Our strategic plan states, “to save cranes, we must engage people in the conservation of landscapes that nurture cranes, ourselves, and the diversity of life on Earth.” No one engages people better, or with more gusto, than ICF Board Member and puppeteer extraordinaire, Heather Henson, and her traveling troupe of performers, IBEX Puppetry. Heather is the Founder and Creative Director of IBEX and is the inspirational force in using artistic spectacle, educational outreach, and the fine art of puppetry to promote health and healing for our planet. IBEX programs feature puppets, kites, and creative movement to produce Heather’s original works, including environmental performances such as Celebration of Flight, Endangered Species Parades, and educational initiatives and workshops. Continued on page 2

Pictured here in a traditional Mongolian ger, Heather Henson creates a crane kite with a kind grandmother who invited her in for tea and snacks. Photo by Liz Smith

An Evening with the Cranes
See page 7
of the connections between people and the natural environment. They can all play in creating a healthier planet by playful exploration and discovery.

**The goal of IBEX environmental workshops is to discover roles we can all play in creating a healthier planet by playful exploration and discovery.**

Life affirming. “I’m inspired by the science of it all. I’m just as fascinated as I am moved by it. I find it interesting. Lovely. Life affirming.”

Participating in IBEX Endangered Species Parades present the environmental troubles of our world without negativity. They focus on healing, positivity, and the potential for restoration without negativity. They focus on healing, positivity, and the potential for restoration. They focus on healing, positivity, and the potential for restoration. They focus on healing, positivity, and the potential for restoration.

**Approachable puppets of endangered animals such as the Whooping Crane, manatee, and Florida panther interact with spectators while sharing their message of hope.**

Heather shares her enthusiasm, “I’m inspired by the science of it all. I’m just as fascinated seeing trees or grasses move as I am with animals. It’s that life force, whether it’s a beating heart or the wind... I find it interesting. Lovely. Life affirming.”

The goal of IBEX environmental workshops is to discover roles we can all play in creating a healthier planet by playful exploration of the connections between people and the natural environment.

Participants, both young and old, are challenged to see conservation issues in a fun and engaging way. As ICF’s ambassador, Heather has taken her educational workshops and spectacles on the road to many faraway places such as Mongolia, Kazakhstan, and China – as well as crane hotspots throughout the United States. Most recently, Heather sponsored puppet kits and the performance of a water puppet troupe at the Vietnam Crane Festival (see next page). Heather takes great care to research and include indigenous knowledge into her performances. Vietnamese water puppetry is traditionally performed in rice paddy fields, while kites perform in the air. Together, these elements are honored in a performance to which the local community can relate and enjoy. This respect for native customs and lore is the hallmark of Heather’s creative expression. We salute Heather and IBEX Puppetry for the incredible energy, joy, and positive messages they bring to audiences around the world.

In March 2015, as the Sarus Cranes returned to the lush wetlands in the Mekong Delta, a crane festival was held in Kien Giang Province, Vietnam at the site of the Phu My Wetland Conservation Project. Through our Phu My Project we protect remnant wetlands in the Mekong Delta by linking natural resources provided by the wetlands to the people who live near that wetland. Native vegetation is sustainably harvested and used to manufacture woven goods. Proceeds from woven products support both good-paying jobs and wetland conservation of the native ecosystem. At the heart of the crane festival was a children’s art fair focused on wetlands and cranes. More than two hundred schoolchildren and teachers attended and ninety young artists enthusiastically completed their drawings or paintings for the competition. The art fair was one of the activities made possible by recent grants from the Disney Conservation Fund and CLSA Chairman’s Trust Fund to the International Crane Foundation. With additional support from ICF Board Member, Heather Henson, we were able to bring Vietnamese water puppet and kite flying shows to the festival.

In addition to the crane festival, we have begun implementing crane and wetland education for area children. Phu My is one of the poorest communities in the Mekong Delta. Children there do not have many opportunities for entertainment. Our idea was to combine education activities with entertainment opportunities for children in the village by offering a Disney movie time at 3 area schools each month. Before the movie, we presented a short slide show about Phu My wetlands, wildlife, and how to protect them. Learning about the environment while watching movies seems to work well! Eventually, a series of 10 slide shows will be developed, each approximately 5 minutes long. Stay tuned for future updates on this project!

