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SIBERIAN CRANE FLYWAY NEWS



Photo by Zhou Haixiang

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***COMPILED BY ELENA ILYASHENKO
ICF/CMS SIBERIAN CRANE FLYWAY COORDINATOR***

CONTENT

Information from Breeding Sites 2006

Western and Central Flyways

About Monitoring on Siberian and Eurasian Cranes in West Siberia, Russia, in 2006 (*Yuri Markin, Alexander Sorokin, Alexander Ermakov, and Anastasia Shilina*)

Eastern Flyway

Siberian Crane Breeding in Kytalyk Resource Reserve, Yakutia, Russia, in 2006 (*Sergei Sleptsov*)

Field Trip to the Siberian Crane Breeding Ground in Yakutia, Russia, in 2006 (*Nikolai Germogenov, Yuri Markin, Elena Ilyashenko, and Claire Mirande*)

Information from Migration Sites 2005/06

Western and Central Flyways

Sightings of Siberian Cranes during Spring and Autumn Migrations in Kazakhstan in 2006 (*Yevgeny Bragin*)

Sightings of Siberian Cranes in Azerbaijan in Spring 2006

Unusual Late Sighting of Siberian Cranes in Astrakhan Nature Reserve (*German Rusanov*)

Eastern Flyway

Brief Report on Southwards Migration of Cranes at the Yellow River Delta NNR, China, 2005 (*Shan Kai*)

Waterbird Census at Zhalong NNR, China, in spring 2005 (*Pang Shiliang, Liu Sheng-Long, Qiu Fucheng, Cai Yong-Jun*)

New staging area for Siberian Cranes in NE China (*Ding Changqing, and Wang Qishan*)

Record Number of the Siberian Crane in Liaoning Province, China, in Autumn 2006 (*Yang Yan*)

Brief News on Migratory Cranes From Wetlands at Daqing, China, in October 2006 (*Su Liying*)

The Siberian Crane Migration in Indigirka River Valley, Yakutia, Russia (*Elena Ilyashenko, Maria Vladimirtseva*)

Spring and Autumn Migrations of the Siberian Crane in Lower Aldan River, South-East Yakutia, in 2005 and 2006 (*Inga, Bysykatova, Nikolai Yegorov, Raisa Zelepukhina, and Nikolai Germogenov*)

Siberian Crane Spring Migration in Maiya River Valley, Middle Aldan River, Yakutia, in 2006 (*Victor Degtyarev, Maria Vladimirtseva, and Inga Bysykatova*)

Sighting of Siberian Cranes in the Middle Aldan River, Yakutia, in 2006 (*Arkady Isayev, Sergei Protopopov*)

A Visit to the Siberian Crane Staging Areas in the Aldan and Maya River Valleys of Southern Yakutia in 2006 (*Crawford Prentice, and Mikhail Stishov*)

Sighting of the Siberian Crane in Amur Region, Russian Far East (*Sergei. Smirenski*)

Summer of 2006 – an Important Year for the Siberian Crane Sightings in Mongolia (*Tseveenmyadag Natsagdorj, Nyambayar Batbayar, and Munkhzul Tseveenmyadag*)

Information from Wintering Sites 2006

Western Flyway

Siberian Cranes at Wintering Site in Iran in 2006 (*Sadegh Sadeghi Zadegan*)

Eastern Flyway

Report on Wintering Waterfowls in Poyang Lake, 2005/2006 (*Ji Weitao, Zeng Nanjing*)

Survey on waterfowls in Anqing Riverine Wetland NNR, 2005/2006 (*Zhang Hong*)

Sighting of a Siberian Crane in Yancheng NNR, China, in 2006 (*Wang Hui*)

Banding 2006

Sighting of a banded Siberian Crane in Yellow River Delta, China (*Qian Fawen, Simba Chan*)

Captive Breeding 2006

Propagation of the Siberian Crane in Oka Crane Breeding Center, Russia, in 2006 (*Tatiana Kashentseva*)

Propagation of the Siberian Crane in Moscow Zoo, Russia, in 2006 (*Olga Rozdina*)

The International Siberian Crane Studbook (*Tatiana Kashentseva, Rob Belterman*)

Reintroduction 2007

Release of Siberian Cranes at Wintering Site in Iran in 2007 (*Yuri Markin, Sadegh Sadeghi Zadegan*)

Education 2006

Three White Cranes, Two Flyways, One World (*Jim Harris*)

First Crane Celebration in Iran (*Azin Fazeli*)

Fifth Anniversary of the Crane Day in Kazakhstan! Crane Day Report and Leader Competition!
(*Tatiana Bragina*)

Naurzum – the Siberian Crane Territory (Crane Festival in Kazakhstan) (*Elena Efimova, and Ekaterina Salyutina*)

International Children Art Exhibition in Asian Countries (*Elena Ilyashenko*)

UNEP/GEF Siberian Crane Wetlands Project

The UNEP/GEF Siberian Crane Wetlands Project – Status at the End of Phase 1 (*Crawford Prentice, and Patricia Gleason*)

CMS News

Afghanistan Signature Closes Important Last Siberian Crane MoU Gap (*UNEP/CMS*)

Information from Breeding Sites 2006

Western and Central Flyways

About Monitoring on Siberian and Eurasian Cranes in West Siberia, Russia, in 2006

Yuri Markin¹, Alexander Sorokin², Alexander Ermakov³, and Anastasia Shilina²

¹*Oka State Biosphere Nature Reserve, Russia*

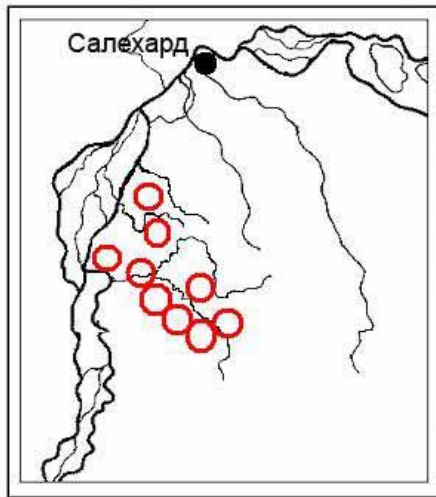
²*All-Russian Institute on Nature Protection, Russia*

³*Sterkh Foundation, Yamalo-Nenetsky Autonomic Region, Russia*

In 2006 monitoring of populations of the Siberian Crane and the Eurasian Crane in the Lower Ob River Basin was continued. Surveys were conducted in the frame of the UNEP/GEF Siberian Crane Wetlands Project and according to Conservation Measures of the Siberian Crane under the Convention of Migratory Species of Wild Animals. Two different methods were used to collect data on cranes: aerial surveys and questionnaires within local communities.

An aerial survey of the eastern tributaries of Pitlyar, Khashgortyogan and Kunovat in the Ob River Basin was conducted by helicopter on 12 June 2006. We flew above breeding areas previously used by Siberian and Eurasian Cranes, observing all available habitats carefully. Because these areas had a high potential for nesting sites, we made our observations while flying at minimal speed and from a height of 30-50 m. This approach was based on our previous experience of seeking crane nests from a helicopter. To save flight time when monitoring habitats with a low potential for nesting sites, we flew at the higher speed of 200 km/hour and at a height of 100-250 m. Total flight time was 4 hours and 50 minutes, including two hours of active surveying of prospective crane habitats.

Siberian Crane. It was surveyed 9 breeding areas known in the last, where Siberian Cranes were not sighted during more than 5 years. Three former pairs were located in the Upper Rivers of Pitlyar and Khashgortyogan, Middle Longyvozhogan River; other five pairs were known from the basins of Lower and Middle Kunovat River. We couldn't discover Siberian Cranes during our survey as well as in last years.



Distribution of the Eurasian Crane breeding areas in Kunovat River Basin according to previous data

Eurasian Crane. It was observed ten known in the last Eurasian Crane breeding areas in the wetlands on the right side of Lower and Middle Kunovat River. After very careful surveys only three pairs were discovered. Repeated flight above these pairs showed that two of them were territorial pairs, but probably not nesting. Molting birds among sighted cranes were not observed.

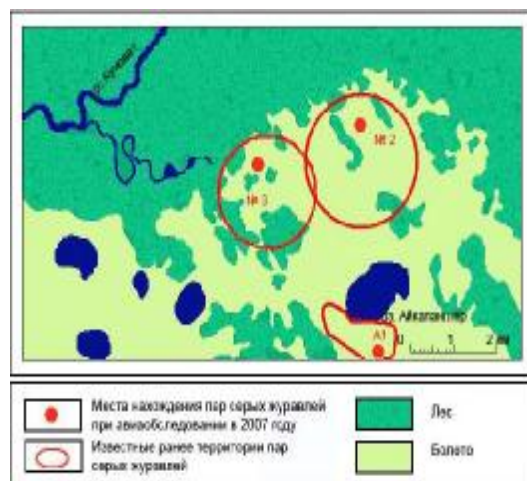
According to a 25-year period of Eurasian Crane monitoring in the Kunovat River Basin, main chick hatching period occurs from 10 to 20 June. On the basis of this data we can suggest that Eurasian Cranes did not nest successfully in 2006. This is unusual for that territory. It is probably connected to very late and cold springs, and very late snow melt on the wetlands, with the result that the cranes had no opportunity to nest during the optimal period. Usually if cranes do not lay eggs before the end of May, they stop any nesting activity in such a cold year.

