheat, have reduced the amount of food available for cranes. Perhaps some economic benefit to the local people can be provided by helping the cranes, more barley fields will remain unplowed. Perhaps Tibet needs Crane Festivals with some income from eco-tourism directed toward community development.

The World Wide Fund for Nature and ICf supported three conservation leaders from Tibet to visit several important sites, including Nepal and the Phobjikha Valley in Bhutan. ICf and our colleagues in Hokioka, Japan, are proposing that groups of Americans and Japanese travel to Tibet in January of 2002.

The Bhutanese are concerned about the preservation of their culture; tourism to Bhutan is restricted to just 3000 people every year. ICf has permission to bring a small group of our members to Bhutan in November to experience the Crane Festival and other treasures. In addition to a week in Bhutan, the group will visit two outstanding wildlife areas in Nepal, the Royal Chitwan National Park (rhinos guaranteed) and the Lumbini Crane Sanctuary.

In addition, if approvals are received, in January of 2002, I hope to bring a group of ICf members to Hokioka, Japan to see the Red-crowned Cranes, and to join with Japanese colleagues in continuing on to Tibet for cranes and festivals.

In the Phobjikha Valley as in the rest of this “kingdom in the clouds,” the people and wildlife live in harmony.
**News from the Flock**

ICF’s Bird-a-Thon

Last year’s Bird-a-Thon raised over $30,000 for the Ren Savoy Conservation Fund and for ICF operations here in Bemidji. Since 1989, the Bird-a-Thon has raised over $231,000. Please help the cranes by joining in the 2001 Bird-a-Thon. In March, ICF will mail you information about ICF’s Thirteenth Annual Bird-a-Thon and how you can help.

**Free Admission to AZA Zoos and Aquariums**

Your ICF membership grants you free admission to over 150 zoos and aquariums! ICF participates in the American Zoo and Aquarium Association (AZA) reciprocity agreement, which means you can get into other zoos and aquariums free for a year. Details and a list of ICF's participating zoos and aquariums are available online at www.aza.org/birdathon.

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**Summer 2000 Highlight**

**Ride for Rare Birds!**

Cane lovers and Harley riders Janet and Jim Mckennis, Pat and Jim McKethan, and Doris and Woody Adams organized ICF's first ever Ride for Rare Birds on August 26, 2000. What a success! Not even the early morning nimrods, which canceled our ride to ICF, brought the 30 participants down. They piled into cars and made it to ICF for a VIP tour and luncheon catered by the Little Village Cafe. This creative fundraiser made close to $5,000 for the cranes. Thank you to all who participated and donated to ICF. A big cranale saliva goes out to Janet McKennis for leading the ride for Rare Birds pack!
First Sighting
By Kristin Evans, Project Whoopee "What will the wandering Whoopee Cranes in Michigan do when winter rolls around? Everyone had a different opinion. The truth was, no one knew, so why not find out? On the evening of November 6, 2000, Anne Lacy and I bounded the now-famous Alliant Energy radio tracking vans. Our destination: Michigan. Our mission: to observe the pair who unexpectedly left the sedentary flock of Whoopee Cranes in Florida, and to follow where they began moving south. On the evening of the 8th, we arrived at the Batkin's dairy farm in Sandusky, Michigan. Marilyn and her son Mark welcomed us like family. We made plans to witness the cranes' arrival the next morning. At dawn, Anne went to the window and there they were, two ghostly, birds, about 50 meters from the barn. Rushing outside, we quietly sneak behind an old truck to get our first view of these amazing birds. As the day went on we realized these birds were not in a hurry to go anywhere. We even went inside for tea with Marilyn. The next two weeks fell into a routine: wake up, check on the whoopers, have tea, read, check on the whoopers, play with Copper (the Batkin's dog), check on the whoopers... We began to wonder if they were going to move at all.