**Vietnam Celebrates SARUS CRANES**

Photos by IBEX Puppetry

First prize entry

Photos by IBEX Puppetry

**Travel with ICF**

Perhaps no other destination in the world inspires the spirit of adventure as much as Africa! ICF President Rich Beilfuss invites you to join him on a journey to Rwanda and Uganda in May 2016. The tour will give a generous sampling of the flora and fauna for which Africa is famed.

ICF Program Manager Kerryn Morrison and other local research and project partners will join the group to provide an up-close and personal view of ICF project sites. Our tours are a truly exceptional way to see the world, and they fill very quickly. For more information, or if you would like to receive notice of travel opportunities before registration is opened to the public, please contact Kari Stauffer at 608-356-9462 ext. 115 or email travel@savingcranes.org.

Photo by Gopi Sundar

**Kids and Adults: we challenge you to make all the crane species and post them on our Facebook page. Visit our website species guide for inspiration and photos of the cranes of the world.**

www.savingcranes.org/species-field-guide.html

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Photo by Gopi Sundar
Notes from the President

I love a good road trip. I’ve spent countless hours on airplanes flying to ICF projects all over the world, but there is nothing quite like traveling the highways with a fun group of people – what better to travel with than a bunch of craniacs? Last month, I joined Julie Langenberg (VP-Conservation Science), Darcy Love (Visitor Program Manager), Kim Boardman (Assistant Curator), and Dave Chesley (Site Manager) on a trip to the spectacular Henry Doorly Zoo in Omaha, Nebraska. For those who haven’t visited the world-class Omaha Zoo, I highly recommend it – and you can stop there right off Interstate 80 on your next trip to see the marvelous springtime concentration of Sandhill Cranes on the Platte River.

Our mission was to meet with visionaries of the Omaha Zoo – including long-time Zoo Director (now retired) and mastermind Lee “Doc” Simmons, General Curator Dan Cassidy, and Assistant Curator Stephanie Huettner, who generously donated their time and creativity to help us think about the future of the ICF campus. For so many of us, ICF in Baraboo is our window to the world of crane conservation. We come face-to-face with all fifteen species of cranes, learn about their beautiful homes, and their increasing peril in the wild. It’s here that we gain a better understanding of the who, what, where, when, why, and how of ICF’s global efforts to secure a future for cranes, finding new pathways to sustain our water, land, and livelihoods.

Soon, we will be upgrading our public exhibits to make even stronger the important connections between cranes, our rich biodiversity, and ourselves. We will treat the concept of “place” in each exhibit that reflects the cultural connections between cranes and people, showcases the spectacular wetlands and grasslands that cranes depend on in the wild, and reveals the unique ways in which people fashion livelihoods from these ecosystems. Especially exciting for me will be the possible addition of new some creatures, great and small, that benefit from crane conservation. I look forward to the opportunity to emphasize the inter-dependerence between cranes and other species in the wild. I probably would have to convince our aviculturists to add a Kafue lechwe antelope to our Wattled Crane exhibit any time soon, but in the floodplains of Zambia these two are never far apart. Lechwe graze down tall grasses, making the soil accessible for Wattled Cranes to probe for tubers and seeds. Maybe an Australian Magpie Goose can join our flock – they feed alongside Brolgas, taking turns churning the soil for spike rush, tubers, widespace, and other aquatic vegetation. In India, meticulous research by ICF’s South Asia Program Director Gopi Sundar has revealed that hundreds of bird species depend on the small patches of wetlands that we are working to safeguard for Sarus Cranes. Our efforts to secure Poyang Lake in China, winter home to the entire world’s population of Siberian Cranes, also benefit most of the world’s oriental white storks, swan geese, Jewick’s swans, and hundreds of thousands of waterbirds. And a commitment to healthy wintering grounds for Whooping Cranes in Texas supports a spectacular array of waterbirds like roseate spoonbills, tricolored herons, reddish egrets, and all who depend on (or like to eat) blue crabs, redfish, and oysters. From the tiniest whirligig beetles and frogs of our coastal marshes to the great ungulate herds on coastal marshes to the great ungulate herds on our continent, the International Crane Foundation has ramped up efforts to save Whooping Cranes on every front to meet these escalating threats.

