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COMPILED BY ELENA ILYASHENKO
ICF/CMS SIBERIAN CRANE FLYWAY COORDINATOR
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Breeding of Siberian and Sandhill Cranes at the Kytalyk Resources Reserve, Yakutia, Russia, 2007

By Nikolai Germogenov, Sergei Sleptsov, Maria Vladimirtseva, and Inga Bysykatova
Institute of Biological Problems of the Cryolithozone, NB RAS, Yakutia, Russia

From 9 to 20 June 2007, the expedition of the Institute of Biological Problems of the Cryolithozone, North Branch of the Russian Academy of Science, worked on the territories surrounding the village of Chokurdakh, Aliakhovskiy Ulus (Region), on the right and left banks of the Yelon Tiver; near Yelon and Dzyhukarskoye cordon, following the routes on foot and by water.

Even before the beginning of the expedition Sergei Sleptsov conducted a census of Siberian Cranes and other birds on uncounted routes: Tuos An – cordon on Dzyhukarskoye Lake (15 km); cordon Yelon on Dzyhukarskoye Lake (23 km), and Mishkina Laida – near Khosukun Lake (the region of the largest colony of Common Eider) (34 km).

The expedition inspected the territory along the stream flowing out of Butunai Lake and running into Yelon River (6 km), and the part of Yelon River from Yelon cordon up to Mishkina Laida (the length of the water route – 16 km).

The observations of Siberian and Sandhill Cranes lasting for two days were conducted near Khadar Hill.

During the spring 14 sightings of Siberian Cranes were registered in the Kytalyk Resource Reserve.

At the beginning of June on the shore of Boidom stream Sergei Sleptsov observed two pairs of Siberian Cranes and a flock of five young birds.

Eight territorial pairs were registered in square #42 (seven of which were on the nests), as well as one pair and two single birds – in square #53. The single birds were likely from pairs where the partner was staying on the nest. Observations of ten pairs of Sandhill Crane were registered, including one nesting pair.

Vast and insufficiently explored territory to the west of Chokurdakh Village was also examined. On the route, the total length of which is over 80 km, pairs of the Siberian Crane, unknown before, were met (three observations); all observations were relatively close to Chokurdakh Village. Occurrences of Sandhill Cranes in this region, as well as the high density of its population, signal the expansion of its habitat, not only to the west, into tundra, but also to the south, into forest-tundra.

Thus, in the spring of 2007 a total of 11 territorial pairs of Siberian Cranes were found in the course of this expedition, eight pairs were certain to nest (square #42 – seven pairs, square #53 – one pair); potentially two more pairs were nesting in square #53.

For more information:
Nikolai Germogenov
sterkh-yrcu@mail.ru

Siberian Crane Records in Mongolia in 2007

N. Tseveenmyadag
Institute of Biology, Mongolian Academy of Sciences

The Siberian crane is a very rare species and rarely recorded only during migration and summer periods in Mongolia. Mostly it was observed in the eastern part of the country, but in recent years they have been recorded in the central part of Mongolia. In 2007, there were two sightings of the Siberian crane in Mongolia.

- On 6 August 2007, during a survey for avian influenza in northern Mongolia, Dr. N. Tseveenmyadag and D. Batchuluun recorded nine Siberian cranes at a small lake to the north of Sharga Lake in Bayanact Soum, Bulgan Province (48057°10"N, 101056°00"E). Perhaps they were not two-year old birds, because brownish
coloration was not seen on the plumage of these birds. There were no previous records of these birds in this area. When we asked local people if they had seen such birds before they did not recognize it. There were about 270 Demoiselle Cranes and 20 Eurasian Cranes as well. On 27-28 July 2008, researchers from WCS also observed four Siberian Cranes at the same location. They were young birds with yellowish coloration in plumage.

- S. Ariunsetseg, a ranger at Gun Galuutai Nature Reserve, reported that two Siberian Cranes were sighted along with three pairs of White-naped Cranes at Ayaga Lake (47°34′54″N, 108°23′27″E) near Kherlen River, in Bayandelger Soum, Tuv Aimag, on 4 October 2007.

Sightings of Siberian Cranes on the Daurian Steppe, Russia, in 2007

Oleg Goroshko

Daurskiy State Nature Reserve, Russia

In the transboundary region of Daurskiy steppes you can see Siberian Crane practically annually, but in insignificant quantity (for the last 20 years the maximum groups included 32 individuals). As in 2006 (see article by N. Tsveenmyadag in Flyway News #8), in 2007 Siberian Cranes were seen more often in the region. Two individuals were observed on Torejskiy Lakes in Daurskiy Nature Reserve on 28 April. It is the second unusual early occurrence of Siberian cranes in southeast Transbaikalia. Regular observations have been conducted in the reserve and its vicinities since 1988. Until 2007 Siberian cranes had arrived in April only once – on 20 April 1995. In all other years Siberian Cranes arrived at the Torejskiy Lakes, as well as in other areas of southeast Transbaikalia and adjacent territories of northeast Mongolia, in May. Late terms of occurrence are explained by the fact that only the immature birds arrive in Dauria for summering. Adult Siberian Cranes can hardly be seen in the region, as their migration routes are considerably easterly – through the Amur River middle course.

On 4-5 July, ten Siberian cranes were foraging on damp meadows nearby Angirt-Nur Lake on the territory of Mongolia adjacent to Torejskiy Lakes. The birds were observed carefully: six individuals appeared to be one year olds (with a lot of brownish feathers) and four individuals were in the age of 2-3 year olds (with some brownish feathers in the plumage).

Besides, Siberian Cranes are seen on the Argun River on the border of Russia and China. The group of 11 birds stayed in the vicinities of Starotsuruhajtuy Village on damp inundated meadows in June-July. One Siberian Crane stayed in the Dura Village vicinities from the end of June; two more birds joined it in the middle of July, and all of them flew away together at the end of the month. The birds foraged on Durojskiy Lakes and damp inundated meadows. The data were received by us from the local reliable correspondents-observers, who know the Red-crowned crane and all other cranes, living on Argun (White-naped, Eurasian, Hooded, Demoiselle Cranes). These observers of Siberian Cranes on Argun had never seen them before. Therefore they closely examined the birds: the birds’ appearance and features of behavior are described in detail. Reliability of data and correctness of the species identification are undoubted.

Information from Migration Sites 2007

Western and Central Flyways

Sightings of the Siberian Crane in West Siberia, Russia, during the Fall Migration 2007

By Anastasia Shilina

All-Russian Research Institute for Nature Protection, Russia

On 25 August 2007, two groups of Siberian Cranes (three and two birds) were sighted in a flock of Eurasian Cranes in Be-lozerskiy Wildlife Refuge (Zakaznik) (Armizn District, Tyumen Region, Russia) according to personal information of Vladimir Drobyshevskiy, Head of this wildlife refuge.

On 29 September 2007, two Siberian Cranes were recorded on the right band of the Polui River near Ovrazhnoey Lake (100 km from Salekhard Town, Yamako-Nenetskiy AR, Russia), according to personal information of Yuri Klimov.

Adapted from article by A. Shilina “Information on Siberian Crane sightings” published in proceedings of “Cranes of Eurasia-3”, in press

For more information:
Anastasia Shilina
sterkhproject@mail.ru
**Sightings of Siberian Cranes in Uzbekistan**

On 10-12 October 2007, ten Siberian Cranes were sighted in a flock of 150 Eurasian Cranes to the east of Tudakul Lake (Karnabchulya, 20 km from Bukhara City, Bukhara Region, Uzbekistan), according to personal information of B. Nazarov, F. Salimov, and H. Kamiljanov, rangers.