In like manner, very low numbers of swans were seen, following the late and cold spring of 2006. We observed only two nesting pairs, although tens pairs were counted in years with normal springs.

Information on Siberian Crane sightings was collected from local people as a part of the UNEP/GEF Siberian Crane Wetlands Project through sharing a questionnaire and through interviews with local people. Target groups included hunters, fishermen, pilots, and other people connected to and interested in nature. Special attention was given to obtaining accurate data. Tables below include only authentic data of 2006.



Eurasian Cranes on Aikalanglor Lake in Kunovat Wildlife Refuge, 2006. Photo by Alexei Blagovidov



Distribution of the Eurasian Crane breeding areas in Kunovat River Basin in 2006

Yamalo-Nenetsky Autonomous Region

№	Date	Site of sighting	Number of Siberian Cranes	Notes
1	08.05.2006	Near village of Berezovo	2	In flight
2	15.05.2006	Near village of Aksarka	2	In flight
3	20.05.2006	Between town of Salekhard and village of Aksarka	2	In flight, observed from helicopter
4	20.05.2006	Yety-Pur River (south of Purovsky District)	2	Were feeding on the bank
5	20.05.2006	Verkhnepoluisky Wildlife Refuge (Zakaznik)	2	In flight
6	June 2006	Near New Kievat, Lower Dvuobije	1	On the bank of small river. Crane had reddish spots on its feathers, probably a one-year old bird.
7	June 2006	Poluisky Wildlife Refuge (Zakaznik)	1	In flight
8	June 2006	Near village of Berezovo, Dvuobije	1	On the bank of river
9	The second part of August 2006	Bank of Zazhimchar River, 12 km to the east from village of Kyzym-Mys.	2 birds	Cranes were observed during two days; they were feeding on the bank.
10	Summer 2006	Wetlands with lakes on the left bank of Zazhimchar River	2 pairs	These pairs kept 4 km from each other. Looked like nesting pairs.

Tobolsk and Uvat Districts, Tyumen Region

№	Date	Site of sighting	Number of Siberian Cranes	Notes
11	summer 2006	Near Chelbash and Chernenkoye Lakes	3	On a marsh
12	11.09.2006	Near settlement of Uvat, bank of Irtysh River	2	In flight
13	13.09.2006	Village of Luchkino, Uvat District	3	In flight

Armizon District, Tyumen Region

№	Date	Site of sighting	Number of Siberian Cranes	Notes
14	beginning of August 2006	Belozersky Federal Wildlife Refuge (Federal Zakaznik)	1	In flight
15	29.09.2006	Belozersky Federal Wildlife Refuge (Federal Zakaznik)	1	In flight

Data #9 and #10 deserve special attention. This information was received from two separate respondents who live in native villages and for whom the Siberian Crane is a well known bird. In previous years we also received information about Siberian Crane sightings. In 2005 we conducted an aerial survey of this territory; however, the wetland cited in data #10 was not included in that survey. We are planning to survey this site in 2007.



Questionnaire on the Siberian Crane sightings prepared by the Russian National Coordination Group of the UNEP/GEF Siberian Crane Wetlands Project

We would like to add to the account for data #12. On 11 September, special training for young Siberian and Eurasian Cranes reintroduced with the help of an ultralight aircraft into the wild was conducted on the banks of the Irtys River, not far from town of Uvat, as a part of the "Flight of Hope Project". Observers included members of our expedition, local rangers, and a TV group. The young cranes followed the ultralight very well, and this event was captured that day in film footage and photographs. Five months later, when one of the pictures was produced with a high resolution, it was discovered that, in addition to the released cranes, a pair of wild Siberian Cranes were also captured on that picture! The pair of wild cranes were flying about 100 m above the released cranes, and were not seen by the numerous people there who had good observation skills. This case demonstrates how gaps can occur and how difficult it can be to get correct data about Siberian Cranes through questionnaires.

For more information:
Yuri Markin
Yu.markin@mail.ru

Eastern Flyway

Siberian Crane Breeding in Kytalyk Resource Reserve, Yakutia, Russia, in 2006

By Sergei Sleptsov

Institute of Biological Problems of Cryolithozone, Yakutia, Russia

In the spring of 2006 crane migration began on schedule. On May 26 in the area of Yelon Cordon, Siberian Crane migration was observed. In 3.5 hours twelve Siberian Cranes were registered (four pairs and a flock of four birds). They were heading north at an altitude of 15 to 20 meters, along the Yelon River. The weather was sunny and still.

At the "Dzhyukarskoye" site, Siberian Cranes were observed on May 31, when about half of the snow at their nesting locations had melted. The pair at the Krugloye (Round) Lake started incubating on June 2, while simultaneously building their nest. On the same day another breeding pair was noticed.

The Sandhill Cranes, also in that area, started nesting a little earlier than the Siberian Cranes. The pair that arrived on May 27 presumably started incubation on May 31 since only one bird was observed on that day.

In the summer of 2006 many young Siberian Cranes were observed. On June 2 a flock of four young Siberian Cranes was noticed flying from west to east. On the night of June 4, not far from the "Dzhyukarskoye" site, a flock of seven young Siberian Cranes was observed. In the early morning of June 6, three young Siberian Cranes were observed at the southern shore of Dzhyukarskoye Lake. On June 16 in the daytime, one young bird flew to the trailer and spent about 4.5 hours there. This Siberian Crane was hunting for some large insects, probably bumblebees. On June 17 six young Siberian Cranes flew to the north at an altitude of approximately 35 to 40 meters. Unlike the adult birds, young Siberian Cranes are not very cautious, allowing people to approach as close as 100-150 meters. The young cranes, at this age, are not yet completely white. About 15% to 20% of their feathers are still brown; these brown feathers are especially numerous on the neck and tail.

Nesting pairs are aggressive to the young birds, forcing them to leave the nesting location. This may be the reason why young Siberian Cranes tend to be found in dry, elevated locations, which are not typically used by this species of crane. On June 5 an adult Siberian Crane, having noticed three young birds of the same species arriving at its location, flew closer to them and landed within 70 meters; it then approached the young cranes and demonstrated threatening poses. This adult crane continued to threaten the young cranes until they left the site.

In June 2006 in Katalyk Resources Reserve, a total of 13 nesting pairs of Siberian Cranes were registered. Nine of them were incubating eggs.

Additional observations included the following: In the summer of 2006, the number of raptors increased in comparison to the two previous years. Two nests of the Rough-legged Buzzard (*Buteo lagopus*, also referred to as the Rough-legged Hawk in some parts of the world) were found, with four and five eggs respectively. In general, weather conditions in May were favorable for all species of birds.

For more information:
Sergei Sleptsov
sleptsov@mail.ru

Field Trip to the Siberian Crane Breeding Ground in Yakutia, Russia, in 2006

by Nikolai Germogenov¹, Yuri Markin², Elena Ilyashenko³, and Claire Mirande³,

¹Institute of Biological Problems of Cryolithozone, Yakutia, Russia

²Oka State Biosphere Nature Reserve, Russia

³International Crane Foundation



Kytalyk Resource Reserve in Yakutia, Russia.
Photo by Elena Ilyashenko

A field trip to the Kytalyk Resource Reserve, the primary Siberian Crane breeding ground, was held from 14 to 26 August in connection with the UNEP/GEF Siberian Crane Wetlands Project. This Reserve is located in the north of North-East Siberia, 120 km from Chokurdakh, the capital of Allaikovsky Ulus. This field trip was an international experience as participants from all project levels took part: Claire Mirande, Project Director; Elena Ilyashenko, Siberian Crane Flyway Coordinator (regional level); Alexei Blagovidov, MTR Deputy Reviewer; Nikolai Germogenov, Maria Vladimirtseva and Inga Byskatova, staff of the Institute of the Biological Problems of Cryolithozone; Yuri Markin, consultant on PTT marking; Tatiana Minaeva and Andrei Sirin, consultants on management planning and wetlands (Russia national level); Qien Fawen, National Project Manager for China (Chinese project national level); Yu Gouhai, Vice-director of Momoge National Nature Reserve (Chinese project site level); Tatiana Stryukova and Sergei Yanygin, Environmental Inspection in Allaikovsky Ulus; Ivan Danilov, former Director of Kytalyk RR (Russian

site level in Yakutia); and Raymond Mirande, volunteer.

