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Crane researchers Inga Bysykatova, Russia, and Dr. Gary Krapu, USA, led an expedition to coastal tundra near the Laptev Sea in the Ust-Yana region of northern Yakutia from 15 July to 4 August 2009 to assess the status of Siberian cranes in this remote region. They carried out the first ground surveys ever undertaken in this region to estimate densities of Siberian cranes occupying the Kroma core and adjacent buffer zone (Degtyarev & Labutin 1991) during the breeding season. A total of 69 and 41 Siberian cranes were sighted in the Kroma core and buffer zone, and after accounting for probability of crane detection, resulted in estimated densities of 9.1 and 3.6 Siberian Cranes per 100 km², respectively. Extrapolation of these results to the entire Kroma core which covers a 10,300 km² area (Degtyarev & Labutin 1991) resulted in an estimate of 936 Siberian Cranes occurring on the Kroma core including 379 pairs. Thirty-two Siberian Cranes (including 13 pairs) were sighted on lands to the west of the known breeding range in the lower drainages of the Syalakh and Syuryuktyakh rivers and on coastal wetlands bordering Sellyahskaya Bay on the Laptev Sea. The findings of this study provide an up-to-date quantitative assessment of densities and numbers of Siberian Cranes breeding in the Kroma core, and underscore the importance of this vital breeding ground to the species. These results suggest that as many as one-quarter of the population may occupy the Kroma core during the breeding season prompting the researchers to suggest consideration be given to establishing one or more large nature reserves in the Kroma core and adjacent areas to help ensure the long-term well-being of this unique and endangered species.
Siberian Crane Records in Mongolia in 2009 and 2010

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Mostly the Siberian Crane is sighted in the eastern part of the country, but in recent years, they have been observed also in its central part. In 2009 and 2010, 7 sightings were recorded.

Ornithologists Ch. Uuganbayar and T. Amartuvshin along with German birdwatchers recorded three Siberian Cranes on 17 July 2009 at Tsagaan Lake in Uldza River Valley, Khentii Province. Two of these three Siberian Cranes were subadults with brownish color on white plumage. On 19 June 2010, researcher Ch. Uuganbayar again observed and took a picture of four Siberian Cranes at the same location (48°42′42″N, 111°57′07″E).

Besides the last sighting, there were another five sightings of the Siberian Crane in 2010. On 21 June, researcher P. Jargalsaikhan sighted and took a single picture of a Siberian Crane at Ugii Lake (47°45′31.6″N, 102°43′53.3″E) in Orkhon River Valley, Arkhangai Province. On 26 July, a researcher G. Amarkhuu, ornithologist Axel Branlich and German birdwatchers recorded seven Siberian Cranes near Binder Lake (48°22′1.7″N, 110°17′0.1″E) in Batshireet Soum, Khentii Province. On 26 August, biologists S. Mungunbagana and B. Dashnyam saw eleven Siberian Cranes at the same location. On the same day, during a survey on avian influenza in the north of Khentii Province, N. Ankhbayar and D. Lkhamaa (Department of the Veterinary Medicine, Khentii Province) and B. Sanchir (Department for Environment and Tourism, Khentii Province) recorded a single Siberian Crane at the small lake of Khukh (48°16′02″N, 110°46′14″E) in Khuiten River Valley, Binder Soum. The next day, 27 August, they sighted one more Siberian Crane at Mankhaadai Lake (48°37′03″N, 110°47′36″E) in Onon River Valley in the same province.

Siberian Crane Sightings in Dauria (Transbaikalia) from 2008 to 2010

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From 2008 to 2010, three sightings were recorded in Transbaikalia.

On 14 May 2008, Siberian Cranes were not sighted in Torey Lakes, however six individuals were observed in the southeast edge of Transbaikalia, in Argun River Valley which goes along the border between Russia and China. Cranes stayed in Duroi Lakes.

On 4 September 2009, four Siberian Cranes were sighted in Torey Lakes near the village of Kulusutai. On 24 May 2010, two Siberian Cranes were met in Torey Lakes near the mouth of Uldza River.

Sightings of Siberian Cranes in Altan-Kyra Hollow (Middle Onon River, Transbaikalia)

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In Altan-Kyra Hollow located in Transbaikalia Region, Siberian Cranes are observed irregular and only during spring migration and in summer time. Small groups of cranes, mostly sub-adults, stay usually near small steppe lakes. In the end of May of 1995, one sighting of three Siberian Cranes was recorded.

During recent years there were four sightings in this area. On 22 June 2008, two cranes fed in the Valley of Tasurkhai River, the western tributary of Kyra River, not far from a farm. The second sighting was recorded in summer 2009: three Siberian Cranes fed near the border between Russia and Mongolia, at Mongolian side, near
Tsagan-Nur Lake in Dadal Somon of Khentei Province. In 2009, according to information from local people, a pair of the Siberian Crane stayed few days in the right-bank of Kyra River, to the north from the village of Kyra. Besides, near 10 Siberian Cranes were observed in the summer of 2009 near Nozhiy Lake in Aginsk Region of Transbaikalia, also according to information from local farmers.

Information from Migration Sites 2009 - 2010

Western and Central Flyways

A Siberian Crane Sighting in the South of Siberia

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On 29 May 2008, during ornithological researches near the town of Seversk in the special protected area of “Samus Lake Complex” of local level (Tomsk District, Tomsk Region), the Siberian Crane was recorded. It was flying above Maltsevo Lake in the altitude of 35 - 40 in the northeastern direction.

Siberian Crane Records in Kazakhstan from 2008 to 2010

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In 2008 we received information from hunters about a sighting of two Siberian Cranes in the period from 15 to 19 April in Ubagan River Valley, 14 - 15 km north from Chili Lake. They fed in an agricultural field along with 28 Eurasian Cranes and a pair of the Demoiselle Crane. On 20 April they could not already find any cranes.