Right now, we are:

• Boosting Whooping Crane numbers through our innovative breeding and reintroduction programs.
• Protecting critical habitat in collaboration with conservation partners across the country.
• Eliminating threats by engaging in policy development, outreach, and advocacy.

And very importantly, we are spreading the word. We are building public awareness, support, and pride across the continent for an iconic species whose story so desperately needs to be told.

We are calling for your support now because the threats facing this beloved bird – fresh water shortages, power line collisions, habitat destruction, senseless shootings, and more – have never been more numerous or severe. Far too frequently, another one of our precious Whooping Cranes falls victim to these threats. The International Crane Foundation has ramped up efforts to save Whooping Cranes on every front to meet these escalating threats.

By Rich Beilfuss, President & CEO

I hope this story will be a happy one. But we can’t do it without you. Please consider making a donation to the International Crane Foundation to support our work. Your donation ensures that we mount the historic effort needed to protect Whooping Cranes for the long term. Thank you!

Dr. Rich Beilfuss, President & CEO

Ways to Give

Call: (608)356-9462
Donate at: www.savingcranes.org/donateonline.php
Or, use the envelope in this issue!
Our Whooping Crane trunks offer a variety of activities. Ethiopia, just 1.6 times the size of Texas, has more than 850 species of birds. It is home for three species of cranes, including the stately white Wattled Crane. The Wattled Crane range extends from the highlands of South Africa north to Ethiopia, with a stronghold in the enormous floodplains of Zambia, Botswana, and Mozambique, where their population is estimated at 8,000 birds. Little is known about the tiny population of Wattled Cranes in Ethiopia.

ICF’s Research Associate, Shimelis Aynalem, has observed as many as 36 Wattled Cranes near Lake Tana, and has confirmed breeding along the little Blue Nile that flows into the southwest corner of the lake. Lake Tana, the largest lake in Ethiopia, is the source of the Blue Nile and is located in the northwestern highlands. In 2012, far to the south of Lake Tana in the Rift Valley, we observed about 150 non-breeding Wattled Cranes in flocks. In February, I returned to Ethiopia to join Shimelis to learn more about the cranes in southern Ethiopia.

Ethiopia is a country of mountains, including the Bale Mountains, which border the Rift Valley on the east and boast peaks at almost 15,000 feet tall. Just below the highest peaks, the Sanetti Plateau provides nesting habitat for at least three pairs of Wattled Cranes. They arrive in July during the rainy season, and nest after water levels in the wetlands peak in September, before the onset of a long dry season. After the chicks fledge and many of the wetlands are completely dry, the cranes leave. We don’t know where they go, but we suspect they descend to the Rift Valley. That mystery will be explored during the next few years by doctoral candidate, Hadis Tadele Desta, of Addis Ababa University. Hadis joined us to visit the Bale Mountains and the next few years by doctoral candidate, Hadis Tadele Desta, of Addis Ababa University. Hadis joined us to visit the Bale Mountains.

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By Dr. George Archibald, ICF Co-founder and Senior Conservationist


While a family washes clothing, Wattled Cranes forage in the mud for tadpoles as the sun sinks into the horizon behind Boyo Lake. Photo by George Archibald
A Photo to Ponder...

Editor’s note

On a recent study visit to ICF, Mongolian researcher Iderbat Damba, shared many of his excellent photos of beautiful panoramas, wildlife, cranes, and happy children on horseback – but this is the image that made a lasting impression on me. At first glance, I didn’t realize what I was looking at – and then, the meaning of the photo hit me. I could imagine the expansive landscape of the Khurkh Valley, and the farmer slowly plowing along as he prepared to plant wheat, and then happening upon a crane nest. I wondered why he chose to plow around the nest – giving the exposed eggs a wide berth with a generous buffer zone. I assumed it was due to local beliefs or taboos about breaking eggs – but it brought to mind the famous quote that our character is defined by our actions when we think no one is watching. For me, the image symbolizes the hope that people can and will make the difference for safeguarding the natural treasures and wild places we all love.