*Adapted from CMS Technical Report Series # 16*

*“Conservation Measures for the Siberian Crane”, Bonn, Germany, 2008*

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**Siberian Crane Sighting in Samarkand Region, Uzbekistan**

*L. Belyalova, S. Fundukchiev*

*Samarkand State University, Uzbekistan*

On 7 April 2007 at 15:45, during field work within Project on IBA in Uzbekistan, a large white bird was sighted at the Katta-Kurgan Reservoir. We observed this bird nearly one hour with telescope “Viking” and drew a conclusion that it was a Siberian Crane. Its plumage was white with a few brownish feathers. We could see the red-brown color of the front of the head very well. The crane was quite far away, and it was not possible to take a picture. During our observation the Siberian Crane stayed quite a long time in shallow water and then flew out.

*Adapted from Newsletter of the Project on IBA in Uzbekistan, #3, 2008*

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**Siberian Crane Sightings in Kazakhstan during Migrations in 2007**

*By Yevgeni Bragin*

*Naurzum State Nature Reserve, Kazakhstan*

The spring of 2007 in Kostanai Region was late and was marked for abundance of water. The spring flood of this magnitude was noted for the first time since 1982 – all lakes in the central and the southern portion of the region were filled to the maximum level or close to it, including the Naurzum Lake System, as well as many estuarine reductions. Much water was left on the fields even in the beginning of May. In these conditions, the possibility of encounters with migratory Siberian Cranes was miniscule. However, several sightings were reported.

In the final days of April a hunter from a neighboring village sighted a couple of Siberian Cranes on the Alabota Lake of the Kobagar-Tyunyur Lake System.

Two pairs were reportedly seen at an approximately the same time near a road by an inhabitant of the Karamendy Village.

In the Uzunkol District in the northern portion of the region, one Siberian Crane in a flock of Eurasian Cranes was sighted by a local farmer on the Mokhovoe Lake between 4 to 6 May.

A charter bus driver reported sighting eight white (Siberian) cranes near the town of Zhitikara. According to his words, on 15 April on the route to Kostanai, he saw two cranes which took off near the road, and there were six more birds sitting further in the field.

Unfortunately, we were unable to verify any of these sightings. Two reports seem trustworthy – a well-described couple on the Alabota Lake and the lone Siberian Crane in the Eurasian Crane flock on the Mokhovoe Lake. Furthermore, it is not the first time we’ve received a report of a sighting of a Siberian Crane with Eurasian Cranes.

The observer on the Baituma Lake, without binoculars could have well taken the big white herons for the Siberian cranes, and the former were present here in large numbers at the end of April through May.

The report from Zhitikary causes doubts for several reasons: firstly, the location lies far to the side of the traditional, well-known route. Secondly, the large number of birds, plus - too early a date for a late spring.
The first sighting during the fall period of 2007 occurred on 28 August, very close to the first fall sighting in 2007. One Siberian Crane was sighted by me in the southern portion of the Aksuat Lake (Naurzum Lake System, Naurzum Nature Reserve). The Siberian Crane fed in the shallow waters together with swans.

For more information: Yevgeni Bragin
naurzum@mail.ru

Sighting of the Siberian Crane in Astrakhan Nature Reserve, Russia, in Autumn 2007

By German Rusanov
Astrakhan State Nature Reserve, Russia

In the afternoon of 25 October 2007, Anatoly Kashin, ranger of the Astrakhan State Nature Reserve, met one adult Siberian Crane at Obzhorovo site, in the mouth of the Kutum River, not far from the site where captive-bred Siberian Cranes were released in 2004. The bird kept in lotuses, and probably fed.

The next day, on 26 October, Kashin visited this site again and tried to take some documentary film, but the Siberian Crane flew away over him. He could take some footage, and it is possible to see that it was a Siberian Crane.

On 31 October and 1 November I investigated Obzhorovo site with hope to see the Siberian Crane, but without success. The nature reserve staff also had no information.

For more information: German Rusanov
g.rusanov@mail.ru

Eastern Flyway

Spring Migration of the Siberian Crane in Northeast Yakutia, Russia, in 2007

Igor Osipov
Institute of Biological Problems of the Cryolithozone NB RAS, Russia

Observations were performed from 8 to 20 May 2007, in the Kumakh–Sysy in Momskoi Region. The location is a plain between the Yu Mountains and the Moma River, overgrown with grassy vegetation and small bushes. The vegetation is composed of dwarf birches and forest strips and patches which include mostly larches, willows, and birches. In spring after the snow melt, the lowlands are flooded with thawed water, which stays there for around 3-4 weeks, creating shallow lakes. Pedestrian routes lie along the mountain, 2-5 kilometers away from the base, along the stopping places of the Siberian Crane. The observation point was located there as well.

At the beginning of the field work, on 8 May, the weather was clear and without wind, +8-10°C. Snow remained practically only in the woods. On 13 May, there was rain with snow, and the temperature dropped to 0-+3°C.

The first cranes appeared in the early morning of 14 May. The flock, consisting of 33 Siberian Cranes and two Eurasian Cranes, flew in a northern direction.

On 15 May, a pair was sighted feeding in a flooded meadow. On 16 May in the same location a flock was observed, consisting of 15 Siberian Cranes and one Eurasian Crane. Towards the evening, three more Siberian Cranes joined them. The flock stayed on the territory measuring 4-5 square kilometers until 9 a.m. on 19 May. The birds actively fed on the Siberian Salamanders, which were spawning in the flooded areas.

For more information: Inga Bysykatova
mb_ip@mail.ru

Observations of the Waterfowl Spring Migration in Chabda and Kuoluma-Chappanda Resource Reserves in Yakutia, Russia, in 2007

By Victor Degtyarev, Vasilii Okoneshnikov, Andrei Sekov, Peter Tokumov, Grigoriy Malyshev
Institute of Biological Problems of the Cryolithozone NB RAS
Kuoluma-Chappanda Resource Reserve, Yakutia, Russia

In 2007, within the UNEP/GEF Siberian Crane Wetland Project, observations were continued on the migration of waterfowl in the basin of the Middle Aldan River. In the previous years, active flights of the given group of birds were sighted, including the Siberian Crane and the Baikal Teal. The number of specimens that were taken into account amounted to 15% and 1% respectively of the global population of these species.

Observations of the spring migration were conducted on the territory of Kuoluma-Chappanda Resource Reserve in the Aldan River Valley from 26 April through 26 June and of Chabda Resource Reserve in the Maya River Valley from 11 through 28 May. Both territories are situated in the eastern portion of the Lena River Basin.

Calculations showed an extremely low migratory activity among waterfowl along the whole valley of the Middle Aldan and the Lower Maya during the spring season of 2007. There were no sightings of any Siberian Cranes at either of the two observation points. Only twice small flocks were sighted by locals in the district of the Tumul and Ezhantsy Townships. The number of geese and shorebirds, as well as the species that mass-migrated in 2006 (Baikal Teal, Eurasian Wigeon, Common and Herring Gulls, Common Tern), comprised, in most cases, only several dozen specimens.
Survey on Northward Migratory Cranes in Huanghe Delta NR, China, in 2007
By Shan Kai, Zhu Shuyu, Yu Hailing
Huanghe Delta National Nature Reserve, China

During the spring migration in 2007, Siberian Cranes had short stay in reed marshes in Huanghe Delta National Nature Reserve (NNR). Compared with former years, the number of northward migratory cranes (Red-crowned, Eurasian and Siberian Cranes) in the NNR is remarkably decreased. Due to limited fresh water some reed marshes dried up, and cranes lost their habitats. In winter the lower water level of Huanghe River was unable to support enough fresh water to the marshes in the NNR. The harvest of reeds by people disturbed cranes seriously.


Migration Trend of Siberian Cranes in Momoge NNR, China, in spring 2007
By Zou Changlin, Sun Xiaowei, Wang Bo, Wang Yong
Momoge National Nature Reserve, China

Momoge National Nature Reserve (NNR) is an important stopover site for migratory Siberian Cranes, with about 300-800 cranes stopping over here annually; usually it attracts a few more cranes in autumn than in spring.
In spring of 2007, seven adults were found on 21 March. The cranes stayed in a reed marsh. Three days later they flew to E-Tou-Pao area. This spring most Siberian Cranes concentrated at this area, and there was a stable group with more than 100 cranes in the west of reserve; they left the farm on 8 May.
The large group of Siberian Cranes with 1,156 birds (1,010 adults and 146 juveniles) was found in Dongmietunbei, on the south bank of E-Tou-Pao, on 3 May. It was the largest group of Siberian Cranes in Momoge. From 8 to 22 May, 21 Siberian Cranes stayed there.