There were no sightings, nor were there any inquiries about Siberian Crane sightings in Kostanai Region in 2009.

In 2010, on 11 August, for the first time, I visited the lakes of the Naurzum State Nature Reserve that are good stopovers for the Siberian Crane. One Siberian Crane was sighted on the Aksuat Lake, same as in 2007. This adult Siberian Crane was without bands. On the 16th as well as 30 and 31 August 2010, I visited Naurzum Lake System again and saw the single Siberian Crane on the same lake. Thus, the Siberian Crane stayed at Naurzum quite a long time, at least from 11 to 31 August, almost three weeks!
A Sighting of Siberian Cranes in Azerbaijan in 2008

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According to information from Abbas Abbasov, the ranger of Ghyzyl-Aghach State Nature Reserve, Azerbaijan, in the beginning of November 2008, two Siberian Cranes were sighted at wetlands near Julfa Town (coordinates: 38°57’N; 45°37’E) in Azerbaijan. One of cranes was banded with green (or blue) plastic band.

This is the first sighting of Siberian Cranes in Julfa, which is located in the border between Azerbaijan and Iran, farther south than sites of previous Siberian Crane sightings in Caspian Lowlands.

Eastern Flyway

A Siberian Crane Record in Chaunskaya Gulf, Chukotka

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One adult Siberian Crane was recorded by V. Melyushkin on June 4, 2009, in Chukotka Peninsula, Chaunskaya Gulf, Valkarkai, mouth of Kenilveem River (coordinates: 70°05’N; 170°55’E). He was able to take a few pictures*.

Notes by editor: The last occasional visit of the Siberian Crane in Chukotka in Chaun River Lowlands was recorded approximately in 1925 - 1927 (Portenko 1972).

A Siberian Crane in Chaunskay Gulf. Photo by V. Melyushkin

Autumn Migration of Siberian Cranes in Aldan River Basin, Yakutia

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Since 2008 we have had good results from the Siberian Crane migration research in Aldan River basin. We collected data which will allow us to determine the main parameters of migration including its dynamic, phenology, the physical characteristics of habitats used during migration, crane feeding behavior and food items, their ecology, the characteristics that cause cranes to choose migration stopovers, threats and so on.

In 2009, in the investigation of a digital picture of the Siberian Crane flock taken during autumn migration we could see a bird that was banded in August 2008 with a plastic band with an attached satellite transmitter that had stopped working in August 2009.
**Migration Status of the Siberian Crane in Momoge NNR in Spring 2009**

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Momoge National Nature Reserve, China  
(Adapted from China Crane News, 2009, vol. 13 (1), p. 3)

Momoge National Nature Reserve (NNR) is an important stopover site of the Siberian Crane. Since the autumn 2007, the Siberian Crane population in each migration season were stably more than 1,700 and the stay period more than 90 days.

In Spring 2009, Siberian Cranes firstly arrived in Momoge NNR on 15 May. A family with one juvenile stayed at Etoupao wetland.

Because of the abnormal climate in late March, much cold than usual and even snowing, it affected the migration of Siberian Cranes. From March 20 to 30, the Siberian Crane flock was less than 100 in Momoge NNR, and till mid April, in increased to more 600.

On 30th April, we observed 2616 individuals of the Siberian Crane. It was a new record of the largest flock in Momoge NNR. The birds concentrated in the west of Xietunmiao, eastern Etoupao wetland.

On 9 May, most of Siberian Cranes migrated away and only 600 individuals still remained there. On 15 May, we monitored only 66 birds.

**Some Stopover Records for the Siberian Crane in 2010 и 2011 in China**

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There are some new records of stopover sites for the Siberian Crane reported by several people during migration seasons in 2010-2011 in northeast of China.

**Muyuan Town** (49°24’18”N, 121°8’33”E) in Yakeshi City (District) of Inner Mongolia Province. Chen Liang saw a small flock, about 10 Siberian Cranes on September 19, 2010.

**Hui River National Nature Reserve** (48°55’1”N, 119°40’38”E) in Hulunbeier, Inner Mongolia Province. Wo
Qiang and Wu Zhijian saw 18 Siberian Cranes feeding in the shallow water (an oxbow) with five Hooded Cranes in September 19, 2010. These birds left on the following day.

Xitumutai Village (46°55'58''N, 123°54'27''E) in Tailai County in Heilongjiang Province. On April 17, 2010, Su Liying and Fu Jianguo observed 21 Siberian Cranes foraging in a shallow water lake with seven Swan Geese and a large flock of Bean Geese.

On October 5, 2010, about 1.6 km south from the above mentioned site on the same lake, Sha Jianbin, Cheng Yachang, and Dong Yi found 45 Siberian Cranes feeding with eight White-naped and three Red-crowned Cranes on the south side of the shallow water lake. There were also big flocks of Gadwalls, Common Pochards, Bean and Greater White-fronted Geese.

Lianhuanhu No. 4 Branch (46°33'41''N, 124°10'3''E) in Duerbote Mongolian Autonomy County of Heilongjiang Province. On October 9, 2010, Fu Jianguo and Dong Yi saw a family of three Siberian Cranes in the wetland.

Changfa Village (46°29'7''N, 124°16'36''E) in Duerbote Mongolian Autonomy County of Heilongjiang Province. On October 9, 2010, Fu Jianguo and Dong Yi saw seven Siberian Cranes, two families each with one chick and also a single bird in the wetland.

Ganqika Town (42°57'15''N, 122°23'47''E) in Tongliao City (District) of Inner Mongolia Province. On March 14 - 4, 2010, the photographer Bai Hexi and his friends observed small flocks of 2 - 12 Siberian Cranes at the small lake nearby the town. Two cranes arrived first on March 14. After a small flock of 10 birds joined them on March 23, they all left together on the March 24.

