

# The Bugle

*Saving cranes and the places where cranes dance!*

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## Safer at Home

By Hillary Thompson,  
North America Program  
Crane Analyst

As a field biologist, the *Safer at Home* order in March was the most unexpected way to begin a field season. I stayed in my small apartment, grateful to be healthy and safe, and I adjusted to working from home with one of my cats occasionally wandering into a video call. Our field interns were sequestered in our guesthouse at the International Crane Foundation. I spoke with them daily. They wondered if their internships would now consist of looking through a database instead of looking through binoculars. We worked on writing reports, learning new skills, analyzing data, and preparing research for publication.

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This little Whooping Crane chick is “safer at home” with its parents at Necedah National Wildlife Refuge in Wisconsin. This is the fifth chick this pair has raised over six years.

*Photo by Hillary Thompson*

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Every day we wondered how the cranes were faring in the wild. Had they returned to the breeding grounds? Were there new breeding pairs building nests?

We were able to keep tabs on a few pairs remotely. Some Whooping Cranes in the Eastern Migratory Population have remote transmitters that send us GPS points through the cell phone network, so we could see when those birds returned to Wisconsin. When they started spending lots of time in one location in a marsh, we suspected they might be nesting. We also received reports from landowners when they saw Whooping Cranes on their property. We hoped to deploy some cameras on nests to help us monitor the cranes without leaving home.

When the governor lifted some restrictions on essential work, we were able to answer some of our questions. We created safety protocols to accommodate social distancing measures, sanitized our equipment, and issued face masks. We received word we could do some limited fieldwork, focusing on monitoring nesting pairs of Whooping Cranes.

**Find the nests!** In a typical year, we would have a pilot conducting surveys from a small plane looking for nests from above. But this year we had to find them all from the ground. Luckily, cranes are territorial and tend to build their nests in the same areas from year to year. In the first two days, we found five nests, and we discovered five more by the end of April.



Crane Research Intern Nicki Gordon deploys a nest camera on this unusual nest—three eggs laid by a pair of female cranes. Photo by Hillary Thompson

**Set up a camera!** We use typical trail cams to take photos every five minutes or when motion is detected. By collecting so many images, we're able to document incubation, visitors to the nest (hopefully not predators), and when the eggs hatch.



Remote cameras help us keep track of wild-hatched chicks like these twins W1-20 and W2-20.

**Retrieve the photos!** When the pair is no longer incubating, we collect the camera and look through thousands of images for chicks, or other unusual activity. We deployed 14 cameras and discovered nine crane pairs that ultimately hatched 12 adorable chicks. Reviewing all the photos helps us learn about the challenges Whooping Cranes face during their nesting season.

Now that our *Safer at Home* order has been lifted, we are working with a pilot to monitor the Whooping Cranes from the air. The pilot even found a few surprise chicks we weren't able to discover from the ground! We are now banding the wild-hatched chicks so we can track their movements, survival, and hopefully future breeding success. The team is happy to be back out in the field, monitoring and learning how we can continue to support Whooping Crane recovery. We are thrilled to see so many family groups thriving in the wild because, in the end, we want Whooping Cranes to be safer at home too.

*Thanks to the Arthur J. Donald Family Foundation for funding new nest cameras this year!*



This chick was recently banded and is getting close to fledging! Whooping Crane chicks begin to fly at around 80 days. Photo by Jadine Lee

## Notes from the President

By Rich Beilfuss

*We're Stronger Than Ever, Together*



Our world is reopening with a confusing mix of risk and caution as we move toward a "new normal," while long-standing racial and economic disparities are exploding on our streets in protest. As the leader of a global organization dedicated to bringing people together for conservation and sustainable development on five continents and empowering the most vulnerable communities who share their lands with cranes, I've been thinking about the valuable lessons these crises are teaching us that will make the International Crane Foundation, and our mission, stronger than ever.

The International Crane Foundation has always sought to bring people together from diverse backgrounds to solve problems and lead change—and will always do so. We work cross-culturally with communities, non-profits, schools, governments, businesses, and anyone who will join with us to get things done. This work has taught us that the health of our people and the health of our natural world are inextricably bound together.

Our senior leadership team is focused on looking forward—"scanning the horizon"—for the emerging challenges and opportunities we see during and after the pandemic. The pandemic has undoubtedly affected our ability to engage with communities, conduct field research, advocate for better land use, and connect personally with local partners, governments, and donors. But while I expected a lot of concern around the negative impacts of this crisis on our work, I've been pleasantly surprised to see so many positive opportunities as well. I have shared some of these opportunities in recent emails to you, as we seize on the global mandate to reduce illegal trade and fight climate change.

Our crisis management team has provided exceptional leadership since the beginning of the pandemic. To sustain the strongest team possible during and after the pandemic, we have learned that four things matter most: **caring** for our staff, **connecting** staff together, providing **credible** information, and **carrying-on** with our mission.