Russian-Chinese Joint Field Work on Research of the Siberian Crane Eastern Population in Momoge NNR, China
By Nikolai Germogenov, Sergei Sleptsov, Inga Bysykatova, Maria Vladimirtseva
Institute of Biological Problems of the Cryolithozone, Yakutia, Russia

International field work was organized at Momoge National Nature Reserve (NNR) (Jilin Province, northeast China) from 20 October to 6 November 2007 within the UNEP/GEF Siberian Crane Wetlands Project (SCWP). Russia was represented by five members of the Yukutian Local Coordination Group of the project, Institute of Biological Problem of the Cryolithozone staff (Republic of Sakha (Yakutia). China was represented by NNR staff.
Results of monitoring of the Siberian Crane autumn migration have shown that under certain weather and water conditions, the reserve is a Siberian Crane migration stopover where birds stay for quite a long time before departure to their wintering grounds. The first Siberian Cranes have appeared there in the middle of September, and by 6 November most of them have already left the reserve.
The maximum number of Siberian cranes in Momoge NNR were estimated from 1503 to 1585 individuals (37.5-40.0% of all

Participants of the joint field work on the Siberian Crane migration research at Momoge NNR. Photo by N. Germogenov
Inga Bysykatova and Maria Vladimirtseva are staff of the Institute of Biological Problems of the Cryolithozone and the Yakutian Coordination Unit of the SCWP. Photo by N. Germogenov
eastern population of the species) from 22 to 25 October, the percentage of chicks in flocks was 10.8-15.3% in these days. The expedition lead numerous photo and video shootings and visual observations, which will allow the determination of the structure of groupings of the Siberian Crane, its territorial placement and forage behavior of birds during daylight.

In Momoge NNR there are several thousand individuals of the Baikal Teal on flight and many species of geese, including the Lesser White-fronted Goose (more than 15 thousand individuals).

The Siberian Crane Sighting in Ganukan Wildlife Refuge in 2007

By Mikhail Parilov
Khingan State Nature Reserve, Amur Region, Russia

On 24 June 2007, one Siberian Crane was sighted near the village of Kasatkino, in the Ganukan Wildlife Refuge, Amur Region, by Ivan Adamenko, student. He took video and showed it to nature reserve staff. The last sighting of the Siberian Crane at this site was nearly 20 years ago.

For more information:
Mikhail Parilov
parilov@hingan.amur.ru

Information from Wintering Sites 2006/2007

Western Flyway

The Siberian Crane Wintering in Iran in 2006/2007

By Sadegh Sadeghi Zadegan
Department of Environment of the Islamic Republic of Iran

In autumn 2006 Siberian Cranes arrived in Fereydoon Kenar on 22 October evening. They landed on Ezbaran Damghah. Following that, these two birds have stayed separately – one in Fereydoon Kenar Damghah, the other in Sokhrud Damghah. According to information from trappers, one Siberian Crane disappeared from Ezbaran Damghah about 10 January 2007. A subsequent search did not produce any results (Siberian Crane Flyway News #8).

Two Siberian Cranes - one released bird (Siberian Crane Flyway News #8) and one wild crane started spring migration on 24 February 2007 at 10:45 a.m.

For more information:
Sadegh Sadeghi Zadegan
Sadegh64@hotmail.com
Eastern Flyway


By Ji Weitao, Wang Yunbao
Poyang Lake National Nature Reserve, China

Poyang Lake National Nature Reserve (NNR) conducted a survey of wintering waterbirds surrounding the Poyang Lake area 15-23 December, 2006. This survey covered 14 districts and counties including Nanchang, Xinjiang, Jinxian, Youxiqu, Xingzi, Gongqingcheng, Duchang and Jiujiang Counties, Lushan District, Hukou, Pengze, Yugen and Poyang and Ruichang City, with an area of 2,540 km². The survey was conducted for the highest number of wintering birds. During this survey 2,700 Siberian Cranes were counted.


Juvenile Recruitment Rate of Siberian Cranes Wintering at Poyang Lake, China, in Winter 2007

By Li Fengshan, James Burnham
International Crane Foundation

In winter 2006/2007, we recorded juvenile recruitment rate and time turning to roost sites of Siberian Cranes wintering in Candouhu at Dachahu Station of Poyang Lake National Nature Reserve. Juvenile recruitment rate, defined as a ratio of number of juveniles over the total individuals, is one of the important indicators assessing population dynamics of wildlife. Candouhu is located in the southeastern part of Dachahu, and has about 9 km² of open water in late November. During our observation, the number of Siberian Cranes foraging at Candouhu remained relatively high, with a maximum count of 2100. During 23 November and 1 December 2007, three flocks of Siberian Cranes were sampled at Candouhu. The three flocks had a total of 1303 individuals, among which 189 were juveniles, accounting for 14.5% of the total number of cranes.

Table 1. Juvenile recruitment rate of Siberian Cranes in Dachahu at Poyang Lake

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Total number</th>
<th>Number of juveniles</th>
<th>Location in Candouhu</th>
<th>Juvenile Recruitment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>23.11.2007</td>
<td>660</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>Shiziwa</td>
<td>12.12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25.11.2007</td>
<td>510</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>Main lake in Candouhu</td>
<td>15.68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.1.2007</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>Zhupojiang</td>
<td>21.80%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chen Bin et al. reported an average 12.3% of juvenile recruitment rate of Siberian Cranes at Poyang Lake from winters 1981-1986, ranging from 10.0% in 1984 to 14.8% in 1985 (Chen and Wang, 1991). From our observations, the juvenile recruitment rates of the three flocks were relatively high. One possibility of the high recruitment could be late arrival of Siberian Cranes, especially juveniles to Poyang Lake. Normally, all Siberian Cranes arrive at Poyang Lake by mid-November. For example, five Siberian Cranes attached with satellite transmitters in 1995-96 arrived at Poyang Lake by 20 November (Kana, et al., 2002). 2100 Siberian Cranes were recorded alone at Candouhu on 24 November, and a large number of Siberian Cranes also were sighted at Banghu around that time. Given the facts above, therefore, the possibility of the late arrival was very low.


Li Fengshan
fengshan@savingcranes.org


Poyang Lake is the largest fresh water lake in China and is located in the northwest of Jiangxi Province. It is suffering from a 50-year drought, and the water surface area has shrunk from a maximum of about 4000 km² in the richest water year to about 50 km².

According to the Jiangxi Water Monitoring Bureau, Poyang Lake is a seasonal lake. In the richest water year, the water surface area covers about 4350 km² and several hundred km² in the winter. On December 12 (2007) at 8:00, Poyang Lake Xingzi Station observed a water level of 7.48 m, accordingly the water surface area is less than 50 km² and water volume only 10,000,000 m³, 24% less than an average year. Especially, since September 15, the average rainfall across Jiangxi Province is 42 mm, the lowest recorded in 50 years. This amount is only 20% of the usual rainfall, in comparison to records of the same period in previous years. It is the lowest since 1960. The rainfall in 50 counties in Jiangxi is the lowest recorded in history.

According to statistics from the Jiangxi Water Monitoring Bureau, up to early December, several rivers in Jiangxi are at the historically lowest water levels. Currently the total volume of water flow is about 500 m³/s from the five rivers entering the lake. It is less than 50% of the average for the same period, of 1,233 m³/s. On December 12th, the water output at Poyang Lake Hukou Station was 924 m³/s. Because the input is less than the output, the water surface area is reducing dramatically.