Suligutai Village (43°3'37''N, 122°20'58''E) in Tongliao City (District) of Inner Mongolia Province. On March 28-30, 2011, Mr. Bai Hexi and his friends photographed three and six Siberian Cranes on the lake by the village. This lake is located about 10 km north of Ganqika Town.

Sidaohaozi Reservoir (42°44'17''N, 122°57'21''E) Kangping County of Liaoning Province. Zhou Haixiang identified the wetland on a satellite image and predicted it might be a staging area for the Siberian Crane. On October 23, 2010, Zhou Haixiang, Yu Jingjing, Di Zhiying and Su Liying went to do ground checking. We spotted two families in shallow water on the west side, each with one chick. Interviews with local people indicated the numbers of the cranes were much larger earlier that season.

On March 21, 2011, Zhou Haixiang, Wang Guan and Su Liying observed one family of three on the west side of the lake. In late March of 2011, Zhou Haixiang reported about 40 Siberian Cranes staging there for a week.

Malian Village (42°46'49''N, 123°18'24''E), north side of Wolong Lake in Kangping County of Liaoning Province. On October 23, 2010, Zhou Haixiang, Yu Jingjing, Di Zhiying and Su Liying observed a small flock, 23 Siberian Cranes, foraging in shallow water. These were former rice paddies that apparently had been abandoned due to lack of water early in the year; later, in fall 2010, they were flooded by rainfall. There were two families, each with one chick, foraging at a close distance. According to villagers living nearby, there were no cranes in previous years, this year is unusually wet and flooded this area. A few days before we visited, many more cranes were in the area.

Yangjiapu Aquatic Farm (42°42'26''N, 123°12'13''E) southwest part of Wolong Lake in Kangping County of Liaoning Province. This place has been recorded as having staging Siberian Cranes since 2005. On October 23, 2010, Zhou Haixiang, Yu Jingjing, Di Zhiying and Su Liying observed a flock of over 100 Siberian Cranes foraging in shallow water. We also saw a flock of 120 Oriental White Stork at the same wetland.

Early morning, on March 22, 2011, Su Liying, Zhou Haixiang, and Wang Guan found a flock of Siberian Cranes at the migration stopover in Huanzidong Reservoir, Liaoning Province, China. Photo by Zhou Haixiang
of 161 individuals including 6 chicks foraging and roosting in aquatic ponds. These ponds had been separated years ago from the main lake by people, in an attempt to grow fish, and later to grow crabs. There was a single Eurasian Crane in the Siberian Crane flock. There was a large flock of 211 Oriental White Storks also staging in a nearby pond.

In addition, a pair of Red-crowned Cranes came later. There were about 2-3,000 Bean Geese and 10,000 Baikal Teal staging on an ice-covered pond nearby.

On the same spot, on the following day (March 23, 2011), we saw large flocks of Siberian Cranes and Oriental White Storks (we did not count them, but the flock sizes were similar to the night before), six Eurasian, three Hooded, and six Red-crowned Cranes. Large flocks of Siberian Cranes and Oriental White Storks took off in mid morning, soaring high to northwest.

Huanzidong Reservoir (42°21′20″N, 122°56′32″E.) in Faku County of Liaoning. This staging site was found in 2005 by Zhou Haixiang. According to his information, in autumn of 2008 the Siberian Crane flock size at the stopover site in Huanzidong Reservoir in Liaoning Province, China, gradually increased from over 20 birds in early October, up to 430 birds on 5 November. On 6 November, most of the cranes were soaring up and ready to leave for the south. Over a hundred cranes remained at the site. About 10% of the remaining cranes were chicks from this year. Mr. Zhou said that normally Siberian Cranes leave Huanzidong in late October, and by early November all of the cranes are gone. In fall 2008 the cranes left the site later than in other years. Besides Siberian Cranes, on 5 November, 44 Hooded Cranes were observed at the site. These cranes left for the south the same day. Flocks of Oriental White Storks had been arriving at the site in several small groups of 20 - 50 birds, and were leaving separately in October for the south.

In 2011, Siberian Cranes first arrived on 19 March, when the ice still covered everywhere. The high peak of migrating Siberian Cranes so far was around March 30, the flock size was 1,476 in that day. This number is the highest record for the site for all the years observed. On 21 March 2011, Su Liying, Zhou Haixiang, Yu Jingjing, and Wang Guan observed nine Red-crowned and 23 Hooded Cranes, about 210 Oriental White Storks. There were about 2,000 - 3,000 Bean Geese, 10,000 Baikal Teal, and many ducks staging on edge where there small proportion of water open.

Liao River (42°9′26″N, 123°11′35″E.) near by Mahushan and Wuerhai Villages in Xinmin City of Liaoning Province. Su Liying, Zhou Haixiang, Yu Jingjing, and Wang Guan drove by in the early morning of March 21, 2011. There was a flock of 39 Siberian Cranes standing on the ice, sleeping. It appeared that the flock roosted there the night before. When we tried to get closer, they took off, soaring in three small flocks toward the north.