The primary goals of the expedition to the Kytalyk RR were to survey the Siberian Crane breeding area, to conduct a census of the breeding pairs, and to capture Siberian Crane chicks for PTT marking. A Platform Transmitter Terminal (PTT) is a satellite tracking device, very useful in monitoring crane movements.

We could not use a helicopter for aerial survey work and Siberian Crane PTT marking in Kytalyk RR because the helicopter which was to be used in Chokurdakh last year was crushed in spring 2006. The expired license of the Polar Line Air Company was renewed just before our expedition, on 12 August, but a new helicopter in Chokurdakh was not yet available. However, the weather was very cold and foggy throughout the period of our field work. Thus, weather conditions would have prevented any helicopter use even if that option had been available.

As a result, we intended to use two swamp vehicles, "Tugut", for conducting ground surveys and for capturing chicks. These vehicles were rented in Chokurdakh through a communal service agency and with the support of the local administration. Prior to this, these swamp vehicles had been used only during the winter. Using them in summer for crane capture was an experiment.

We observed 5 pairs of Siberian Cranes around Yelon Station in Kytalyk RR. We didn't see any chicks. The behavior of the adult cranes suggested that only one of the pairs had a chick.

We did not capture any chicks, possibly because of the following reasons:

- Low level of Siberian Crane breeding success in this year because of the cold, late spring. This was suggested by a spring ground survey provided by Sergei Sleptsov, YCU ornithologist, and by the analyses of weather conditions for 20 years provided by Anatoly Pshennikov, who showed that 1995, 2000, and 2005 were more favorable years for birds breeding, including the Siberian Crane. But as a rule, the most unfavorable years followed favorable years. This 2006 was an unfavorable year for Siberian Crane breeding according to weather conditions.
- Lack of experience of using the swamp vehicles.
- Lack of preliminary study concerning pairs located around Yelon Station just before our field work.

The following conclusions can be drawn:

- It is possible to use swamp vehicles in tundra regions during the summer, but they need to be refurbished for this purpose, adding a fan, chains for the wheels, etc. An additional concern is that swamp vehicles severely damage the tundra's plant cover.
- It is possible to capture chicks with swamp vehicles provided that special preliminary work has been done; it is particularly important to determine in advance exactly which pairs of cranes have chicks, and to subsequently monitor these chicks before their capture.

A few of the field trip participants--including Nikolai Germogenov, Tatiana Stryukova, Ivan Danilov, Qian Fawen, Yu Goukhai and the rangers--participated in a boat trip to Amyuk-Koel Lake to survey new Siberian Crane habitats along the Berelyokh River and its tributaries. They sighted eight pairs of Siberian Cranes; three of them were with chicks.



In Summer 2006, two swamp vehicles, "Tugut", were used in searching for Siberian crane pairs with chicks. Photo by Elena Ilyashenko



International team observing a Siberian Crane pair. Photo by Elena Ilyashenko

The other important goals of the field trip were to meet with Kytalyk RR staff and stakeholders to recognize their needs and to discuss management planning for Kytalyk RR. The reserve lacks basic equipment, and most of the existing equipment is in need of replacement.

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

Information from Migration Sites 2005/2006

Western Flyway

Sightings of Siberian Cranes during Spring and Autumn Migrations of 2006 in Kazakhstan

By Yevgeny Bragin

Naurzum Nature Reserve, Kazakhstan

The following information about two sightings of Siberian Cranes during spring migration in the Naurzum Nature Reserve, North Kazakhstan, was received from a local farmer (a former ranger who also gave information to ornithologist Anatoly Kovshar a few years ago):

1) one Siberian Crane was sighted on 3 April 2006 in a flock of Eurasian Cranes on fields to the west of the Naurzum Nature Reserve; and

2) two Siberian Cranes (who may be a pair) were sighted on 9 April 2006 near Baituma Lake, 20-30 km north of Naurzum Nature Reserve.

It is unlikely that the farmer noticed any rings.

On 30 August one Siberian Crane was sighted in Aksuat Lake in the Naurzum State Nature Reserve. The bird was not banded.

On 5 September one more Siberian Crane was sighted in Aksuat Lake in the Naurzum State Nature Reserve, North Kazakhstan. Thus, two Siberian Cranes were observed at this lake. During the two days of observation, these cranes did not appear to be a pair; they did not join each other and walked separately for a distance of about 1-1.5 km.

Two Siberian Cranes were observed on 30 August and 5 September, remaining at the Naurzum Lakes until 14 September. We interrupted our monitoring from 15 September to 3 October. However, we received information from local people that these two cranes departed from Naurzum about 20 September; one



Sightings of two single Siberian Cranes on Aksuat Lake in Naurzum Nature Reserve on 30 August and 5 September 2006. Photos by Yevgeny Bragin



Pair of Siberian Cranes on Aksuat Lake in Naurzum Nature Reserve on 5 October 2006. Photo by Yevgeny Bragin

flying Siberian Crane was reported near Razdolnoye Village (87 km to the west of Aksuat Lake) on 20 September, and the other Siberian Crane was sighted on Shoptikol Lake (68 km to the west-southwest of Aksuat Lake) on 21-22 September by Vladimir Parastatov, Head of Local Hunting Society.

On the morning of 5 October we surveyed a few of the Naurzum Lakes including Aksuat Lake, but we did not see Siberian Cranes. During observation of the eastern part of Aksuat Lake later that same day, we sighted two Siberian Cranes in a flock of Eurasian Cranes. After 4 p.m. the Eurasian Cranes left the lake, but the Siberian Cranes remained, joining a flock of swans and continuing to feed.

On 6 October the two birds moved to the south part of the lake. These two Siberian Cranes stayed together and were probably a pair. Neither Siberian Crane was banded.

After 6 October, Siberian Cranes were no longer observed.

Thus, at least four Siberian Cranes were sighted in Naurzum in Autumn 2006.

For more information:
Yevgeny Bragin
naurzum@mail.ru

Sightings of Siberian Cranes in Azerbaijan in Spring 2006

According to information from Abbas Abbasov, ranger of the Kyzyl-Agach Nature Reserve, sightings of five Siberian Cranes were registered at different times in May 2006 in Kurinskaya Kosa, on the western coast of the Caspian Sea. These data should be checked.

Unusual Late Sighting of Siberian Cranes in Astrakhan Nature Reserve

By German Rusanov

Astrakhan Biosphere State Nature Reserve, Russia

On 29 November 2006 at 10:40 a.m., four Siberian Cranes were sighted by Sergei Mitrofanov, ranger of Astrakhanski Nature Reserve, in Obzhorovo site of the reserve. All cranes were adults. They were circling with calls high in the sky above Obzhorovo site.

The night of 28-29 November was very clear and cold, minus 19°C. All springs and creeks were under ice. After 1 December the weather became warmer and the ice melted.

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

Eastern Flyway

Brief Report on Southwards Migration of Cranes at the Yellow River Delta N.R., China, 2005

by Shan Kai

Administrative Bureau of Yellow River Delta National Nature Reserve

The survey on the southward migration of cranes at the Yellow River Delta National Nature Reserve, 2005 has been completed. Compared with the data collected in 2004, the number of cranes stopping over at the

reserve was less than that of the previous year. The cranes arrived about half a month later and left 10 days later than the previous year. Most cranes stayed here in November.

The earliest and latest sightings of Siberian Cranes at the reserve were on 29 October and 22 November 2005 respectively. The departure in 2005 was 23 days later than in 2004. The main departure locations were at Dawenliu Administrative Station on the south bank of the Huanghe River (40 cranes), and at Huanghe Estuary Administrative Station (34 cranes). The total number (74 cranes) of Siberian Cranes was less than that in 2004.

The boundary between red marshland and large areas of water is the most suitable habitat for the Siberian Crane, as is the intertidal zone. The operation of the inshore oilfield decreased crane numbers very significantly.

Adopted from China Crane News, 2006, vol. 9(2), p. 15-16

Waterbird Census at Zhalong NNR, China, in Spring 2005

by Pang Shiliang, Liu Sheng-Long, Qiu Fucheng, and Cai Yong-Jun

Administrative Bureau of Heilongjiang Zhalong National Nature Reserve

Zhalong National Nature Reserve is located in the Song-Nen Plain and in the lower basin of Wuyuer River, western Heilongjiang Province.

Surveys of waterfowl were conducted in the reserve in the frame of the UNEP/GEF Siberian Crane Wetlands Project implementation from 3 April to 5 June 2005. Results of the Siberian Crane census in Spring 2005 are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Waterfowl census at Zhalong N.R. in spring 2005

Species	Lindian	Tumutai	Yantongtun	Zhalong	Total
Siberian Crane	64	130	55	2	251

Adopted from China Crane News, 2006, vol. 9(2), p. 19-20

New Staging Area for Siberian Cranes in NE China

by Ding Changqing, and Wang Qishan

China Ornithological Society

An important migration stopover for the Siberian Crane, the Oriental Stork, and other species was discovered at the Huanzidong Reservoir in Liaoning Province, northeast China, by Liaoning Environmental Protection Volunteers' Association (Green Liaoning) in 2005.