With this reduced open water area, there will be thousands of people clamoring for water, and serious impacts on transportation and fisheries.
Since 2005, there are about 710,000 migratory birds wintering at Poyang Lake every year. Due to the reduced size of open water and a lack of food, the wintering bird population is less than 40,000 this winter.

Adapted from Xinhua News Net December 12, 2007
http://www.hwcc.gov.cn/newsdisplay/NewsDisplay.asp?id=185307
and Changjiang Business News December 8, 2007

Captive Breeding 2007

Siberian Crane Propagation at Oka Crane Breeding Center in 2007

by Tatiana Kashentseva

Oka Crane Breeding Center, Oka State Biosphere Nature Reserve, Russia

In 2007 ten pairs of Siberian Cranes bred at Oka Crane Breeding Center (OCBC) (Table 1).

Table 1. Siberian Crane breeding at OCBC in 2007

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Species (number of pairs)</th>
<th>Period of egg laying</th>
<th>Number of eggs (number of broken eggs)</th>
<th>Number of fertile eggs</th>
<th>Number of hatched chicks</th>
<th>Number of reared chicks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Siberian Crane (10)</td>
<td>02.04.-24.05.</td>
<td>28 (6)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Two pairs laid a second clutch after finishing incubation of the first clutch.

Some cranes that can’t mate themselves were artificially inseminated. Five chicks hatched from six eggs received as a result of artificial insemination. One embryo died during the beginning of incubation. All five hatched chicks were reared successfully.

As of the 31st December 2007 there were 37 Siberian Cranes (18 males and 19 females) on OCBC.

For more information:
Tatiana Kashentseva
tk.ocbc@mail.ru

Reintroduction 2007

Siberian Crane Release on the Wintering Grounds in Iran in 2007

By Sadegh Sadeghi Zadegan

Department of Environment of the Islamic Republic of Iran

After the arrival of a wild Siberian Crane at Fereydoon Kenar on 3 November 2007, a captive-bred male named Vitim was released at Fereydoon Kenar Damgah on 14 November 2007.

This captive-bred male was transferred to Iran on 26 January 2007, along with a captive-bred female named Inya. The female was released just after transportation (Siberian Crane Flyway News #8), but Vitim was kept in captivity at Fereydoon Kenar during the spring and summer of 2007 for release in autumn 2007, banded with standard metal band #A145911. He was kept in a specially constructed enclosure near Fereydoon Kenar damgah under Gorban Ali Azadi supervision. Before release Vitim was banded with two plastic bands (green above and red below).

Three days after release, on 17 November, Vitim flew out of the damgah, and on the same day at night (23:30) he was
captured in one of the night nets in Sooteh. The captured Siberian Crane was transported for the second time to Fereydoon Kenar and placed in the pen.

The second time Vitim was released, again in the Fereydoon Kenar Damgah, was on 17 December 2007. As reported by the trappers, he joined the wild Siberian Crane on 29 December and after that they were seen flying together.

Vitim and the wild bird started migration together on 23 February 2008 at 3.5 p.m.

Before release into the wild Vitim was kept in a pen near the damgah. He was banded with green and red narrow plastic bands on the left leg and standard metal band on the right leg. Photo by S. Sadeghi Zadegan

The wild Siberian Crane and released crane Vitim are in Fereydoon Kenar damgah. Photo bu Reza Samsami

From the end of December until the migration started on 23 February Vitim stayed with the wild Siberian Crane. Photo by Sadegh Zadegan

Both the wild and released Siberian Crane started migration together. Photo by S. Sadeghi Zadegan

Education 2006-2007

2006 is the Year of the Crane in Uzbekistan

By Yevgenia Lanovenko

Institute of Zoology, NAS of the Republic of Uzbekistan

Uzbek Crane Working Group

By the initiative of the project “Important Ornithological Territories” (IOT) in Uzbekistan 2006 became a Crane Year in the Republic. Such initiative allowed joining efforts of different people and agencies, including the Crane Working Group of Eurasia (CWGE), Crane Working Group of Uzbekistan (UzCWG), Nuratau-Kyzylkum Biosphere Reserve and IOT regional office. As a result Crane Celebrations were organized in many republic regions during the spring of 2006.

Mainly students from schools and universities were involved in the Crane Celebrations. These events included numerous competitions and plays, as well as field trips to wetlands for migratory crane observations.

Different information materials and prizes prepared by CWGE and UzCWG were shared during the event.

In 2006 CWGE organized a Children’s Art Exchange about cranes in Asia – “Crane is the Bird of the World.” Nearly 130 children participated in this art exchange. The best art were exhibited at Tashkent and then at the International Crane Foundation, Moscow Zoo and Zoological Museum of Moscow State University.

For more information:

Sadegh Sadeghi Zadegan
Sadegh64@hotmail.com

For more information:

Yevgenia Lanovenko
lanovenko@uzsci.net
To create awareness of the problems of biodiversity conservation, the Kazakhstan Project Coordination Unit of the UNEP/GEF Siberian Crane Wetland Project (SCWP), jointly with the people of Naurzum, organized the «Cranes are Flying – 2006» Republican Festival in September 2006. Karamendy Village (Naurzum District, Kostanay Region) was the center of the festival activities. The festival showcased creative contests of more than two and a half thousand school children from two districts of Kostanay region and from Beloyarsk District of Russian Federation.

Inspired by the success of the 2006 activities, the festival organizers aimed at making this an annual event. The second Crane Festival - a culmination of creative contests involving more than 13 thousand school children from ten districts of Kostanay Region, - was celebrated on 13 October, 2007, in Karamendy Village. Experts from the SCWP, Naurzum National Nature Reserve, Naurzum District, departments of education, internal policy, culture and language development, schools of Kostanay Region, local NGOs of «Naurzum BioNet,» «Naurzum,» «Tulip» and «Ak Niet,» and leaders of farm economic units and private enterprises took part in the festival organization and celebration.

The Crane Celebration in Kostanay City was celebrated a little earlier, in the middle of September - the youngest participants - children from «Dolphin» Children House, together with their teachers, produced a fairy tale about seeing off young cranes, drawing and arranging a colorful exhibition. Then junior school children joined in the production. «Naurzum» OEO, an ecological NGO, through the Crane Working Group of Eurasia, provided the schools with informational materials, colorful booklets, badges and books for awarding contest winners.

The sponsors of the Crane Celebration in Kostanay City were the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS or Bonn Convention), the UNEP/GEF SCWP, the International Crane Foundation, and Crane Working Group of Eurasia.

In the first years the members of «Naurzum» OEO came to schools and helped to organize the event; at present they come as guests of the festival. Children like Crane Celebration as they celebrate it every year and wait anxiously for it. Beginning this year, bird watchers – students from an amateur bird club - along with «Naurzum» OEO have begun to supervise the celebration. The club was created on the basis of Kostanay State Pedagogical Institute with the support of the Association of the Conservation of Biodiversity of Kazakhstan; the leader of the club is Alibert Salemgareyev, chairman of the «Naurzum BIO NET» NGO, created under SCWP.

In preparation for the festival in Karamendy, the organization of contests, posters, drawings, computer presentations, compositions, homemade articles, verse and songs, the heroes of which were the Siberian Crane, was conducted at schools during September; the final decision was made at the end of the festival. The winners were awarded with certificates and prizes, provided by the SCWP, Crane Working Group of Eurasia and local sponsors.

All participants enjoyed the festival. The main gift for children, as for other participants, was great joy and communication, new acquaintances, great impressions made by the kind and warm atmosphere, which reigned at the festival. The
culmination of the festival was a gala concert, in which all delegations and even children of «Baldyrgan» kindergarten from Karamendy Village took part. The opening of the «Ak Tyrna» (White Crane) Information Resource Center of the «Naurzum BioNet» NGO was held the same day as the Crane Festival. The center will provide information to village inhabitants and NGOs on grant contests, nature protection legislation, and NGO registration and activities. Here it is planned to create their own Arhus-center and «EcoSan» demonstration center on alternative energy and technologies. A Crane Museum was established during the festival days at Karamendy Secondary School #2. The best art work of the festival participants and materials on cranes were collected for the exhibit. Museum exhibit number one was the suitcase of the International Crane Foundation, Mr. George Archibald, with which he traveled around the world. An interesting excursion to the Nature Museum of the Naurzum Nature Reserve was organized for participants and guests. Shooting and reporting from the festival was made by: «Alau» district television, «Kostanay News» district newspaper and «Kazakhstan» republican channel. The organizers of the Festival express their gratitude to everyone who responded and became interested. We are very glad that the initiative of the Crane Celebration, the initiative of the Crane Working Group of Eurasia and the International Crane Foundation has been supported in our small, wonderful nook of nature lost in the vast boundless steppe of Kazakhstan - Naurzum!