And They're Off!!
By Matt Hayes, Field Ecology Intern
Day 1: On November 21, suspicions that they might move, we got to the most eastern. Less than five minutes after our arrival, the pair's radio tracking signals were overhead and then south of us. They didn't stop at their usual foraging fields, and the signals just kept moving south. We called Windway Capital Corp. pilot Mike Frakes and designated Marine City Airport as our rendezvous point. Sara, Koji, and I managed to follow the birds for four hours until the tracking plane could catch up. Koji and the pilot, Mike, were then able to track the birds' signals into Canada while Sara and I followed with the van. Lake Erie and Canada were huge obstacles for the van, so we drove ahead to Sandusky, Ohio and waited for the birds to cross the lake. The air crew was unable to see the pair all day due to snow squalls, then it was getting dark so the plane had to land. The last signal heard came from Point Pelee National Park in Ontario, Canada. Sara and I backtracked through Detroit, entered Canada, and headed to Point Pelee. At 10:30 pm we flipped on the switch to listen for the radio signals. Nothing. The next morning we listened again, still nothing. Had the birds crossed the lake or did they try to go around? At 10:00 am the airplane picked up a signal from the female and we headed back to Ohio along a now very familiar route. We felt as if we were playing catch-up all day.

One More?
By Koji Sekiwa, Field Ecology Intern
Day 2: After an unsuccessful search by plane over Canada, we heard our first signal from the air in northern Ohio. Compared to the day before, the weather was excellent for flying. We loved the high pressure. I remember the time, 12:58 pm, when I first found a tiny white speck just above a deep green forest. By then, the signal was painfully pinging in my ears, but even the signal was pleasant because it meant I was flying with a Whoopee Crane! After a few moments, however, I realized something was wrong. The white speck, no matter how long we waited, never became two. There was no sign of the male. Where was he? Since we couldn't abandon the female to look for the male, we stayed with her. She ended the day's trip alone, at a large pond in a southern Ohio coal mine. Day 3: I remained on the ground to track the bird. We went to examine the coastline site. It was like a "mesopotame" with no vegetation. Seeing the female in this vast landscape seemed so bizarre. Just after 10:00 am, I felt a slight wind from the northeast. She must have felt it too. At 10:22, she circled the pond and flew south toward Florida, until she stopped in Chucky, Tennessee.

Fly, Rest, Fly!
By Anne Lency, Field Ecology Intern
Day 5: I was my first chance to track from the airplane, but the whooper had other plans. By 11:30 am it looked like she was going to stay put, but then she unexpectedly took off. As we drove up the road to follow, we noticed she was flying with two Sandhill Crazes. Were they leaving? We headed to the airport to find out. I was really excited to get up in the plane and much to my relief I heard a signal immediately. We started to fly south but the signal faded so we turned around and headed back. The signal grew stronger. Just as we were flying over a farm the van radio; they were below us, looking at the bird in the very same place we left her. She spent the rest of the day there and that was the end of my first day of flying.

Day 7: This was her third day in Chucky, so just the ground crew went to check on the bird. I sat in the hotel for an hour and a half, no word. Mike's phone finally rang. It was from someone he didn't know and the person said was, "she left, get to the airport." He told me to call a cab. We later found out the ground crew had been trying to call us but the call never came in. For some reason the scheme wasn't working as they asked one of the bird watchers to give us the message. Once in the air I picked up the signal right away. Heading south this time, we followed her over the Appalachian Mountains into North Carolina. Successfully following this bird on such a clear, beautiful day was quite an experience. My first full day of radio tracking from the plane ended in Anderson, South Carolina, where she picked a small pond on a gravel hill for a roost. That night I could still hear her signal beeping in my head.

The End of the Beginning
By Anne Lency, Field Ecology Intern
Day 10: It seemed she was headed one of two ways. At the roost in Starke, Florida, we were about 80 miles from Interlachen, the last known Florida location of this female and her mate. Would she fly there or would she go to the Kissimmee Prairie, where she was released as a chick? We got the call about 9:00 am - she's in the air! Once airborne we quickly found the signal, and not too long after, the bird. I mapped her trajectory — sure enough, she was headed straight to Interlachen! We knew exactly where she was going that morning.

Commission came up to see if the bird was in her old home range of last year. She wasn't. The female had picked up and left again after just one night and continued to move - day 1! She settled to Kissimmee Prairie, where she had been released as a chick in 1996. To guess what she was thinking is futile, but we couldn't help putting a humanizing spin to her story. She had found her territory again, but where was her mate? After not finding him "home" in Interlachen, perhaps she decided to go and make a fresh start back in the prairie. Regardless, all of us are excited and very curious to see what will transpire during the spring of 2001 - migration anyone??