In November 2005 up to 213 Siberian cranes and 32 Oriental Storks were observed; on 29 March 2006, 423 Siberian Cranes were recorded, gathered with 13 Hooded Cranes, nine White-naped Cranes, 40 Oriental Storks, and over 1,000 Baikal Teal. On 7 April 2006, Swan Geese, Mute Swans, White-fronted Geese, Eurasian Spoonbills, and Ospreys were also seen (numbers not given). According to preliminary estimates, the reservoir is a resting place for up to 20,000 waterbirds on spring migration. The Siberian Crane, Oriental Stork, White-naped Crane, Hooded Crane, and Baikal Teal account for over one percent of the global population, so the site meets Ramsar and IBA criteria. But the reservoir is not managed and there is uncontrolled fishing; many birds are caught in fishing nets, while others are baited with poison or illegally netted. Land reclamation is also a problem, as is possible disease from poultry farming. In April the WWF-China agreed to assist the Liaoning Volunteers in their survey and public awareness work.

Huanzidong Reservoir is located in Faku County, 150 km northwest of Shenyang City, Liaoning Province (122°55'08"E; 42°21'28"N). It covers 1,200 hectares as well as 200 hectares of wetland and 70 hectares of reed beds. Most of the reservoir is about 0.5 meters deep; there are plenty of aquatic plants and fish for the birds to feed on.

*Adopted from Chinese Journal of Zoology, #3, 2006
and China Crane News, 2006, vol. 10(1), p. 14-15*

Record Number of the Siberian Crane in Liaoning Province, China, in Autumn 2006

by Yang Yan

WWF China Species Programme

According to Prof. Zhou Haixiang, the technical advisor for Liaoning Environmental Protection Volunteer Association, the majority of Siberian Cranes arrived at the Huanzidong Reservoir Wetland in Shenyang, Liaoning Province, in the beginning of November, with a record of over 800 cranes on 7 November. Historically, this number is twice as high as the number of Siberian Cranes in the past. The biggest flock--about 500 Siberian Cranes--left on 8 November along with 240 Hooded Cranes, 50 Eurasian Cranes, and five Red-crowned Cranes.



Huanzidong Reservoir Wetland in Shenyang – a new migration stopover of the Siberian Crane in Liaoning Province.
Photos by Zhou Haixiang

Shenyang Environmental Protection Bureau is planning to establish a Municipal-level Nature Reserve at Huanzidong. WWF-China is also looking for opportunities in promoting it to a Ramsar Site, or any other collaboration and support.

For more information:
Yang Yan
[***yyang@wwfchina.org***](mailto:yyang@wwfchina.org)

Brief News on Migratory Cranes from Wetlands at Daqing, China, in October 2006

by Su Liying

International Crane Foundation

With kind assistance from Longfeng Wetland Reserve and accompanied by Mr. Fu Jianguo, I did a brief survey of cranes in several wetlands in the Daqing area on October 12-13, 2006. During the surveys, we saw Red-crowned, White-naped, Hooded, and Siberian Cranes, and also many species of ducks.

These wetlands are located in the northern part of Songnen Plain, about 30 km east from Zhalong Wetland and 50 km northeast from Momoge Nature Reserve. These wetlands play a role similar to that of these well known wetlands, not only providing breeding grounds for many waterfowl, but also serving as stopover places for migratory species from northern China (Great Xinganling Mountains), nearby parts of Siberia, and farther north from the arctic tundra of Yakutia. These wetlands lie on the flyway for the eastern population of the Siberian Crane.

On October 12, we saw 20 Hooded Cranes in a wetland north of Daqing Reservoir (Heiyupao) and east of the Beibuyinnen Canal, at N 46° 54' 41", E 125° 23' 24". These cranes were foraging by the edge of a reed marsh near a cornfield. Amazingly, there were 8 chicks in the small flock.

On October 13, we saw 24 Red-crowned, 12 White-naped, and 19 Siberian Cranes in the flood plain of the Shuangyang River in Lindian County (north of Daqing City), N 47° 12' 56", E 125° 08' 42". There were no chicks for the Red-crowned and White-naped Cranes. The Siberian Cranes consisted of five families (each with 2 adults and 1 chick) and 4 adults. These cranes were foraging in a dry river bed with scattered short vegetation. The species did not mix in single flocks. The distances between the flocks were about 300-800 m. Distances between the Siberian Crane families were 100-200 m. There was a large patch, at least 100 ha, of reed marsh near the foraging area for the cranes.

After that, we drove along the Beibuyinnen Canal south to return to Daqing Reservoir. We found more Hooded Cranes a little bit of north of where we had found the Hooded Cranes the day before, N 47° 00' 26", E 125° 10' 28", in wetlands north of Daqing Reservoir. The numbers of birds in each flock were as follows: 12, 47, 22, and 4. Among them were 19 chicks. Later, we found a family with 2 adults and 2 chicks at the same spot where we had seen cranes the day before.

The wetland north of the Daqing Reservoir has a long, narrow shape, about 6-10 km wide where it extends along Beibuyinnen Canal north-southward to Daqing Reservoir, then buffering the north edge of the reservoir and merging east with wetlands to the north of Hongqi Reservoir (this latter reservoir belongs to Anda City). This year, this complex of wetlands became the second largest wetland in Songnen Plain, second only to Zhalong. There were a broad range of wet meadows and grasslands adjacent to the wetlands. With different amounts of rainfall each year, there are dynamic shifts among open water lakes, reed marshes, wet meadows, and grasslands, creating a different pattern of habitats each year.

According to Mr. Fu, there are some cranes and a large number of ducks using the wetlands every year during the migration season. During the high peak of migration, the population size of Hooded Cranes is much bigger than we found on October 12-13 (see Guo et al. 2004 *China Crane News* 8(2)). The place where we saw Hooded Cranes has also been a breeding area for Demoiselle Cranes and Great Bustards. But no one has studied breeding birds there in the last 10 years. We saw many species of ducks and gulls and terns during our surveys.

For more information:

Su Liying

liying@savingcranes.org

The Siberian Crane Migration in Indigirka River Valley, Yakutia, Russia

Maria Vladimirtseva and Elena Ilyashenko

Institute of Biological Problems of Cryolithozone, Yakutia, Russia

CMS/ICF Siberian Crane Flyway Coordinator

The Yakutian Coordination Unit (YCU) under the UNEP/GEF Siberian Crane Wetland Project carries out a survey on sightings of Siberian Cranes in the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia). The Children Educational Center in the village of Khonuu, Momoysky Ulus, has been involved in this activity, under the direction of Nadezhda Permikina, who is an active participant and organizer of Crane Celebration.

Nadezhda's son Ivan, 14, was in earnest about the assigned task. After studying relevant literature and consulting researchers from the Institute for Biological Problems of Cryolithozone, the Siberian Division of the Russian Academy of Sciences, and the Project staff, he conducted surveys, with a widely distributed

questionnaire among the citizens of the villages of Khonuu, Buor-Sysy, Saidy, Tebyulyakh, and Sasyr, located in the Momsky Ulus. The resulting data were summarized in his report on *Importance of the Momsky Ulus for the Siberian Crane Migration* presented at the "Step into the Future" scientific and technical conference held in the local school.

The Momsky Ulus settlements are situated in the Indigirka River floodplain, at a place where the river begins its way through the Chersky Mountain Range.

In November-December 2005, Ivan interviewed 50 people, and 30 people filled in the questionnaires. Data on all sightings that people remembered from their childhood were registered. Hunters, reindeer breeders, helicopter pilots, inspectors of the Momsky National Park, and power plant staff – the people who regularly visit remote areas – were the most productive respondents. The sightings of Siberian Cranes were outstanding events for these people, and they often remembered the exact dates and places of sightings, and could even point out the geographical coordinates, as their routes had been mapped out.



Below are several extracts from the report by Ivan Permikin.

Ivan Permikin working on his report. Photo by Nadezhda Permikina

Spring migration. On their spring passage, Siberian Cranes stop over rivers and large lakes. The most suitable stop-over sites are located along the Indigirka, Inyali and Moma Rivers. By the time of passage, the rivers are still partly covered with ice. The lakes of Sobolokh and Ulakhan Kel (the latter name can be translated as 'a child was born') provide safe places for roosting. Extensive information has been collected on the sightings of Siberian cranes in the area of Kubalakh. From 50 to 300 birds stage there in different years. Flying across the Chersky Mountain Range, near the village of Tebyulyakh, cranes rise to a height of over 2,700 m. Perhaps, the Momsky Ulus is the place where they can have a rest after an exhausting passage.