Adapted from “Ecopravda” Newspaper, #661
For more information:
Resource and Information Center of «Ak-Tyrna»
aurzumbionet@mail.ru

Siberian Crane National Stamp Published in Iran
By Azin Fazeli
Department of Environment of the Islamic Republic of Iran

A set of four stamps, each with a different image of the Siberian Crane, were recently published in Iran. The Iranian National Coordination Unit of the SCWP, together with the National Post Office, developed the stamps with financial assistance from World Wildlife Fund (WWF). The stamps were designed to raise public awareness of the Siberian Crane and the importance of wetland conservation within the country. In addition, as part of their awareness raising program, the Iranian NCU translated «The Lily of Birds,» a booklet on the conservation history of the Siberian Crane, into Farsi, which was recently printed in a national newspaper.

Siberian Crane National Stamp Published in Iran

For more information:
Azin Fazeli
Azin_fazely@hotmail.com
Crane Art in Yakutsk, Russia

By Andrey Degtyarev, Maria Vladimirtseva
Ministry of Nature Protection, Yakutia
Institute of Biological Problems of the Cryolithozone

The Yakutian Local Coordination Unit (YLCU) of the SCWP has established contact with a group of Yakutian artists and sculptors to encourage them to create and exhibit sculptural and artistic images depicting Siberian Cranes in public places. In 2004 the YLCU furnished a team of artists with a package of Siberian Crane images representing photos, drawings reproducing anatomical features of cranes, details of color shadings of the birds’ plumage and stuffed birds. In the course of artwork creation the YLCU specialists have given some suggestions, held negotiations with the institutions (Sterkh Insurance Company) about sponsorship to prepare these expositions. In 2004-2007 environmental education and public awareness measures were undertaken within SCWP level too.

As a result the following compositions have decorated Yakutsk for three years:
- Billboards depicting dancing Siberian Cranes (three pieces) are placed by the Museum of Local History, near the bus terminal and regional hospital (fig. 1)
- “Dancing Siberian Cranes” bas-relief. Main entrance of the National Library (fig. 2)
- Wooden sculptural compositions of Siberian Cranes. Main entrance of the Administration Office of the Regional Museum of Local History (fig. 3).
- Stella with Flying Siberian Cranes placed at the Yakut People Square to commemorate those who died during World War II, 80s Ilmenskaya Street. IBPC is one of the sponsors (fig. 4).
- The Yakutian traditional wooden sign with Flying Siberian Cranes placed at the square in Sottintsy Village, Ust-Aldan District (fig. 5).

Observation and conversation with people indicate that such sculptural and artistic images of the Siberian Crane are widely popular among the local residents, and are well taken in by young people, ensuring perception of ecological culture. In 2007-2008 Yakutsk plans to place Siberian Crane images in sculptures in one of the central squares, City Amusement Park and Zoological Park Orto-Doidu though involvement of financial assistance of the SCWP.

For more information:
Maria Vladimirtseva
Sib-vkt@mail.ru
Three White Cranes, Two Flyways, One World Project in Yakutia in 2007

By Maria Vladimirtseva, Lyudmila Zakharova
Institute of Biological Problems of the Cryolithozone, NB RAS, Yakutia, Russia

The web page with information in Russian for Yakutian students was put on the website of the “Three White Cranes, Two Flyways, One World” international project in November 2007 (www.trackingcranes.org). The information from the website in English (www.trackingcranes.org) was translated into Russian by middle school students. The schools in remote areas of Yakutia, where access to the Internet is limited, receive printed versions of the website.

The Yakutian children are inspired by the idea of an exchange of pictures and letters with students in Russia, China and the USA - countries where the three rarest white cranes live. The idea of a creativity exchange devoted to cranes began during a trip by Kang Yun and Maria Vladimirtseva to Wisconsin in March 2007, where they disseminated pictures and craftworks of Chinese and Yakutian students in eight schools and received art of American children in return. In November 2007 Zhan Juan and Maria Vladimirtseva visited schools in China in Panjing and in Xianghai National Nature Reserve. Chinese children have transferred their drawings to the Yakutian students with pleasure. Now children can communicate by e-mail and regular mail.

Students of the remote areas of Yakutia where cranes live are more responsive and happier about the attention to their creativity and the international communication.

In hard conditions of northern villages such remarkable people as Nadezhda Permkina, director of the House of Children’s Creativity in Momskiy Ulus in northeastern Yakutia; Rosa Zelenukhina, the master of a wood crafts in Tomponskiy Ulus in southeastern Yalutia; Marina Kanaeva, the inspector of wildlife management in Ust-May Ulus, where the Chabda and Kyupski Resource Reserves are situated; Tatiana Stryukova, chief of the Allaikhovskiy Inspection of Wildlife Management; Olga Yeliseyeva, Director of the Local History Museum in Chokurdakh Village, understand the importance of ecological education for students living in cranes’ habitats, and help to draw attention to the project uniting the countries of three white cranes.

For more information:
Maria Vladimirtseva
Sib-ykt@mail.ru

World Environment Day and Cranes Seminar in Afghanistan

By Qais Agah
Nongovernmental Organization of “Save Environment of Afghanistan”

Within the framework of the World Environment Day in 2007, the northern section of the non-governmental organization Save Environment of Afghanistan (SEA) organized a one-day seminar on nature conservation in Afghanistan, which included a general presentation regarding the crane status in the country, their migratory routes, the conditions of their habitats used during migration and on wintering grounds.

The seminar participants were represented by nearly a thousand students of the Agricultural Department of Balha University, professors, representatives of various government and non-government organizations, such as the UNDP, USAID, FAO, PRT, as well as various leaders and journalists.

The goals of the seminar included:
1. The creation and conducting of an enlightenment campaign on the propaganda of the protection of the environment;
2. Celebration of the World Environment Day;
3. Propagation of information about the status of cranes in Afghanistan and the results of the studies carried out by SEA.

Posters, informational materials and chapters from the Koran about nature conservation were the main part of the exhibition that was carried out under the slogan of “The Reduction of the Excessive Hunting on the Environment of Afghanistan.”

The seminar program contained presentations about nature conservation studies, movies about cranes and nature conservation, distribution of materials about cranes, prepared by SEA and the Crane Working Group of Eurasia.

The presenters, including the Head of Balh University, expressed their understanding of the condition of nature conservation in Afghanistan and cranes as a part of the ecosystem. He added that God created these remarkable creatures so that they could live freely and so that we could admire them, and not to disturb or hunt the cranes in the north of Afghanistan. At the same time, he also remarked on the work for crane conservation and study conducted by SEA.
Meetings

Round Table on the Siberian Crane conservation in Khanty-Mansisk, West Siberia, Russia

by Olga Strelnikova
Yuganski State Nature Reserve, Russia

The round table session on “Regional Policy on Siberian Crane Population Conservation” was held in the network of the V International Ecological Action “To Save and to Rescue” on 30 May, 2007 in the city of Khanty-Mansisk. The action was initiated by the Yuganskiy State Nature Reserve staff with financial and organizational support by the Department of Wildlife Management and Ecological Safety of the Khanty-Mansisk Autonomous Region, Yugra.

The Department staff, special protected areas staff of the region, the Museum of Nature and Man, ecologists of the gas & oil companies, and other interested people have taken part in the work. Tatiana Kashentseva, Director of the Oka Crane Breeding Center, participated in the round table.