We care deeply about keeping our aviculture and site management teams safe through careful workplace management and social distancing. For staff working from home, we created a support group for parents managing work and young kids to provide a constant supply of encouragement to "keep calm and crane on." We encourage our staff to provide caring back to our communities through volunteer opportunities as well. In South Africa, our team provided

food relief parcels in the communities where we work, supporting more than 1,000 people facing hunger.

Our global staff is better connected than ever during the crisis. Our weekly all-team meeting has blossomed to include more than 80 people participating and sharing updates from China, Russia, Myanmar, Vietnam, Kenya, Uganda, Zambia, South Africa, Texas, and here in Wisconsin. Their stories are a constant reminder that we are one world fighting the coronavirus, and fighting for conservation, together. We've also learned during these times of lockdown the incredible value of having self-reliant, well-trained, and highly capable teams at the front lines of everywhere we work.



Day in and day out, we strive to provide trustworthy information to help our staff, and our organization, make good decisions based on sound science and reliable sources. We regularly filter through national, state, and local recommendations in the U.S. and every country where we work to distill useful guidance from the chaos of conjecture and misinformation. As we carefully reopen our field programs, offices, and beautifully remodeled campus over the months ahead, I am confident we will do so in a way that keeps our staff and visitors safe and inspired.

We will carry on with our important mission, no matter what. Some of our staff remain busier than ever with their normal work plans, while we have redeployed others to

help in areas with the most need. The global pandemic has not slowed the threats to cranes and the vital places they (and we) need. Plans for ill-conceived dams and other negative land-use changes have proliferated worldwide during the crisis while attention is diverted. To address these emerging challenges, we are exploring new ways to strengthen local partnerships and government relations "virtually" to secure cranes and the bountiful wetlands they need, and better support the communities who depend on these lands for their livelihoods.

It takes a strong, diverse team to run a successful, high-impact organization during a global crisis. Our cranes, our shared natural heritage, and the looming threat of climate change need our attention for the long haul. The same is true for achieving lasting social change—our commitment to justice, diversity, and inclusion is deep. We will continue learning, adapting, and sharing as we go. Thank you for your support and your commitment to making the world a better place.

# One Step Closer

Each year, we are one step closer.  
One crane at a time—one donation at a time.  
It all matters, and we are grateful.



*The serenity of this incubating Whooping Crane contradicts the disturbing photo from the turn of the century when Whooping Cranes faced almost certain extinction.*

The last few months have seen unexpected changes to all of our daily activities and behaviors. At the beginning of Wisconsin's *Safer at Home* order, many of us at the International Crane Foundation worried about our intrepid globetrotting Co-founder, George Archibald, being grounded for so long. George is accustomed to frequent travel to remote corners of the world to promote his unique brand of crane diplomacy. But little did we know that we had nothing to worry about—there would be a silver lining to this dark cloud.

Just as so many people are now turning to nature for comfort and recreation, George turned to the original social distancers—Whooping Cranes.

As luck would have it, three young Whooping Cranes were setting up housekeeping less than ten miles from his home. When George co-founded the International Crane Foundation nearly fifty years ago, he never dreamed that Whooping Cranes would inhabit Wisconsin, let alone a wetland in his home county. George was over the moon and set to work, observing and recording their every move. With the renewed exuberance of his days as a graduate



student, he described their antics in heartwarming detail.

Seeing wild Whooping Cranes dancing and soaring so close to home is the culmination of a long career devoted to restoring a species to its rightful place. But more importantly, it is a testament to unwavering caring and action.

Of course, it is never just one person who brings back a species from the brink of extinction. When people choose to come together to help, amazing things can happen. And when the challenges seem daunting and insurmountable, the determined dreamers of the world, like

George, remind us that we can always make a difference. And we have the power to decide what that difference will be.

Decades of hard work breeding, raising, releasing, and monitoring Whooping Cranes led to this moment. And each one of you decided to help along the way. Together, we are playing a lead role in the historic comeback of Whooping Cranes.

**It is our collective LEGACY.**

Our promise to save cranes continues to drive us forward, and in these times, it matters more than ever. Our work is science-based, strategic, and urgent. We envision a future where our captive rearing programs are no longer needed—where Whooping Cranes, and all cranes threatened with extinction, are thriving in the wild on their own. **But we can't do it without your help.**

**Your donation ensures we have the resources to continue—one day at a time.**



Please send your donation today by using the **enclosed envelope** or donate online at [www.savingcranes.org/support](http://www.savingcranes.org/support) or call **608-356-9462 ext. 807**. Thank you!



Since 2001, several hundred captive-reared Whooping Cranes have been released in Wisconsin to establish a new migratory population. The cranes that George watches from an elevated deer hunting blind are the offspring of captive-reared Whooping Cranes released in eastern Wisconsin. All the released birds are color-banded, and that's how we keep track of who's who during field observations. Each one of you has played a role in the historic recovery of the Whooping Crane. By helping them recover—we all recover. Thank you for taking action toward a healthier planet.