Even though records for most of these sites are the first records for staging Siberian Cranes, all sites are located along a known migratory flyway (Fig. 2). The wetlands at these sites have varied a lot over the years depending on the rainfall situation in each year. The crane use of these sites has changed according to the amount of water at these sites. For example, there was a large flood in late fall of 2010 at Huanzidong Reservoir. All the normally shallow water, emergent sedge zone was under deep water. No Siberian Cranes stopped here in the fall. In contrast, the small lakes in Keerqin Desert normally dry out; they will have shallow water only when there has been a lot of rainfall. There was more water in 2010 in the Keerqin Desert than other years. Small flocks of Siberian Cranes stopped at these lakes, such as by Ganqika and Suligutai. Along the flyway, there are numerous small lakes in remote areas; these lakes are potential stopover sites for migratory crane flocks. The cranes may disperse to the different lakes when the water conditions are good.
Information from Wintering Sites 2009/10 и 2010/11

Western Flyway

A Siberian Crane Sighting in Azerbaijan in January 2010

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On 29 January 2010, ornithological researches were conducted in Ghyzyl-Agach State Nature Reserve and adjacent areas. The weather was clear and sunny, and there was a haze above fields. In the middle of the day I sighted one Siberian Crane which walked along a channel covered by reeds and stretched along a winter crop field. I watched bird using a telescope during 1.5 hours at the distance of near 750 m.

Siberian Crane Wintering in Iran in 2010/11 гг.

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In the morning of 25 October 2010, one Siberian Crane arrived in Fereydoonkenar Damgah wetland, the only known wintering ground of the Western Asian flock of the Siberian Crane. It was observed by local farmer-trappers of this area, members of the Mazandaran Crane Conservation Association (MCCA). The weather was cloudy, temperature was about 20°C.

Mr. Peyvaste, one of the older damgah-keeper MCCA member, showed journalist Parisa Khalafbeigi the Siberian Crane near his damgah. She could take more than 100 photos, and one of them is presented in the article.

On 4 March 2011 after 10 a.m., according to information from damgah keeper Mr. Taghavi, the lone crane flew off Ezbaran and Sorkhrud Damgah, towards Gilan and Dashte Moghan where it may have a short stop. The damgah-keepers in Fereydoonkenar will again next fall be hoping to see this one wild Siberian crane, now named by them as Omid (Hope, Nadezhda).
The Oka Crane Breeding Center (the OCBC) is host to 29 Siberian Cranes (14 males and 15 females) as of 31 January 2010.

In 2010 11 pairs of Siberian Cranes bred at OCBC (Table).

The young Siberian Crane pair which started to breed on 2009, broke the first egg just after laying (as in 2009) and didn’t lay a second one. The Siberian Crane female, who has been breeding since 1997 didn’t lay eggs, but she built her nest and incubated pieces of bricks. On 20 May, wooden artificial eggs were put into her nest; and female incubated them during 63 days.

To produce offspring from birds incapable of mating, artificial insemination was used for six females of the Siberian Crane. In 2010, artificial incubation was not used.

Table. Siberian Crane breeding at OCBC in 2010

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Species (number of pairs)</th>
<th>Egg-laying period</th>
<th>Number of laid eggs (broken)</th>
<th>Number of fertilized eggs</th>
<th>Number of hatched chicks</th>
<th>Number of raised chicks</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Siberian Crane (11)</td>
<td>05.04 - 07.06</td>
<td>20 (1)</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Seven chicks hatched from eight fertilized eggs. All chicks were raised by parents of by other Siberian Crane pairs as adopted pairs.

Nine Siberian Cranes (six chicks and three birds of one year old) were sent for release into the wild at the Siberian Crane migration stopovers; two Siberian Cranes were transported to Yakutsk Zoo.

During the breeding period one Siberian Crane chick was killed by a Siberian Crane of another pair.

During 2010, five adult cranes and six chicks were given veterinarian treatment. Adults had traumas mostly, and chicks had wrong calcium metabolism. On 25 October a health check for all 56 cranes of the OCBC was conducted with the help of veterinarians of Moscow Zoo and Veterinary Clinic of “Kobra”. It included determination of cranes weight and taking of some diagnostic characteristics. The health check indicated that the physical condition of cranes of the OCBC is satisfactory.
Health check for cranes of OCBC was conducted with the help of veterinarians of Moscow Zoo and Veterinarian Clinic of "Kobra". Photo by T. Kashentseva

Hybrid of the Siberian and Eurasian Cranes which hatched as a result of artificial insemination specially conducted to determine what morphological traits the hybrid would show. Photo by T. Kashentseva

The Fifth Issue of the International Siberian Crane Studbook
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The 5th issue of the International Siberian Crane Studbook was prepared in December 2009. It includes information about 393 captive Siberian Cranes (166 males, 174 females, and 52 cranes with unknown sex) from 55 agencies of 14 countries (Table 1). It should be reminded that the fourth issue (2006) included data on 326 cranes (129 males, 127 females, and 70 with unknown sex) from 40 agencies of the same 10 countries.

Eight agencies provided crane breeding during the period of 2006-2009 using artificial insemination technique (Table 2) and different chick rearing methods. For four years, 100 cranes were reared in captivity.

Thus, the main breeding centers are the Cracid and Cranes Breeding and Conservation Center (Belgium), the Oka Crane Breeding Center (Russia), and the Beijing Zoo (China).

<table>
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<tr>
<th>№</th>
<th>Agency</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Number of males</th>
<th>Number of females</th>
<th>Number of birds with unknown sex</th>
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<td>36</td>
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<td>40</td>
<td>Jesus Estudillo Lopez Zoo</td>
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<td>41</td>
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<td>50</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Al Bustan Zoological Center</td>
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<td>Al Bustan Zoological Center</td>
<td>UAE</td>
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<td>International Crane Foundation</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>16</td>
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<tr>
<td>54</td>
<td>Cincinnati Zoo &amp; Botanical Garden</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55</td>
<td>Zoo New England</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>166</strong></td>
<td><strong>174</strong></td>
<td><strong>52</strong></td>
<td><strong>393</strong></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Reintroduction 2009 and 2010

Reintroduction of the Siberian Crane at Breeding Grounds in Kunovat River Basin, West Siberia, in 2009

Alexander Sorokin¹, Yuri Markin², Anastasia Shilina¹

¹All-Russian Research Institute for Nature Protection, Russia
²Oka State Nature Biosphere Reserve, Russia
agsorokin@mail.ru

Two three year old Siberian Cranes, named Yamal and Itera, who had been reared in the Oka Crane Breeding Center (OCBC) of Oka State Nature Biosphere Reserve (OSNBR), were released June 26, 2009 in the Kunovat River Basin, West Siberia. They were transferred by helicopter to a former breeding site of wild Siberian Cranes in the Kunovat Federal Wildlife Refuge. It was the first release of three year old captive-reared cranes. This experiment was important for further development of reintroduction techniques of endangered species.