Autumn migration. In the autumn, Siberian Cranes stop over the hay fields, which are largely flooded in the Momsky Ulus. The villagers mow grass standing up to their knees in the water. These fields provide ideal habitats for Siberian Cranes. These sites are hardly accessible. There is enough feed: plant roots in the marshes, berry grounds with cowberries nearby, and fish in the lakes. The name of Sobolokh Lake reflects the fact that there have always been many crucian carps. The passage takes place in September. If the autumn is lengthy, as it was in 2005, cranes occur in late September to early October. They stage on the rivers of Indigirka and Chibogalakh, and on Sobolokh Lake. The maximum number of staging cranes (1,500 individuals) was registered at the icy Khiltaakh River in 2000".

Ivan collected interesting information on the sightings of cranes in the summer. Judging from these, the southern boundary of the Siberian Crane's breeding range is possibly located in this very region. No nests were found, although reindeer-breeders saw a pair of cranes 160 km NW of the village of Khonuu on 16 June 1999. Their behavior suggested that they could have a nest.

Information on sightings of cranes with chicks was provided by former citizens of the currently abandoned settlement of Eselyakh. It had been located in the Eselyakh Resource Reserve covering the northeastern Momsky Ulus. Until 1969, when the last villagers left Eselyakh, pairs of cranes, each with one chick, were regularly seen in the traditional hay harvesting areas in early August. The rusty-colored chick always attracted people's attention.

In 2006, hay-makers informed Ivan about a pair of cranes with a rusty chick they saw near the settlement of Sobolokh, 30 km south of the Khonuu village, in early August.

Sightings of juveniles and yearlings, still rusty buff in color, were frequent in the spring, summer and autumn. They occurred in the mixed groups, together with adult birds, as well as in groups consisting of young birds only. As an example, a group of 50 young birds was registered at the Chibogalakh River in October 2004.

Ivan emphasizes in his report that local people treat the Siberian Crane as a sacred bird. A sighting of this bird promises happiness and longevity. The killing of a crane is a sin. The girl beauty is often compared to

the crane's looks. Old Yakut songs tell of cranes dancing in a circle of tundra birds--geese, ducks, gulls, and waders. The Evenki name for the Siberian Crane is *kidak*; its Yakut name is *kytalyk*.

This attitude is genuinely supported by Ivan's interest and regard for this amazing bird.

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

Spring and Autumn migrations of Siberian Crane in Lower Aldan River, South-East Yakutia, in 2005 and 2006.

By Inga Bysykatova¹, Nikolai Yegorov¹, Raisa Zelepukhina², and Nikolai Germogenov¹

¹*Institute of the Biological Problems of the Cryolithozone, Yakutia, Russia*

²*Tattinski Forest Agency, Yakutia, Russia*

Observations of the Siberian Crane migration were conducted near the village of Okhotski Perevoz, south-east Yakutia (61°52'41" N, 135°31'25" E). This village is located on the right bank of the Lower Aldan River, where Tomponski, Tattinski, and Ust-Maiski Uluses (Regions) are joined. The main migration route of the Siberian Crane nested between Kolyma and Indigirka Rivers, goes along the Aldan River Valley.

We also summarized data from the questionnaire on the Siberian Crane season migrations in 2005 and spring migration in 2006.

In 2005, spring came early; daytime temperatures were up to +10°C at the end of April. Ice melting started on 8 May; the water level of the floodplain was low. The Siberian Crane migration was recorded from 10 to 16 May. The total number of cranes sighted was 87:

on 10 May – 7 birds;

on 13 May – flock of 27 near the village of Okhotski Perevoz;

on 16 May – two flocks (30 and 23) near Kytikh site, 4 km to the southeast from Okhotski Perevoz.

In flight, the cranes' altitude ranged from 100 to 1000 m, and their main direction was to the north.

During the autumn migration of 2005, from 25 September to 5 October, 5 sightings were registered with a total number of more than 90 birds. Siberian cranes were observed 2-3 km to south-east from Okhotski Perevoz (табл. 1).

Table 1. The Siberian Crane Migration Near Okhotski Perevos Village in Autumn of 2005 (Lower Aldan River)

Date of sightings	September		October		
	25	28	2	4	5
Number of cranes	Flock (more than 20)	3	20	28	20

The autumn migration was primarily in a south to southeast direction, at an altitude up to 500 m.

The spring of 2006 came early, as it did in 2005. The average temperature during the first half of May was +5°C. Ice melting started on 11 May; the river was free of ice on 24 May.

The first Siberian Cranes were sighted on 16 May: 12 birds flew above Okhotski Perevoz at 200-250 m. The next sighting was near Kytynakh site on 17 May: 16 birds flew at altitudes up to 400 m. The last sighting was one kilometer from Okhotski Perevoz on 22 May: 17 birds circled 400 km above the left bank of the Aldan River.

Almost all of the flock was flying in a northeast direction at an altitude of about 300-400 m before landing to rest.

According to information from local people, at least four sightings of resting cranes were registered during the last five years on the left bank of the Aldan River, one kilometer from Okhotski Perevoz Village:

- Khorogor-Mas site, 2 km from ranger house, on the river bank;
- Kamyshevoye Lake, 3 km from ranger house;
- Khochuta Lake, 6 km from ranger house; and
- Krestyakh site, in a meadow 6-7 km from ranger house.

This information will enable us to estimate the seasonal migrations of the Siberian Crane in the Lower Aldan River, and also will support research and conservation measures for the protection of this species.

For more information:
Inga Bysykatova
mb_ip@mail.ru

The Siberian Crane Spring Migration in Maiya River Valley, Middle Aldan River, Yakutia, in 2006

by Victor Degtyarev, Maria Vladimirtseva, and Inga Bysykatova
Institute of the Biological Problems of the Cryolithozone, Yakutia, Russia



Migration stopover of Siberian Cranes on the lower part of the Maiya River.
Photo by Victor Degtyarev

Within the UNEP/GEF Project "Development of a Wetland Site and Flyway Network for Conservation of the Siberian Crane and Other Migratory Waterbirds in Asia", the staff of the Institute of Biological Problems of Cryolithozone, Northern Branch of the Russian Academy of Science, with active support from nature protection inspection and representatives of Rosselkhoznadzor (Agricultural Inspection of Russia) of Ust-Maiskiy Region, Yakutia, initiated regular observations of the seasonal water birds' migration in the basin of the Middle Aldan River. In May 2006 a census of the migratory birds was conducted on the lower part of the Maiya River. This census established that a significant number of the Baikal Teals and the Siberian Cranes migrate along the Maiya River Valley.

Siberian Cranes fly in pairs and groups of 40 birds, making long stopovers for feeding and resting. One flock of cranes (24 Siberian Cranes and one Eurasian Crane) has been observed during the whole stay for the night rest. In particular, it has been observed that the cranes spend most of the time feeding; vegetation of different types serves as forage.

For more information:
Victor Degtyarev
sterkh-yrcu@mail.ru

Sighting of Siberian Cranes in the Middle Aldan River, Yakutia, in 2006

by Arkady Isayev, and Sergei Protopopov
Institute of the Biological Problems of the Cryolithozone, Yakutia, Russia

According to information from rangers E. Panfilov and M. Kalinin, two Siberian Cranes (adult and young according to their plumage) were sighted on the bank of Aldan River on the territory of Sunnagino-Sylligilinsky Wildlife Refuge (Zakaznik) (58° 29'; 129°16').

For more information:
Arkady Isayev
isaev_ark@rambler.ru

A Visit to the Siberian Crane Staging Areas in the Aldan and Maya River Valleys of Southern Yakutia in 2006

by Crawford Prentice, and Mikhail Stishov

International Crane Foundation

The main breeding grounds of the eastern population of Siberian Crane in the Khroma – Indigirka region of Arctic Yakutia have been relatively well studied by scientists from the Institute for Biological Problems of the Cryolithozone (IBPC). As a result of their efforts, these breeding grounds are now largely protected within the huge Kytalyk Resource Reserve, and efforts are being made through the Siberian Crane Wetlands Project (SCWP) to strengthen the management of this important site and to foster the participation of local communities.

While it has been known for some years that Siberian Cranes pass through southern Yakutia on their way to China, there is still only limited information available on the importance of sites along the major river valleys as staging areas. An inventory of these flyway sites was conducted by IBPC staff in 2005 and 2006. Fortunately, Yakutia has a very well developed protected area system, including some large and important resource reserves in this region, including Chabda, Kyupsky, Kuoluma and Kuoluma-Chappanda. These cover large areas of taiga forest and important floodplain habitats, including oxbow lakes, *Mari* peat-moss bog complexes, *Alas* meadows and emergent wetlands.

However, even in this remote and relatively pristine environment, development pressures are coming to bear: a huge hydro-electric scheme involving a cascade system of power-generating dams is being planned for the headwaters of the Aldan River basin. This proposed development apparently contradicts an agreement made with the Evenk people in 1992, and its potential impacts on the river system need to be comprehensively assessed, especially regarding impacts on fisheries – a vital resource for local communities. Overhead power transmission lines will transport the electricity northwards to Yakutsk up the Aldan valley, a known migration route for the Siberian Cranes and other waterbirds such as Baikal Teal. The Yakutsk Energy company has been very open and cooperative in working with IBPC to mitigate the potential impacts of these power lines on migratory birds, and is seeking advice on adjustments to the routes of the power lines and methods of marking the lines to reduce bird collisions. Further development pressures from the extension of the railway line (to Yakutsk) and oil and gas prospecting are also likely to exert pressures on the environment.