Having discussed the problem comprehensively, the participants of the round table have made a decision on the creation of the Siberian Crane Working Group to develop the program on conservation and restoration of the western population of this species. In the network of this program the following problems should be solved:

- Revealing the Siberian Crane status and flyway in the territory of the region;
- Carrying out the annual monitoring on the breeding nesting population number;
- Preparation of basis for the reintroduction of populations on the Yugra territory;
- Attraction of local population to the problem of Siberian crane conservation through public awareness.

We hope that such a program will be worked out in the near future and the district will start to implement it.

For more information:
Olga Strelnikova
biostrel@rambler.ru

Third Conference on Migratory Birds of the North Pacific Region, Yakutsk, Republic of Sakha, Russian Federation

By Nikolai Germogenov
Institute of Biological Problems of the Cryolithozone, Yakutia, Russia

The Third Conference on Migratory Birds of the North Pacific Region was held in Yakutsk on 8-13 August, 2007 within the framework of the International Forum on the Study and Conservation of Arctic Wildlife, convened by the Government of the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia) on the celebration of the 375th anniversary of the entry of Yakutia into the Russian State and founding of the City of Yakutsk. The Institute for Biological Problems of the Cryolithozone hosted the meeting, in cooperation with the Yakut Scientific Centre of the Siberian Division of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Yakut State University, and the Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Sakha.

Ninety biologists, ornithologists and conservation experts from four countries participated in the conference. Although there was strong participation from Russia and a small delegation from the United States of America, no other North Pacific countries were represented. There was therefore a strong focus on issues within the Russian part of the Pacific region.

The Conference opened with a grand ceremony for the International Forum on the Study and Conservation of Arctic Wildlife at the Russian Pushkin Drama Theatre in Yakutsk. This was presided over by Ayal I. Stepanov, Vice Chairman of the Government of the Sakha Republic, joined by Vladimir A. Grigoryev, Minister for Nature Protection of the Sakha Republic, Afanasy V. Migalkin, Director of the Department on Indigenous People’s Affairs and Federative Relations of SR, Prof. Dr. Nikita G. Solomonov, Advisor of the Russian
Ayal Stepanov, Vice-Premier of the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia), hands certificate and medal for nature conservation efforts to Claire Mirande, International Crane Foundation. On the right - Minakshi Nangendran, US Fish and Wildlife Service. Photo by Crawford Prentice

Anatoly Kovshar, Institute of Zoology of NAS of Kazakhstan, and Nikolai Germogenov, Vice-Director of the Institute of Biological Problems of the Cryolithozone, Yakutia. Photo by Crawford Prentice

Minakshi Nangendran presented a report on Avian Influenza at the Third Conference on Migratory Birds of the North Pacific Region. Photo by Crawford Prentice

Academy of Sciences (RAS), Dr. A.A. Alekseyev, Chair of Archaeology and History at Yakut State University, Dr. Nikolai Germogenov (Institute for Biological Problems of the Cryolithozone (RAS) and representatives of the US Fish & Wildlife Service, International Crane Foundation and Kazakhstan Institute of Zoology.

A traditional blessing ceremony reminded the participants of the spiritual connection between man and nature, followed by a stunning performance by a selection of local artists that demonstrated Yakutia’s vibrant culture and arts. After the opening session, the participants boarded the MV Mechanic Kubilin for the workshop sessions while en route up the mighty Lena River to the famous Lena Pillars National Park. The relaxed surroundings and close confinement were ideal for the exchange of ideas and experiences, and the discussions were very productive overall. Participants were able to climb to the top of the pillars for a wonderful view of the Lena River at this most sacred spot for local people.

The Conference consisted of seven sessions, covering: fauna and populations of birds, bird migration, bird ecology, conservation of rare and endangered bird species, diseases and parasites, use of bird resources, and wetlands of international importance, key ornithological sites and specially protected habitats of rare cranes in NE Asia.
In general, the Conference discussed the results and plans for international, regional, and inter-regional scientific cooperation on nature conservation, especially research on the preservation and use of migratory birds and their habitats in the northern Asia-Pacific Region. It also reviewed progress on implementing the decisions of the Second Conference, priorities for the UNEP/GEF Siberian Crane Wetland Project in NE Asia, integration of research on conservation of migratory birds and their habitats, cooperation between GEF projects in Yakutia, and proposed items for inclusion in the next conference.

For more information:
Nikolai Germogenov
Sterkh-ycu@mail.ru

UNEP/GEF Siberian Crane Wetland Project

The Sixth Steering Committee Meeting, Bangkok, Thailand

By Crawford Prentice
International Crane Foundation

The Sixth Project Steering Committee Meeting of the UNEP/GEF Siberian Crane Wetland Project (SCWP) was held December 4-6, 2007 in Bangkok, Thailand. Representatives from the National and Regional Coordination Units, United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and Convention on Migratory Species attended the three-day meeting, which was organized by SCWP staff and the UNEP/DGEF Asia Pacific Regional Programme.

Meeting highlights included the presentation of annual progress reports and workplans for the 2008 project year. Project staff shared experiences and lessons learned over the previous year and developed plans for enriching information exchange over the coming year.

For more information:
Crawford Prentice
crwafor@savingcranes.org

Regional Training Workshop on Site Management Planning and Related Issues in Nanchang, China

By Crawford Prentice, Elena Ilyashenko
International Crane Foundation
Crane Working Group of Eurasia

This spring a Regional Training Workshop on Site Management Planning and Related Issues was held in Nanchang in the People's Republic of China from 6 to 11 March 2007 under the UNEP/GEF Siberian Crane Wetland Project (SCWP). The SCWP is a six-year effort to sustain the ecological integrity of a network of globally important wetlands in Asia—wetlands that are of critical importance for migratory waterbirds and other wetland biodiversity—using the globally threatened Siberian Crane as a flagship species.

As a part of its goal to conserve the habitats essential to Siberian Cranes and other waterbirds, the SCWP is concentrating its efforts on strengthening two networks of wetlands: the North East Asia Crane Site Network (now part of a wider waterbird site network in East Asia) and the Western/Central Asia Site Network. Each one encompasses flyways used by the Siberian Crane and other migratory waterbirds. Equally important are the networks of international cooperation that have been built or strengthened through the work of this project. This training workshop covered both site networks and aimed to share information and experiences between sites and networks. It was regional in its scope, including participants from all areas covered by the project. Thirty-six participants from seven countries attended, including 31 trainees from Azerbaijan, China, Iran, Kazakhstan and Russia. The workshop was organized and led by coordinators and technical advisors from SCWP and from several organizations and agencies, including the International Crane Foundation, Wetlands International, and the Federal Center of Geoecological Systems.

The workshop was convened on 6 March, coordinated by Moscow-based CMS/ICF Siberian Crane Flyway Coordinator, Elena Ilyashenko, and International Technical Advisor, Crawford Prentice. The workshop was hosted by the Jiangxi Provincial Management Bureau for Wild Fauna and Flora Conservation in Nanchang.

For more information:
Crawford Prentice
crwafor@savingcranes.org
Training was provided in three languages (Russian, Farsi, and Chinese), and most of the supporting materials were also available in multiple languages.

Through a series of training sessions, this workshop gave participants the opportunity to improve the effectiveness of their management of protected sites, and also to share their own experiences and management approaches with other site managers. Over four days, participants attended sessions on site management planning, environmental monitoring, participatory management, avian influenza, and presentations on the Poyang Lake Basin. Participants shared drafts of management plans from their own sites and discussed the challenges associated with their respective sites. The final two days of the workshop were devoted to field trips to Poyang Lake Nature Reserve and Nanjishan Nature Reserve.

At the conclusion of the workshop, participants were asked to evaluate the sessions. Overall, the workshop was deemed to be successful. Of particular value were some of the specific sessions, the opportunities for shared experiences, and the supporting materials and resources provided during the workshop. The presentations were well received, especially the sessions on management planning and avian influenza. Other noteworthy points included the structure of the workshop programme; the information exchange; the field trip arrangements and opportunities to view wildlife; the pre-workshop information; and the physical logistics.