During the first few days the cranes stayed in open-air cages constructed in a marsh in the Siberian Crane habitats. After that they were banded (Tabl. 1) and released into the wild. During those early few days after the release, necessary measures were undertaken to adapt the captive-bred cranes to natural food and to from a fear of people. As a result, Siberian Cranes adapted successfully to the natural conditions and used natural food. Their behavior was nearly that of wild cranes: they flew off when people came close to them and stayed in open, heavily accessible habitats.

After release, the released birds’ flight ability improved markedly, becoming better and better. Cranes flew from one side to the other quite easily, even into a headwind. Taking into account the good physical conditions of captive reared Siberian Cranes, their fast adaptation to natural conditions and sufficient time before the start of autumn migration, we can consider the first release of three years old birds as successful.

Table 2. Siberian Crane breeding from 2006 to 2009

| №  | Agency                                    | Country     | Number of breeding raised cranes | Number of |
|----|-------------------------------------------|-------------|---------------------------------| males     |
| 1  | Cracid and Crane Breeding & Conservation Center | Belgium    | 19                              | 19        |
| 2  | Park Paradiseo                            | Belgium     | 1                               | 1         |
| 3  | Beijing Zoological Garden                | China       | 1                               | 1         |
| 4  | Berlin Zoological Garden                  | Germany     | 1                               | 2         |
| 5  | Moscow Zoological Garden                  | Russia      | 1                               | 1         |
| 6  | Oka Crane Breeding Center                 | Russia      | 9                               | 9         |
| 7  | Tama Zoological Park                      | Japan       | 1                               | 1         |
| 8  | Zoo New England                           | USA         | 1                               | 1         |
|    | Total                                     |             | 35                              | 36        | 100       |
Reintroduction of Siberian Cranes reared in Oka Crane Breeding Center (OCBC) of Oka State Nature Biosphere Reserve (OSNBR) was conducted in 2009 and 2010 in Astrakhan State Nature Reserve (ASNR) with support of the oil and gas company “Petroresurs”.

On 16 September 2009, two one-year old and four juvenile Siberian Cranes were transferred to the Obzhorovo site of ASNR, located in Volga River Delta. This site is a traditional migration stopover of wild Siberian Cranes along the western flyway.

Before release, captive-reared cranes were placed in open-air cages constructed in biotope of wild migratory Siberian Cranes. They were banded with standard and white plastic bands with black numbers. Two cranes (one a juvenile and the other a one-year old) were also marked with plastic bands with attached satellite transmitters (Table 1).

Siberian Cranes were released into the wild on 18 September. Since that time, daily observations of released cranes were conducted. Data of observations were verified with data of satellite tracking.

After a short period the Siberian Cranes adapted to natural conditions and food, during this time they were also fed with fish and mixed food. The cranes picked up shellfishes, caught insects, small fishe and collected plant roots. They also learned to search, catch and swallow freshwater crayfishes, which they had never seen before.

As the days went by, the Siberian Cranes flying improved and increased their territory. By the time of migration they had acquired the behavior of wild birds.
Table 1. Marking of Siberian Cranes released in Astrakhan Nature Reserve in 2009

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Right thigh</th>
<th>Left thigh</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yugan</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>White plastic band with black number 183</td>
<td>Standard metal band A145991</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amga</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>Green plastic band with white number 01 in green background and attached satellite transmitter #59949</td>
<td>Standard metal band A145992</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lybed</td>
<td>female</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>Standard metal band A145981</td>
<td>White plastic band with black number 186</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kundysh</td>
<td>female</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>Standard metal band A145982</td>
<td>White plastic band with black number 01 and attached satellite transmitter #59946</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indigirka</td>
<td>female</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>Standard metal band A145983</td>
<td>White plastic band with black number 188</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Akhtuba</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>Standard metal band A145984</td>
<td>White plastic band with black number 189</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

After 10 November, the released Siberian Cranes were no longer seen. On 12 November, during a census of waterbirds using a plane, attempts were made to find the cranes. We recorded five of six released Siberian Cranes (two one-year old and three juvenile birds) on the site. The last time the four released cranes (two one-year old birds – Yugan and Amga, and two juvenile birds – Kundysh and Lybed) were sighted from the ground in the Obzhorovo site was on 14 November 2009. After that, the cranes were not seen even with a careful survey of delta. We assume that the cranes started migration along with the other waterbirds. Unfortunately, the regular satellite data during the cranes stay in ASNR, stopped just after the start of migration.

In 2010, six Siberian Cranes (four juveniles and two one-year olds) were reared in OCBC for the release in ASNR. During transportation to ASNR one juvenile bird died. The other cranes were transferred to the Obzhorovo site on 24 September and placed in an open-air cage. They were also banded with standard and white plastic bands with black numbers. Similar as in 2009, two cranes (one juvenile and one one-year old bird) were marked with satellite transmitters attached to plastic bands (Table 2).

The cranes were released into the wild the next day, 25 September 2010.