Against this background of potentially significant staging areas and increasing development pressure, Dr Nikolai Germogenov (IBPC Deputy Director and Director for SCWP in Yakutia) coordinated an assessment visit to Chabda and Kyupsky Resource Reserves involving Mikhail Stishov (Technical Advisor for Russia and Kazakhstan) and Crawford Prentice (International Technical Advisor) in late June and early July 2006. We were accompanied throughout by Ivan Atlasov (head of Evenk people). The main objective of this visit was to evaluate the scope for initiating SCWP activities at these two sites.

Our first stop was to meet staff of the Ust Maya Ulus (district) Administration, staff of the Ulus Inspectorates for Hunting, Fishing and Environment, and rangers and representatives of local communities. Ust Maya is centrally located at the junction of the Aldan and Maya rivers, and is the coordination centre for management of all the resource reserves in the Ulus.

We then journeyed up the Maya River to Chabda Resource Reserve to search for breeding Hooded Cranes, collect information on crane sightings, and discuss management issues with the ranger and local people. An assessment of the reserve's management status was conducted using a standard protected area management effectiveness tracking tool, identifying issues and needs. The areas for development include



A memorial with cranes, honoring soldiers lost during the Second Great Patriotic War, located near Kyupsky Municipal Administration. Photo by C. Prentice

strengthening capacity for waterbird monitoring, conducting environmental education, assessing feasibility of ecotourism development, and improving the reserve's management infrastructure.



Emblem design for the Kyupsky Municipality, showing five crane species. Photo by Mikhail Stishov

Next stop was Kyupsky Resource Reserve, downstream on the Aldan River. We were pleasantly surprised to find strong support for cranes at Kyupsky municipal administration, where the head, Mr. Mikhail Arkhipov, showed us a memorial with cranes to soldiers dead during the Second Great Patriotic War outside his office and a emblem design showing 5 crane species for the municipality!

IBPC has erected an observation tower at Kyupsky for monitoring migrating cranes, with good results. An assessment of the reserve's management status was conducted, which indicated a need for improvements in basic management infrastructure and training for staff, environmental education, and assessment of ecotourism prospects. In addition, this is likely to be the site where the power lines cross the Aldan River valley, so careful routing, mitigation measures and monitoring of bird mortality are needed.

One of the threats identified for Kyupsky was seismic testing for oil and gas deposits. Aside from the direct impacts of such testing (which should require expert assessment to mitigate impacts), it opens the way for potential commercial production within the Resource Reserve if commercially viable deposits are found. This

would be incompatible with the legal status of the reserve.

As a result of this assessment visit, SCWP will support some activities at this cluster of sites (Chabda, Kyupsky Kuoluma-Chappanda) by establishing and developing a new model site for the *Middle Aldan River*. Activities will include strengthening the legal status of these resource reserves, development of a business plan, strengthening management capacity for the area, conducting mitigation measures for the power lines, monitoring of migrating waterbirds, and an ecotourism feasibility study.

For more information:
Crawford Prentice

Crawford@savingcranes.org

Sighting of the Siberian Crane in Amur Region, Russian Far East

By Sergei Smirenski

Muraviovka Park of Sustainable Use, Russia



Siberian Cranes observed during spring migration in Muraviovka Park, Amur Region, one km from the road between the villages of Muraviovka and Korfovo. Photo by Sergei Smirenski

A flock of 14 Siberian Cranes spent the night of 13-14 May in Muraviovka Park near Kapustikha Lake.

The morning of 15 May one more flock of 10 Siberian Cranes was sighted by Moscow ornithologists Anna Klenova and Yevgenia Bragina in Muraviovka Park, one km from the road between the villages of Muraviovka and Korfovo. This was a separate flock, as the first flock was feeding near Kapustikha Lake at that time.

In summary, a total of 24 Siberian Cranes were sighted in Muraviovka Park on 13-14 May. Some of these Siberian Cranes were juveniles with reddish feathers.

For more information:
Sergei Smirenski

sergei@savingcranes.org

Summer of 2006 – an Unusual Year for the Siberian Crane Sightings in Mongolia

By Tseveenmyadag Natsagdorj¹, Nyambayar Batbayar², and Munkhzul Tseveenmyadag³

¹*Institute of Biology, Mongolian Academy of Sciences*

²*Wildlife Science and Conservation Center*

³*National University of Mongolia*

Siberian Cranes rarely summer in Mongolia. This year was an important year for Siberian Crane sightings in Mongolia. A total of 7 sightings of Siberian Cranes was made in northeastern Mongolia. This is very interesting because this number of sightings in one year exceed previous records of annual sightings in Mongolia.



Group of Siberian Cranes sighted near Turgenii Tsagaan Lake, Dornod Province on 2 July 2006. Photos by N. Tseveenmyadag

On May 27, a single adult bird was observed at the southern shore of Gungaluut Lake in Bayandelger soum, Tov province (N47°38'1.1", E108°18'28.5"). This is the same area where 4 Siberian cranes spent three months in 2004. We visited the same location again on July 25, but did not see the birds. Here, we recorded over 300 Demoiselle Cranes, presumably a pre-migration congregation.

On 2 July 2006, a group of 9 Siberian cranes was sighted near Turgen Tsagaan Lake, Bayan-Dun soum, Dornod province (N49°23'33.8", E113°14'55.2"). It is the largest number ever recorded for the Siberian Cranes in Mongolia. They were feeding on a slightly upland and grassy area not far from the lake. It seemed they were eating grasshoppers and insects. When we visited this lake on July 26, the cranes were not present.

On July 5, one sub-adult and one adult bird were observed in the southwest corner of Galuut Lake, Chuluunkhoroot soum, Dornod province (N49°43'18.3", E115°15'41.2"). That same day, one bird was observed at Khokh Lake (N49°39'35.8", E115°26'31.0").

On August 5-6, 1 adult Siberian Crane feeding near salix trees was observed near Galuut lake (N49°43'34.2", E115°16'6.3").

On August 25, a total of 5 cranes was recorded in Ulz River valley, Bayandun soum, Dornod province (N49°18'0.09", E113°05'36.3").

Another record of the Siberian Crane came from Wildlife Conservation Society's biologist Susan Townsend. According to her description, she saw at least eight very tall white cranes while driving south from Monginmort on August 4, 2006 at 10:45 am. They were not white-naped cranes; they appeared larger than white-naped cranes, and they had no other coloration that she could see. They were very striking. They were not grey herons because they were not really standing like herons and they were far too big to be herons. The coordinates for this observation are N48°4.671', E108°34.142".

It is possible that the cranes she saw were the group of 9 cranes observed near Turgen Tsagaan Lake a month ago by N. Tseveenmyadag. If we do not include this observation, then we have recorded a total of 19 (maybe 27) Siberian Cranes in Mongolia in 2006. We believe that increased field activities in wetland areas and frequent visits to particular areas were the reasons for this high recorded number of Siberian Crane observations. It is very important for Siberian Crane conservation to understand this crane's habitat use and movement during summer in the arid steppe of Mongolia.

For more information:
Tseveenmyadag Natsagdorj
tseveenmyadag@magicnet.mn

Information from Wintering Sites 2006

Western Flyway

Siberian Cranes at Wintering Site in Iran in 2006

By Sadegh Sadeghi Zadegan

Department of Environment of the Islamic Republic of Iran



One of two single Siberian Cranes arriving in Fereydoon Kenar in Autumn 2006.
Photo by Yuri Markin

In 2006, the spring migration of the Siberian Crane started on 3 March. On Friday morning, between 10.45-10.55 a.m., three Siberian Cranes (two wild cranes and one captive-bred, released Siberian Crane called Suna) flew off from Ezbaran Damgah. The three Siberian Cranes had congregated together in Ezbaran Damgah since 26 February, 5 days ago, otherwise having spent most of the winter in separate territories; (one wild crane had stayed primarily in Sokh Rud Damgah; the other two, in Fereydoon Kenar Damgah). They had been foraging intently, obviously preparing to migrate.

In autumn Siberian Cranes arrived in Fereydoon Kenar on 22 October evening. They landed on Ezbaran Damgah. Following that, these two birds have stayed separately – one in Fereydoon Kenar Damgah, the other in Sokhrud Damgah.

According to information from trappers, one Siberian Crane disappeared from Ezbaran Damgah about 10 January 2007. A subsequent search did not produce any results.