*You can read George's full field notes on our website: [www.savingcranes.org/travels-with-george-in-the-field-with-whooping-cranes/](http://www.savingcranes.org/travels-with-george-in-the-field-with-whooping-cranes/). Photo by Michael Forsberg*



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The Bugle is the triannual newsletter of the International Crane Foundation. ICF was founded in 1973 by Ronald Saucy, Ph.D. (1948 - 1987) and George Archibald, Ph.D.

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# FROM THE FIELD Webinar Series

Because of the pandemic, we are all becoming proficient at the various ways to stay connected with each other online—and many of us are ramping up our lifelong learner portfolios! Our desire to stay connected with you during this time gave rise to our remarkably successful *From the Field* webinar series. Each week, someone from our team around the world shares information on cranes and conservation during a live presentation on **Thursdays beginning at 11 a.m. Central Time.**



So far, there have been lively topics ranging from cranes in art to cranes and climate change. And we have so many more to share with you—the ideas are pouring in! We want you to ZOOM in so we can show you how your support makes it all possible. A moderator keeps the show rolling and will field your real-time questions to the presenter.

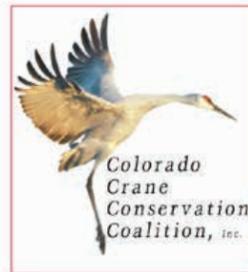
To see a schedule of upcoming presentations, view past presentations, or register, visit: [www.savingcranes.org/from-field-webinar-series/](http://www.savingcranes.org/from-field-webinar-series/).

Our *From the Field* series is sponsored by generous donors like you. We are grateful to our past sponsors, and we are seeking more! Sponsors are acknowledged online and are thanked live by the presenter. If you are interested in becoming a sponsor, please email [info@savingcranes.org](mailto:info@savingcranes.org) or call 608-356-9462 ext. 147.

# Colorado Craniacs

## 2020 Virtual Festival

The Colorado Crane Conservation Coalition, Inc. is updating plans for the 2020 Yampa Valley Crane Festival, moving to a virtual platform during the regularly scheduled festival dates, September 3-6, 2020. Included in the free virtual celebration of cranes will be a series of new educational and entertaining videos about Greater Sandhill Cranes and other bird and nature topics focused on the Yampa Valley of Northwest Colorado. All of the information about the virtual festival will be posted in early August at [www.coloradocranes.org](http://www.coloradocranes.org).



**T-shirt** - This machine-washable, unisex shirt is 100% cotton jersey. Available in black with short sleeves and the International Crane Foundation logo on the left arm. S-XXL. **\$19.95**

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**Bumper Sticker** Sticker measures 11.5 x 3.5 inches. **\$1.00**

To order, visit [www.craneshop.org](http://www.craneshop.org) or call 608 356-9462 ext. 171.



*New interactive exhibits share our history with iconic species and our commitment to protecting them well into the future.*

# CELEBRATIONS POSTPONED

Our grand opening celebration for our newly renovated site *Cranes of the World* and our *Evening with the Cranes* celebration will be rescheduled in 2021.

“We are so excited to share our wonderful renovation, but we need to place the safety of our guests above opening our gates,” explained Chief Operating Officer Kim Smith. “Like many attractions, we need to postpone our grand opening to a future date when large groups can safely gather.”

We are exploring potential opportunities for the fall of this year, including the possibility of member visits to the site. We will keep everyone informed as we finalize those plans. Meanwhile, we will continue to share the joy and hope that cranes symbolize. And although we can't be together now, we look forward to the day when we, and the cranes, can welcome you back.



*Our newly renovated exhibits are planted with native prairie plants with seed from our site, or very nearby. This dynamic landscape changes with every season as new plants emerge in the spring, explode with color in the summer, and soften to warm, deep hues in the fall.*



*More than 150 native trees and shrubs have been planted among our new exhibits. These new plants will provide shade, shelter, and food for our cranes and anyone else who visits!*



## International Crane Foundation

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*Address Service Requested*

# Let's Whoop It Up!

You are cordially invited to our first-ever virtual fundraiser to celebrate cranes and craniacs worldwide. ***Let's Whoop it Up!*** is an opportunity to unite in support of our mission on **Thursday, July 23, at 7 p.m. Central Time.**

We created this special event to give you a sneak peek of our newly renovated site, *Cranes of the World*. We'll be opening the gates virtually and providing never before seen glimpses of our amazing site renovation. And, we'll hear from colleagues in Asia, Africa, and North America about their efforts to save cranes and the places where cranes dance.



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The evening will be hosted live by President and CEO Rich Beilfuss and Co-founder George Archibald in the new George Archibald Welcome Center. There will be a virtual auction beginning on **Monday, July 13**, where we will auction off one-of-a-kind crane experience "packages."

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Be sure to mark your calendars and help us spread the word by inviting your friends to join this free, fun event! Please go to [www.savingcranes.org/lets-whoop-it-up/](http://www.savingcranes.org/lets-whoop-it-up/) to stream it.

No advance registration is required.