Similar to 2009, in 2010 the Siberian Cranes adapted quickly to local conditions and natural foods. Same as in 2009, Siberian Cranes caught many freshwater crayfish. On 28 November, two months after release, the remains (a leg with standard metal band AA 2009) of one juvenile were found. Thus, only four Siberian Cranes (two one-year olds and two juvenile birds) started the autumn migration. They were seen for the last time on 28 November at 3:00 p.m. The cranes circled above the release site and flew in a westerly direction.

Visual observations on 29 November concurred with satellite tracking data. On this day cranes flew from the Obzhorovo site to the Damchik site of ASNR, where they were sighted by fishermen. Most likely the cranes spent the night at the Damchik site as the data from satellite tracking came in at 7:00 p.m., when it is already dark at this time of the year. The next day, 30 November, the cranes moved to the Bolshoye Tatarskoye site of ASNR. Satellite data continued until 27 February 2011. We can assume that the cranes spent the winter there (the winter 2010/11 was very warm) or died.
Siberian Crane named Lybed caught a freshwater crayfish with length of 10 sm. Photo by Yu. Markin

The first unison calls and demonstration poses of young cranes. Photo by Yu. Markin

Table 2. Marking of Siberian Cranes released in Astrakhan Nature Reserve in 2010

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Location and # of a band</th>
<th>Location and # of a band</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Khroma</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>White plastic band with black number <strong>212</strong></td>
<td>Standard metal band AA 2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sosva</td>
<td>female</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>Red plastic band with white number <strong>15</strong> and attached satellite transmitter <strong>#635291</strong></td>
<td>Standard metal band AA 2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nyuya</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>Standard metal band AA 2006</td>
<td>White plastic band with black number <strong>187</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buzan</td>
<td>female</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>Standard metal band AA 2007</td>
<td>White-yellow plastic band with black number <strong>10</strong> and attached satellite transmitter <strong>#635293</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Siberian Cranes in Kutum River. It is difficult to find Siberian Cranes among other white birds. Photo by Yu. Markin
In each year (2009 and 2010) two released Siberian Cranes were marked with plastic bands and satellite transmitters. Photo by Yu. Markin

Released Siberian Cranes in flight. You can see antenna of satellite transmitters on one-year old and juvenile birds. Photo by Yu. Markin

Reintroduction of Siberian Cranes in Belozerskiy Wildlife Refuge (Tyumen Region) in 2010

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agsorokin@mail.ru

The Siberian Crane reintroduction was conducted according to the Conservation Plan developed under Memorandum of Understanding concerning Conservation Measures for the Siberian Crane of the Convention of Migratory Species (CMS).

On 23 August 2010, three Siberian Cranes (two juveniles and one crane of 1.5 years old) and one Eurasian Crane juvenile reared in Oka Crane Breeding Center (OCBC), Russia, were transferred by plane in Moscow and then in Tyumen. On the same day the cranes were transported by car to Belozerskiy Wildlife Refuge (Armizon District, Tyumen Region).

Before being released, the cranes were placed in an open-air cage for two to three days for adaptation to their new conditions. The cage was placed near the Eurasian Crane roosting site in Omelino Island located in the center of Big White Lake (diameter is 10 m) and is the site of the regular Siberian Crane release since 1994. The site is a Eurasian Crane staging area with a crane congregation of near 3,000 birds. Usually wild cranes feed in agricultural fields and rest at night on Omelino Island. According to satellite tracking of previous years, this site was also used by wild Siberian Cranes as a short migration stopover.

Table. Marking of Siberian Cranes released in Belozerskiy Wildlife Refuge in 2010

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Species, name, gender</th>
<th>Date of birth</th>
<th>Location and # of a band</th>
<th>Age at the time of migration start</th>
<th>Date of migration start</th>
<th>Place where migration started</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Siberian Crane, Nadym, female</td>
<td>10.06.2009</td>
<td>White plastic band with black number 211 in the left thigh; yellow plastic band with attached satellite transmitter in the right thigh</td>
<td>One year and four month (118 days)</td>
<td>03.10.10 presumably</td>
<td>Strekhnino Village, Tyumen Region</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Siberian Crane, Elon, female</td>
<td>20.05.2010</td>
<td>White plastic band with black number 198 in the left thigh</td>
<td>Three month and 12 days (103 days)</td>
<td>01.10.10</td>
<td>Belozerskiy Wildlife Refuge, Armizon District, Tyumen Region</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eurasian Crane, Akim, female</td>
<td>26.05.2010</td>
<td>White plastic band with black number 104 in the left thigh</td>
<td>Three month and 6 days (98 days)</td>
<td>01.10.10</td>
<td>Belozerskiy Wildlife Refuge, Armizon District, Tyumen Region</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In 2010, cranes were kept in the cage only one day since the Siberian Crane of 1.5-year-old expressed aggression directed to one of Siberian Crane juveniles. For this reason, the cranes were banded with plastic bands and released on Omelino Island on 25 August. In addition, the one-year old Siberian Crane Nadym was also marked with a satellite transmitter attached to the plastic band (Table 1).

During the period of adaptation, the cranes were fed pellets of mixed fodder as well as wheat grains, which are the main food for wild cranes during the pre-migratory period. After the cranes release, the cage was removed and feeders were distributed inside the release site which is also used by Eurasian Cranes and other waterbirds for rest. The feeders were made from large plastic bottles originally used for "Coca-Cola" or beer. The bottom was removed, and the bottles were pressed into the soil bottleneck first. Such feeders are quite tall, therefore geese and ducks cannot use them. On the contrary, wild Eurasian cranes use them gladly; and this factor reduces the period of wild and released cranes association. In 2010, we set up eight feeders at different sites on the island and added food during the daytime, when the wild cranes were in the fields.