For more information:
Sadegh Sadeghi Zadegan
sadegh64@hotmail.com

Eastern Flyway

Report on Wintering Waterfowl in Poyang Lake, 2005/2006

by Ji Weitao, Zeng Nanjing

Poyang Lake National Nature Reserve, China

Since 2003, Poyang Lake National Nature Reserve set a monitoring technical rule to standardize and systematize the monitoring of wintering birds and their habitats in the reserve. In winter 2005/2006, 83 species of birds were found in the reserve, including the Siberian Crane.

Siberian Cranes stayed in the reserve during the period from 18 November 2005 to 8 March 2006. They fed and rested at all nine lakes of the reserve, but mainly at Beng Lake and Dacha Lake. The highest number of Siberian Cranes was recorded on 29 December 2005 at 2,999 birds.

Adopted from China Crane News, 2006, vol. 10(1), p. 7-8

Survey on Waterfowl in Anqing Riverine Wetland N.R., 2005/2006

by Zhang Hong

Anqing Wetland Nature Reserve, China

Migratory and wintering waterfowl in the Anqing Riverine Wetland Nature Reserve were surveyed by the reserve staff during November 2005 – March 2006. Sixteen monitoring points were established in six lakes.

Survey results showed that the maximum number of the Siberian Crane was 21 (see table 1). In addition, three Siberian Cranes (a family with one juvenile) were found in the Shimen Lake of Daguan Region, Anqing City. It was the first sighting of this species at this site. So far, there are three Siberian Crane wintering sites (Caizi Lake, Baidang Lake, and Shimen Lake) in the reserve.

Table 1. Survey on the Siberian Crane in Anqing Riverine Wetland N.R.

Species	Number in			Location
	Autumn	Winter	spring	
Siberian Crane (<i>Grus leucogeranus</i>)	6	21	11	Caizi Lake, Shimen Lake

Adopted from China Crane News, 2006, vol. 10(1), p. 9-10

Sighting of a Siberian Crane in Yancheng NNR, China, in 2006

by Wang Hui

Yancheng National Nature Reserve, China

During a survey conducted in the Yancheng National Nature Reserve in Jiangsu Province, one Siberian Crane was sighted in a flock of Eurasian Cranes in a paddy field in Haibeiken District, Dafeng (33°22'1.4", 120°40'06.3") on 30 December 2006. In addition, 3 White-naped, 60 Red-crowned, and 380 Eurasian Cranes were counted there.



A Siberian Crane in a flock of Eurasian Cranes at the Yancheng National Nature Reserve in Winter 2006/07. Photo by Van Hui

Banding 2006

Sighting of a Banded Siberian Crane in Yellow River Delta, China

By Qian Fawen, and Simba Chan

*National Bird Banding Center
Birdlife Asia*



On 10 November 2006 the staff of Yellow River Delta NNR sighted one Siberian Crane with one long blue band on the left leg and one short green band on the right. According to information from Nikolai Germogenov, Institute of Biological Problems of Cryolitozone, Yakutia, Russia, this Siberian Crane was caught as an adult molting bird on 3 August 1995 in Yakutia. It was banded with standard metal band CMK 234041 and with long plastic blue band #19 (need to see from top to down) on the left leg, and with short plastic green and white bands on the right leg. Probably this bird lost the white short and standard metal bands. Satellite transmitter (PTT) #21627 was also installed on this bird that time.

For more information:

Qian Fawen

cranenw@caf.ac.cn

A banded Siberian Crane in Yellow River Delta NNR in Autumn 2006. Photo by Sun Jingsong

Captive Breeding 2006

Propagation of Siberian Cranes at Oka Crane Breeding Center, Russia, in 2006

by Tatiana Kashentseva

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

The Oka Crane Breeding Center (OCBC) is host to 35 (17 plus 18) Siberian Cranes (as of 1 January 2007). In 2006, 9 pairs bred during the period of 20 April to 27 May. Of these, one pair bred for the first time. The birds mated on their own, and then hatched and reared 3 chicks.

To produce offspring from birds incapable of mating 5 females were inseminated artificially. Sperm from males which were not planned for breeding was taken and transferred to the Laboratory of Artificial Breeding Methods of the Moscow Zoo.

Siberian Cranes laid 20 eggs, with eight eggs being fertile. Six chicks hatched, one of which was reared by hand, and the others, by isolated rearing technique. Finally three chicks survived.

Two fertile eggs on the last hatching phase taken from different pairs were sent to the Kunovat Wildlife Refuge, Western Siberia, to be placed into nests of the wild Eurasian Crane. However, no nests were found, and the eggs were returned to OCBC. The embryos died at the pipping stage during transportation.

Four chicks of the Siberian Crane and two chicks of the Eurasian Crane were reared using isolated rearing techniques and imprinted on a motor hang-glider for the "Flight of Hope" Project aimed at teaching migration to captive-raised cranes using ultralights. These chicks were hatched by parents. Immediately after hatching they were put into a special pen for isolated rearing according to the established technique. From their first days, the chicks were accustomed to a working electric motor. In addition to daily walks to marshes, they were guided around a meadow where a hang-glider stood. They were regularly fed while in the presence of a hang-glider with its engine running. Therefore, the chicks got used to the sound of a running engine and to the outward appearance of the hang-glider, and they began to follow it during feeding. When one-month old (12 July), the chicks were transferred to the Lipovaya Gora Post of Oka Nature Reserve to continue their hang-glider training. On 9 August, they were brought to Brykin Bor, and on the next day, two Siberian Cranes and two Eurasian Cranes were transferred to Moscow and then to Salekhard and to the village of Kushevat for their adaptation to the natural conditions of West Siberia and further training. Two weaker Siberian Cranes were left at OCBC and soon died. Upon completion of the "Flight of Hope" expedition, all cranes were returned to OCBC.

No adult Siberian Cranes died throughout the year. Two chicks died of acute infectious disease, and one chick was euthanized due to an inoperable trauma to its knee-joint. A 7-month old Siberian Crane died of spinal column injury received when it flew in the outdoor pen.

Work on collecting blood samples and research into genetic diversity of the captive population of Siberian Crane was continued jointly with the Institute for Gene Biology, Russian Academy of Sciences. Five blood



Training Siberian Crane chicks to follow ultralight in Oka State Nature Reserve under "Flight of Hope" Project. Photo by Tatiana Kashentseva

samples taken from chicks born in 2006 were conserved and delivered. Feather samples taken from 5 molting Siberian Cranes were transferred to the Institute for Biological Problems of Cryolithozone, Yakutsk, for testing new genetic methods.

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

Propagation of Siberian Cranes at Moscow Zoo, Russia, in 2006

by Olga Rozdina
Moscow Zoo, Russia

In 2006 only one of the two pairs of Siberian Cranes bred at the Moscow Zoo. This pair reared one chick. The other pair is usually bred by artificial insemination because those birds are kept separately. As artificial insemination was not provided in 2006, chicks of this pair were not produced.

For more information:
Olga Rozdina
sbukreev@rol.ru

The International Siberian Crane Studbook

by Tatiana Kashentseva, and Rob Belterman
Oka Crane Breeding Center of the Oka State Biosphere Nature Reserve, Russia
Rotterdam Zoo, the Netherlands

The 4th issue of the International Siberian Crane Studbook was prepared in 2006. It includes information about 326 captive Siberian Cranes (129 males, 127 females, and 70 cranes with unknown sex) from 40 agencies of 10 countries (see table 1). It should be noted that the third issue (2001) included data on 190 cranes (83 males, 88 females, and 19 with unknown sex) from 33 agencies of the same 10 countries.

Table 1. Siberian Cranes in Captivity to 1 April 2006

	Agency	Country	Number of males	Number of females	Number of birds with unknown sex	Total
1	Cracids Breeding & Conservation Center	Belgium	46	45	0	91
2	Park Paradisio	Belgium	3	5	0	8
3	Beijing Zoological Garden	China	8	6	12	26
4	Hefei Zoo	China	6	6	6	18
5	Harbin Zoological Garden	China	1	1	4	6
6	Changchun Zoological Garden	China	0	1	4	5
7	Nanchang Zoological Garden	China	1	1	2	4
8	Shenyang Zoological Garden	China	1	1	0	2
9	Baoting People's Park	China	0	0	4	4
10	Jinzhou Zoological Garden	China	0	0	3	3
11	Nanjing Zoo	China	0	0	2	2
12	Qinhuangdao Zoological Garden	China	0	0	1	1
13	Shanghai Zoological Garden	China	0	1	1	2
14	Yangliang Park	China	0	0	10	10
15	Xuzhou Zoological Garden	China	0	0	3	3
16	Zhalong	China	3	0	0	3
17	Cuihu	China	1	-	1	2
18	Huangshan	China	1	0	0	1
19	Linghu	China	0	0	1	1
20	Nanning Zoo	China	0	0	2	2
21	Shields J	China	0	0	1	1
22	Shijiazhuang Zoo	China	0	0	9	9
23	Reserve Zool De Sauvage	France	2	2	0	4
24	Bad Rothenfelde	Germany	2	2	1	5

25	Tierpark Berlin-Friedrichsfelde	Germany	3	2	0	5
26	Koln Zoo	Germany	1	1	0	2
27	Vogelpark Walsrode	Germany	3	2	0	5
28	Tallinn Zoo	Estonia	1	1	0	2
29	Tama Zoological Park	Japan	6	10	3	19
30	Osaka Municipal Tennoji Zoo	Japan	1	1	0	2
31	Saitama Children's Zoo	Japan	1	1	0	2
32	Hirakawa Zoological Park	Japan	1	1	0	2
33	Jesus Estudillo Lopez	Mexico	2	2	0	4
34	Oka Crane Breeding Center	Russia	16	17	0	33
35	Moscow Zoological Park	Russia	7	5	0	12
36	Novosibirsk Zoo	Russia	1	1	0	2
37	Turkey	Turkey	1	0	0	1
38	International Crane Foundation	USA	9	9	0	18
39	Cincinnati Zoo & Botanical Garden	USA	0	1	0	1
40	Zoo New England	USA	1	2	0	3
	TOTALS		129	127	70	326

Ten agencies provided crane breeding during the period of 2002-2005 using artificial insemination technique and different chick rearing methods. For four years, 127 cranes were reared in captivity.