There were problems with some aspects of the workshop, including difficulties with visas; limitations in language interpretation during the workshop; lack of informational support during the field trips; and opportunities lost when some participants could not remain for the entire workshop.

This event was the first time that many of the international participants had the opportunity to learn about and visit some of the Chinese nature reserves so important to Siberian Cranes, such as Poyang Lake Nature Reserve. And the workshop succeeded in strengthening ties between those who work near the Siberian Cranes’ breeding and staging areas (e.g., Yakutia) and those who work in the wintering areas (e.g., in China).
There was a fruitful exchange of information and experiences among the participants, particularly through their presentations of draft management plans and their input on avian influenza. The sessions and presentations by the trainers and technical experts increased everyone’s understanding of participatory management and site management planning. And all presentations were subsequently made available on CD to the workshop participants, greatly extending the possibilities for future implementation.

A memorable part of the workshop was the opportunity to see some of the over-wintering birds during the field trip excursions. Although most birds had already begun their migration northward, workshop participants had a chance to see Whooper Swans, Swan Geese, and Eurasian Cranes at Nanjishan, and a flock of about 100 Siberian Cranes at Poyang Lake. How appropriate to end this workshop with a visual experience of what this project and its participants are working so hard to accomplish--to conserve these elegant birds and these special places for the sake of us all.

For more information:
Crawford Prentice
Crawford@savingcranes.org

Education and GIS workshops in Kazakhstan

By Vera Inyutina
Kazakhstan National Coordination Unit of UNEP/GEF Siberian Crane Wetland Project

Within the UNEP/GEF Siberian Crane Wetland Project (SCWP) the Program on Ecological Education for Teachers and Students were developed by the Kazakhstan National Coordination Unit (NCU). Its goal is to inform teachers and students about the importance of biodiversity conservation in wetlands.

For the period of 21-29 August 2007 the Program was presented at regional teacher’s conferences, and also workshops were provided, where more than a thousand teachers participated. The goal of the workshops is to teach how to use the various materials on biodiversity and wetlands conservation and how to improve them.

In 2005-2006 the Kazakhstan NCU prepared 17 items of education materials, including books, CD with films and informational materials. Hard copies and CDs were passed to regional education departments, school libraries and schools.

On 3 November 2007, a workshop on using Arc GIS was organized at the project site of Naurzum Nature Reserve at the Resource Information Center “Ak Tyrna” (White Crane) within the SCWP. Its goal is to teach staff of nature reserves, regional departments of the Forest and Hunting Committee, and non-governmental organizations, and to pass to them various informational materials for further use.

For more information:
Vera Inyutina
vera.inyutina@mail.ru

Summary of the Meeting on Monitoring the Migration of the Siberian Crane in China in 2006/2007

By Jiang Hongxing, Qian Fawen
National Bird Banding Center of China, Forestry Academy of Science, Beijing, China

The Meeting on Monitoring the Migration of the Siberian Crane in China, 2006/2007 was organized by the China National Coordination Unit (NCU) of the UNEP/GEF Siberian Crane Wetland Project in cooperation with the Forestry Bureau of Yanbian Autonomous Prefecture, Jilin Province, in Yanji City on 14 September 2007. The participants noted the monitoring in 2006/2007 had the following achievements:

1) The Siberian Crane stopovers were found in Qilihai and Qinhuangdao, Xinhai of Leting County, Dahekou Saltern and
Nandagang Reservoir of Haixing County, Heiyupao of Daqing, Majiadian and Qiajiaweizi of Jilin Province, and Yancheng of Jiangsu Province.

2) The monitoring in Lianfengshan confirmed that the peak of autumn migration through Beidaihe is from late October to early November, and the peak of spring migration is in early March annually.

3) Migratory populations of the Siberian Crane were found at Xingkai Lake, Heilongjiang Province in 2006 and 2007, which provides new information about the flyway of the crane.

4) More than 2,000 Siberian Cranes stayed at Momoge National Nature Reserve on 3 May 2007, the largest group had 1,156 cranes.

Some proposals to the monitoring plan were done by participants, including the following:

• To strengthen the monitoring at the Siberian Crane stopovers. The SCWP sites as Zhalong and Xianghai NNR should complete their monitoring work and report in the end of October 2007;
• To divide wintering monitoring into three stages: from November to mid December, from late December to mid January, and in mid February. The SCWP supports only mid wintering monitoring;
• To add Xinghai Lake to monitoring network;
• To report data from different stages in the same wetlands to analyze the distribution and number of migratory Siberian Cranes.

Finally delegates of the meeting suggested publishing the monitoring plan.


Recommendation of the Meeting to Determine Research Progress and Gaps at Poyang Lake, China

By Jeb Barzen
International Crane Foundation

A meeting of scientists from universities in China, France, The Netherlands, and the United States convened in Nanchang (Jiangxi Province), China, on November 5-9, 2007.

Poyang Lake is a unique wetland known throughout China and the world. Though clean water, high biological diversity (including many endangered species like the Siberian Crane), and productive agricultural systems set Poyang apart from other wetlands, it is less clear how this ecosystem maintains these many important functions simultaneously.

Without knowing more about how Poyang Lake functions, it is difficult to predict how the rapidly changing Chinese economy may affect people and species living within this productive ecosystem. Scientists from China, France, The Netherlands, and the U.S. recently gathered in Nanchang to discuss what research has already been completed at Poyang Lake and to identify where research priorities of the future should be and how that research might be accomplished. Though more study of Poyang Lake is clearly needed, it is also clear from the work already completed that the Poyang Lake ecosystem should be viewed and managed as a whole rather than as a group of individual and unrelated resources.

When viewed as a whole, it becomes clear that over-development of any one resource in the lake may cause the breakdown or loss of other parts of the lake. The whole ecosystem, as a result, may suffer. For example, maximizing the ability of Poyang Lake to store flood water may reduce flooding but may also decrease clean water in the system or cause Siberian Cranes to decline because increasing or more stable water depths do not support plants that the cranes eat nor allow water to move through the system. In fact, the ebb and flow of water through the system is likely the most important factor in allowing for the many benefits to people that come from Poyang Lake.

As the current meeting of provincial, national and international scientists closes, participants are initiating proposals to bring more attention and money to the Poyang Lake area so that critical issues can be better understood and addressed. If successful, proposals from this broad array of interested groups will lead to further understanding of China’s largest and most important freshwater lake and a better stewardship of its many resources.

Our list of detailed recommendations:

1. Manage Poyang Lake as a whole ecosystem
2. In order to maintain clean water, biological diversity, and productive agricultural systems, the annual cycle of rising and falling water in Poyang Lake should be maintained.
3. Sand mining in the Poyang Lake ecosystem may have a significant negative impact. Along with the opportunities that sand mining presents, mining also creates costs that should be more closely understood, regulated and supervised.
4. We recognize the current effort by the provincial government to better control pollution, improve the protection of Poyang Lake, and remove trees that were planted in inappropriate places.
5. Vulnerability to flooding is both a social and a physical issue for inhabitants in the Poyang Lake ecosystem. As such, improving education, mobility and access to markets is an important part of an overall strategy to reduce vulnerability of people to flooding.

Excerpts of the meeting summary prepared by Jeb Barzen, International Crane Foundation

For more information:
Jeb Barzen
jeb@savingcranes.org
Kazakhstan to be the Third Central Asian Party to CMS

Kazakhstan, a landlocked state in Central Asia, features arid and semi-arid climate and extensive plains, high mountains and parts of two large bodies of water, the Aral Sea and the Caspian Sea. This variety of habitats provides for the needs of 18 species listed on Appendix I of CMS and more than 100 species on Appendix II. Among them are concerted action species such as the Siberian Crane (Grus leucogeranus), the Ferruginous Duck (Aythya nyocra), the Snow Leopard (Uncia uncia), the Lesser White-fronted Goose (Anser erythropus), the Slender-billed Curlew (Numenius tenuirostris) and the Saiga Antelope (Saiga tatarica tatarica).