Our experience indicates that Siberian Crane juveniles released on the island set up contacts with the wild Eurasian Cranes; unite with their flocks and migrate successfully with them to the south. If we include captive-reared Eurasian Cranes in a group of released Siberian Cranes, the process of association with the wild flock goes more rapidly. Usually the joining of released birds with wild cranes takes 2-3 weeks. At the end of this period released Siberian Cranes fly along with wild Eurasian Cranes to agricultural fields for feeding and come back to the island for roosting.

In 2010, a short time after release, captive-reared cranes divided into a group consisting of juveniles and the Siberian Crane of one-year old remained separated from the others. On 30 September, one of the Siberian Crane juveniles disappeared. We searched for it, but were unsuccessful. It was the crane that was chased by the one-year old Nadym and we presume it was eaten by foxes. During the following two weeks, the two remaining juveniles (Siberian and Eurasian) fed and roosted along

Near 6,000 Eurasian Cranes gather in Belozerskiy Wildlife Refuge. Photo by A. Sorokin
with wild Eurasian cranes in the island. Then they started to fly along with wild flock to agricultural fields on the northwest bank of the lake and return to the island for the night rest. Until the end of September nearly three thousand Eurasian Cranes gathered in the Belozerskiy Wildlife Refuge, and the released cranes successfully integrated into this congregation.

The released crane juveniles along with the wild Eurasian Cranes left the wildlife refuge for migration on 1 October. Siberian Crane female Nadym stayed at the release site for two weeks after release. She flew above the island, feed herself, and her behavior was as the behavior of a wild crane. On 8 September 2010 Nadym flew from the release site to 80 km east and landed near Strekhnino Village, not far from Ishim Town. According to observations of I. Primak, the member of the Russian Bird Conservation Union, Nadym stayed in this place until 3 October 2010. Since that time data from the birds’ satellite transmitter has. This can be caused by the satellite transmitter not performing as well as any other unknown reasons.

Information about the released cranes was passed to Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan ornithologists for monitoring along their possible migration route.
Promotion of Crane Conservation in Yakutia

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Crane Working Group of Eurasia, UNEP/GEF Siberian Crane Wetlands Project and the project of “Three White Cranes, Two Flyways and One World” of the International Crane Foundation introduced into Yakutia ideas and possibilities of ecological education of rural people who live near the Siberian Crane breeding grounds and along its eastern flyway.

Yakutian people have a special attitude towards the White Siberian Crane. Since creation of the Yakutian people epos of “Olonkho” to the present time, the Siberian Crane is mentioned as a symbol of happiness, fidelity, beauty in national literature and is considered as a sacred bird. In this background, the promotion of the Siberian Crane conservation is accompanied with the introduction of knowledge about the status of this species, its breeding and migration, the importance of habitat conservation and conservation integrity of ecological systems.

The importance of ecological education became apparent during a visit to remote villages and settlements. Students from such remote settlements live far from civilization; they cannot visit even the next villages, which are located a long distance from each other. For example, most of the students from Berelyakh Village of Allaikhovskiy Ulus (Districts) have never been in Chokurdakh, the center of this district. In order to reach this Chokurdakh they must travel 12 hours by motorboat along the cold Indigirka River. Students and teachers often have no paper and color pencils. Therefore, they need special attention from ecologists and nature conservationists to increase their awareness about nature and the Siberian Crane particularly.

Local nature conservation inspectors and teachers are our faithful allies in the education of local people. Some of them organize unique student expeditions by bicycles at the end of March, when snow still covers the tundra. This expedition is accompanied by rangers who make roads for them using snowmobiles. Students from the north Yakutian villages of Olenegorsk and Berelyakh who live in the longest winter period in the world painted colorful pictures in the snow cover.

In southeast Yakutia, in the village of Okhotskiy Perevos, the students led by forest specialist R. Zelepukhina, participated in the Siberian Crane count during migration. In the Ust-Maya Settlement, R. Baryshev, the Head of the local agency for nature conservation, organized a local television broadcast on ecology. A local schoolgirl was the anchorwoman.

N. Permikina, Director of the Youth Creative House in Khonuu Village (Momsliy Ulus) in northeast Yakutia, created a special curriculum devoted to the Siberian Crane.
and Department of Biological Resources of the Ministry of Nature Conservation of the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia) are involved in education activities by making available valuable information materials for the website of the project of “Three White Cranes, Two Flyways and One World” www.trackingcranes.org/ru.

We very much appreciate all the people who supported our ecological education activities: C. Mirande, E. Ilyashenko, J. Harris, C.-A. von Treuenfels, Yu. Gorelova, A. Blagovidov, and many others.

The Day of Birds in Olenegorsk school. Photo by M. Vladimirseva

Threats

Siberian Cranes in Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Region in 2010

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In 2010, Siberian Cranes were recorded on 13 May, in Kondinskiy District, not far from the settlement of Kondinskoye (59°44’N; 67°24’ E). In that day a pair of white cranes landed on the wetlands, located near the “Mit Usch” Children Ethnographical Health Center. They were tame. People came very close to them and fed them. Vladimir and Nadezhda Goncharovs, correspondents of “Yugra” State TV channel, made a small film about cranes and their unusual behavior; and it was shown on regional TV.