An innumerable variety of waterbirds occur in the Central Asian state. Kazakhstan is a Signatory to the Memorandum of Understanding concerning Conservation and Restoration of the Bukhara Deer and the Memorandum of Understanding concerning Conservation Measures for the Siberian Crane. As of 1 May, Kazakhstan will be a contracting Party to CMS and thus demonstrates its commitment to preserve the natural heritage of the country.

CMS News

Sixth Meeting of Range States to Siberian Crane MoU

By Timothy Moermond
International Crane Foundation

The Siberian Crane, one of the most threatened of the world’s fifteen crane species, breeds in Russia and winters in China, Iran and, formerly, India. The epic annual migration of these beautiful cranes links eleven countries, as the birds stop to rest and feed along a chain of wetlands scattered across western, central and eastern Asia.

Once numerous in the western part of its range, that population of Siberian Cranes has dwindled to no more than a few individuals, only one of which was seen at its traditional wintering ground in Iran in Spring 2007. The Eastern population, thought to comprise some 3-4,000 birds, appears to be stable, but it faces increasing pressure from development activities in China and Russia.

All eleven countries of the Siberian Cranes’ range are now participating in the CMS Memorandum of Understanding Concerning Conservation Measures for the Siberian Crane. This pioneering CMS instrument – the first of its kind – was created in 1993 to foster greater cooperation among governments and partner organizations.

The Republic of Kazakhstan hosted the sixth of a regular series of meetings of the signatories, in the former capital of Almaty, from 15-19 May 2007. Hosted by the Forestry and Hunting Committee, with organizational support from CMS and the International Crane Foundation, the meeting brought together 50 participants from across the region. For the first time, there was official and/or technical representation from all eleven Range States (Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, China, India, Islamic Republic of Iran, Kazakhstan, Mongolia, Pakistan, Russian Federation, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan). The Convention on Migratory Species was represented by its Senior Advisor, Douglas Hykle, based in Bangkok.

Among the positive outcomes of the meeting were the following:

- The official launch of the Western and Central Asian Site Network for Siberian Cranes and other Waterbirds (WCASN), with the inclusion of an initial ten sites from five countries;
- Elaboration and adoption of new, detailed Conservation Plans for each of the three flyways covered by the Siberian Crane MoU, as well as agreement in principle on a new streamlined reporting template to measure implementation progress;
- Presentation and discussion of an exciting project already begun by Russian colleagues to explore the potential for releasing Siberian cranes into the wild using a human-led migration technique; and agreement to set up a project steering committee to ensure inputs from other partners;
- Review of important considerations related to the eventual integration, within the MoU framework, of activities currently being conducted under the UNEP/GEF Siberian Crane Wetland Project, which will draw to a close in 2009;
- Agreement to investigate the possible establishment of an international trust fund in order to leverage funds from governments and other sources to support future Siberian Crane conservation efforts;
- The inclusion of two additional partner organizations in the ranks of the Memorandum of Understanding, with signatures of representatives of Wetlands International and the Cracid Conservation and Breeding Centre; and
- Recognition of other important initiatives with which the Siberian Crane MoU will increasingly interact, including the CMS Central Asian Flyway Action Plan and the East Asia-Australasia Flyway Partnership.

The signatories tentatively agreed to hold their next meeting around mid-late 2009, with several countries and part-
ners expressing interest in hosting the gathering. It is hoped that, by then, the intensive conservation efforts undertaken over the past two decades will have begun to bear fruit.

For more information:
Elena Ilyashenko
eilyashenko@savingcranes.org

Western/Central Asian Site Network Launched!

By Timothy Moermond, Taej Mundkur, and Elena Ilyashenko

International Crane Foundation
Wetlands International – Asian Program
Crane Working Group of Eurasia

Conservation history was made on 18 May 2007, in Almaty, Kazakhstan, where the countries of West and Central Asia joined together to form an international network to save the critically endangered Siberian Crane. The historical partnership aims to protect globally significant natural wetlands, home to tens of millions of migratory waterbirds, including a number of globally threatened species.

The Western and Central Asian populations of the Siberian Crane migrate thousands of kilometers from their breeding grounds in the far north of Siberia, southward through six countries to their wintering grounds in Iran and India. The Siberian Crane is widely known and deeply embedded in the cultures of all the countries of the region. Since ancient times these great white cranes have been revered as models of virtue and symbols of good fortune, long life and fidelity.

Now, with the western and central populations on the brink of extinction in the wild, representatives from nine countries where they have existed and conservationists from around the world joined together in Kazakhstan to set up an international network to save these magnificent birds.

The Western/Central Asian Site Network for Siberian Cranes and other waterbirds was formally launched on 18 May, in a special signing ceremony held during the Sixth Meeting of the Signatories to the Memorandum of Understanding on Conservation Measures for the Siberian Crane (MoU). Also known as the CMS Siberian Crane MoU, this international agreement brings together all of the Siberian Crane Range States, the International Crane Foundation, as well as the newest MoU partners: Wetlands International and the Cracid & Crane Conservation and Breeding Centre. The Site Network will focus conservation efforts on sites of international importance for the Siberian Crane along its West and Central Asian flyways in Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, India, Islamic Republic of Iran, Kazakhstan, Pakistan, Russian Federation (western Siberia), Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

- Ten sites from five countries were formally accepted to the Network at the launch ceremony. These include, from India: the Keoladeo Ghana National Park;
- from the Islamic Republic of Iran: Bujagh National Park and Fereydoon Kenar, Ezbaran & Sorkh Ruds Ab-Bandans Ramsar Site;
- from Kazakhstan: the Kulikol-Taldikol Lake System, Zhashor-Urakash Lake System, Naurzum Lake System, Delta of the Ural River and Coastal Zone of the Caspian Sea, and the Tyntyugur-Zhanshura Lake System;
- from Turkmenistan: the Durnaly;
- from Uzbekistan: Termez.

Flock of clay Siberian Cranes made by Olga Shirinya, Oka State Nature Reserve, especially for the Range State meeting. Photo by C. Prentice
Certificates for WCASN site nominations were handed out by Douglas Hykle, CMS Senior Advisor, to the official representatives of (1) India (Mr. Anmol Kumar), (2) Islamic Republic of Iran (Mr. Sadegh Sadeghi Zadegan), (3) Kazakhstan (Mr. Khairbeck Musabayev), (4) Turkmenistan (Mr. Eldar Rustamov), (5) Uzbekistan (Mr. Gennadi Goncharov). Photos by C. Prentice

National representatives of each of the countries in the Network nominated the sites. Mr. Khairbek Mussabaeyev, Deputy Chairman, Forest and Hunting Committee of the Ministry of Agriculture, Republic of Kazakhstan, and Mr. Douglas Hykle of the Secretariat of the Convention on Migratory Species, presented launch certificates.

Additional sites nominated by Azerbaijan, Pakistan, and the Russian Federation are currently under formal consideration. The newly designated Site Network Committee and the Site Network Working Group will advance the work of this initiative before the next meeting by reviewing proposals for additional Network sites.

With the establishment of the Western/Central Asian Site Network for Siberian Cranes and other waterbirds, the sites of importance for the Siberian Crane now receive formal recognition across all its three flyways. The Eastern population of the Siberian Crane of around 3,000 birds breeds in Siberia in Yakutia and migrates through Mongolia and northern China to central eastern China, where the large majority of the population winters within the Poyang Lake basin. The conservation of the Eastern population is promoted under the East Asian-Australasian Flyway Site Network which was launched in November 2006 under the East Asian-Australasian Flyway Partnership. This new Network covers all migratory waterbirds and incorporates North East Asian Crane Site Network that was active since its launch in 1997.

For more information:
Elena Ilyashenko
eilyashenko@savingcranes.org