We sent the information about Siberian Cranes to OCBC, and received data from this organization that these cranes are Yamal and Itera, which were reared in OCBC and released at the age of three years in the Kunovat Wildlife Refuge (north of West Siberia) in the summer of 2009 (see the article by A.G. Sorokin et al in this issue). Cranes near Kondinskoye Settlement had no bands (neither metal nor colored plastic bands), however, there were no other cranes in West Siberia who could be so tame. Probably they spent winter somewhere and were searching for a breeding ground. But the question of where they spent the winter is a mystery. On the one hand, their plumage was completely white and clean, so it looks like they spent the winter in the wild. Even in good conditions, in captivity, cranes do not have such nice plumage. On the other hand, they had no bands. The Siberian Cranes demonstrated breeding behavior (unison calls); and the male had breeding plumage (dirty neck and the upper part of his back) which is characteristic of breeding cranes.
In a week the Siberian Crane pair disappeared. In the late evening of 19 May, gun shots were heard from the place where the cranes flew for roosting. In a short time a car owned by a local resident drove away from the site. The next morning, white crane feathers were found at the site. Neither local police nor local administration did their best to investigate this case. Later, under the pressure from nature conservation societies, a local public prosecutor’s office instituted legal proceedings, but time was gone on. The person, who admitted that he shot the cranes, was punished only for shooting during the time which is closed for hunting.

CMS News 2010

The Seventh Meeting of the Siberian Crane Range States, Germany

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On 10-12 June 2010, 30 official representatives and experts met together at the Seventh Range States meeting signed the Memorandum of Understanding Concerning Conservation Measures for the Siberian Crane along with co-operative international organizations as International Crane Foundation (ICF), Wetlands International (WI) and Cracid & Crane Breeding and Conservation Center (CBCC). This MoU is administered by Convention on Migratory Species (CMS), and CMS Secretariat offered to organize the Seventh MoU meeting in Bonn, where its headquarter is located. The ICF Co-founder, Dr. George Archibald, thanked CMS and ICF for their hard work to put together this meeting and noted that we could be pessimistic as no Siberian Cranes have wintered in India since 2002 and none turned up at Fereydoon Kenar, Iran, in winter 2009/10, but it is known that some are still in Western/Central Asia at breeding grounds and migration stopovers. Recent results of the Siberian Crane surveys reported that the total population of the Siberian Crane can be estimated at 3,500 birds, of which approximately 98% belong to the East Asian population, while the Western/Central population consists of only 10-20 birds.

Meeting participants presented national reports on MoU implementation with focus on challenges and future priorities. MoU Signatories discussed more urgent problems of the conservation of the Siberian Crane and its habitats along western, central and eastern flyways and determined priorities for the next period (2010-2012) of MoU implementation.

All participants expressed concerns about the consequences for the future of Siberian Cranes of the dam construction on Poyang Lake in China. All Ranges States took responsibility to work with partners to raise importance of Poyang Lake for the Siberian Crane and other migratory waterbirds due to dam construction.

Other discussion focused on the following themes: responding to hunting along the Siberian Crane flyways; challenges of the Siberian Crane reintroduction to West/
Central Asia; overview of the UNEP/GEF Siberian Crane Wetlands Project (SCWP) outputs, achievements and lessons; updating reporting and information management, further activities under Western/ Central Asian network for the Siberian Crane and other waterbirds (WCASN); partnerships with other processes and initiatives; integration of MoU with Regional Flyway Programmes; future funding of MoU activities, which should be feasible with national resources; and its financial sustainability.

The main challenges of the Siberian Crane reintroduction at wintering as well as at breeding grounds and migration stopovers include insufficient technical equipment for monitoring of released cranes, poor financial support and lack of interest to this program from the side of international organization due to its weak results during the long period of implementation. To strengthen recovery of the Western/Central population it is necessary to improve and update Siberian Crane rearing and release techniques and to develop additional innovation approaches to the reintroduction. Russia reported about the Flight of Hope Project and its main challenges, which include administrative obstacles during state border crossing (requiring numerous veterinarian, customs and CITES documents), organizing of special training for pilots, and fundraising. For the Flight of Hope implementation, new possibilities were investigated in cooperation with Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan to lead captive-reared Siberian Cranes to their new wintering ground in Termez in Uzbekistan used by Eurasian Cranes for the last 15 years.

Mr. Crawford Prentice, IICF, reported on results of consultancy with CMS and ICF to conduct a review on sustainable waterbird harvesting practices and to propose options for a strategy to develop sustainable hunting practices for waterbirds in Western/Central Asia. He identified actions in CMS MoU Conservation Plans regarding hunting issue as follows: need to give priority to addressing hunting issues in Western and Central Asia; identify specific national and regional actions that will help establish frameworks for sustainable hunting; identify hunting organisations and other partners for collaborative actions; identify demonstration sites in “hotspots” where projects can be developed or continued. Report on the SCEWP achievements and lessons presented by Claire Mirande and Crawford Prentice, arose a lot of discussion and comments (see article by C. Mirande and C. Prentice in CMS Publication). Participants thanked ICF for great efforts in SCWP implementation as an Executive Agency.

One of the main achievements of the SCWP was the creation of WCASN. As of 12 June 2010 there were ten sites officially designated in WCASN in five countries: Iran, India, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. Four sites were proposed for shadow list of WCASN: three in Kazakhstan and one in Uzbekistan. WCASN Committee had formally approved the two sites nominated in Pakistan; site certificates were handed to the official representative of Pakistan at a special designation ceremony.
Discussion on fundraising among CMS Secretariat, ICF, Wetlands International, and CBCC showed that during the last six years there has been a degree of funding flexibility, but this is no longer available through the GEF. CMS Secretariat has very finite resources due to financial crisis and administration of additional species MoUs. The separate International Trust Fund (ITF) has been on the table for discussion for the last three years, but without any success. It is needed to develop the function mechanism for the ITF, which could be done through a budget line on the CMS budget or through the ICF. Some countries want to earmark their CMS contributions for Siberian Crane work. Another feasible option would be additional voluntary supplementary contributions paid at the same time as their main CMS assessed contributions.

It was agreed to convene the next CMS MoU8 meeting in 2013, at a venue still to be determined. China delegate expressed possible interest in hosting MoU8 in coordination with scientific meeting focusing on accomplishments of SCWP and importance of Poyang Lake.