Table 2. Siberian Crane Breeding in 2002-2005

	Agency	Country	Number of breeding		Number of reared cranes
			males	Females	
1	Cracids Breeding & Conservation Center	Belgium	9	6	39
2	Park Paradisio	Belgium	2	2	5
3	Beijing Zoological Garden	China	2	5	17
4	Hefei Zoo	China	0	1	1
5	Tierpark Berlin-Friedrichsfelde	Germany	0	1	3
6	Bad Rothenfelde	Germany	1	1	1
7	Vogelpark Walsrode	Germany	1	1	2
8	Moscow Zoological Park	Russia	2	2	5
9	Oka Crane Breeding Center	Russia	8	9	50
10	Tama Zoological Park	Japan	1	2	4
	TOTALS		26	27	127

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). 13 Siberian Cranes, mostly young in age, were obtained by Chinese zoos from the wild (table 3).

Table 3. Replenishment of captive population from the wild in China

##	Studbook #	Age	Place of the capture	Year of the capture
1	496	young	ANQINGWAI	2002
2	557	?	QIQIHAER	2002
3	558	young	JINZHAI	2003
4	559	young	JINZHAI	2003
5	585	young	XIANGTAN	2002
6	615	young	SUSONO	2003
7	650*	young	TONGCHENG	2005
8	651	young	FEIDONG	2005
9	652	young	JINZHAI	2005
10	653	young	LIXIN	2005
11	654*	ad	ZONGYANG	2003

12	655	ad	POYANGHU	2005
13	656	ad	POYANGHU	2005

* - birds which died prior to completion of the fourth issue

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

Reintroduction 2007

Release of Siberian Cranes at Wintering Site in Iran in 2007

By Yuri Markin, and Sadegh Sadeghi Zadegan
Oka Biosphere State Nature Reserve
Department of Environment of the Islamic Republic of Iran



Wild male and captive-bred female after release in Fereydoon Kenar Damgah in February 2007. Photo by Yuri Markin

On 26 January 2007 two captive-bred Siberian Cranes were transferred in Iran from Oka Nature Reserve. Both birds were reared by parents. The female hatched in 2004, and the male hatched in 2005. These cranes were in good physical condition.

Just after arrival in Tehran, the birds were driven to Fereydoon Kenar and placed in a pen built near Fereydoon Kenar Damgah. After three days, the captive-bred female was released in Fereydoon Kenar Damgah along with a wild male. The released female was banded by a yellow plastic band #55 with attached PTT #33244 on the left leg and standard metal band #A145910 on the right one.

Released and wild cranes joined almost just release. In 3 days

they started to unison call. They kept together and started migration on 28 February. Unfortunately we didn't receive satellite transmitter data after their departure.

For more information:
Yuri Markin
Yu.markin@mail.ru

Education 2006

Three White Cranes, Two Flyways, and One World

by James Harris
International Crane Foundation

The cranes are a world treasure, and the challenges and solutions for crane conservation have many similarities in different regions. Chinese and Russian students and teachers, who view their homelands as part of a magnificent Asian flyway, are fascinated to know that students and teachers on the other side of the world – along the eastern crane flyway in the United States – share similar caring and concerns. The three white cranes – the Red-crowned and Siberian of east Asia, and the Whooping Crane of North America – are the three rarest of cranes. Their charisma is involving many people in conservation.

Our new project *Three White Cranes, Two Flyways, One World* will help students on the two continents understand one another and crane conservation on a global scale. We will be supporting teacher visits from one country to schools in the other. Our project website, in two languages, will provide information about the flyways, the wetlands, the cranes and – equally important – the students who care.

For American classrooms, we offer the opportunity to post pictures and stories of how students have become involved with conservation, on our project website. To learn more, or to send postings for our website, visit www.trackingcranes.org or email us at kangyun@brooks.ngo.cn.

Children's art transcends barriers of language and distance. Contact ICF if you would like to share student art for exhibition at ICF and then east Asia where ultimately the art will be given to Chinese and Russian students. In turn, ICF will be bringing Chinese and Russian art to tour our eastern flyway.

Global understanding and a readiness to act, among people along the flyways, can make an immense difference for the cranes. Our thanks to the AMS Fund, Alliant Energy Foundation, Marshall Reynolds Foundation, Dorothy Kopmeier Vallier Foundation, and ICF members. Our flyway work is conducted in collaboration with China's State Forestry Administration and the Convention for Conservation of Migratory Species.

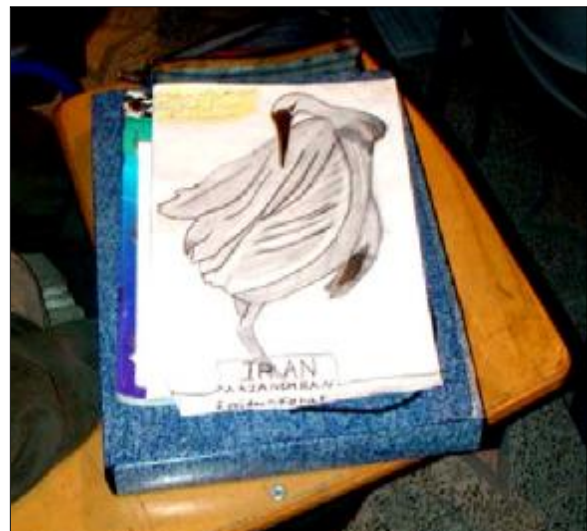
For more information:
James Harris
harris@savingcranes.org

First Crane Celebration in Iran

by Azin Fazeli

UNEP/GEF Siberian Crane Wetlands Project in Iran

On 26 February 2006 the Crane Day was celebrated for the first time in Iran. This event was convened by SCWP Iran NCU and organized by the DoE provincial office in Mazandarn. Mr. Bathaie (DoE, Mazandarn) coordinated the celebration in Mazandarn.



The first Crane Celebration in Iran. Photo by Farzaneh Etezadi-Far

The Crane Day was celebrated at the Kousar Cultural Center of Fereydoon Kenar Town (the only known wintering site in Iran for Siberian Cranes). About 200 people participated in this event, including students from elementary, middle and high schools, teachers, DoE experts, NCU staff, universities, trappers, local guards, NGOs, members of the Islamic Council and local authorities. The crane celebration was opened formally with the speech by the Governor of Babolsar City, Fereydoonkenar district governor and DoE Director General. This was followed by Mr. Bathaie presenting some information about the Siberian Crane, its history and the SCWP. A representative of the trappers, Mr. Ahmadi, talked about the Damgahs and the problems trappers face. In addition, the program included student anthems, a drawing competition and a crane question competition. Brochures and gifts provided by the Crane Working Group of Eurasia were presented to all the participants, for raising awareness and developing motivation.

The event was covered perfectly by local media (newspaper, TV and Radio), and the reports were published in different local newspapers including 'Jame-e-Jam' and 'Soordar'.

For Iran the celebration of this day was a great first step, and areas for improvement were evaluated for consideration in future events.

Special thanks is delivered to Mr. Ashrafipour, DoE Director General, Mr. Bathaie, and all colleagues in DoE Mazandaran who made this event possible.

For more information:
Azin Fazeli
scwpiran@yahoo.com

Fifth Anniversary of the Crane Day in Kazakhstan! Crane Day Report and Leader Competition!

by Tatiana Bragina

Public Ecological Organization "Naurzum", Kazakhstan

Crane Celebration has been celebrated in Kostanai Region since 2002. It was originally initiated by the Crane Working Group of Eurasia (CWGE) with the support of the International Crane Foundation (ICF). Public Ecological Organization (PEO) "Naurzum" is the organizer of the event in Kazakhstan. This year the event is celebrating its fifth anniversary.

Youth groups of Kostanai, the small cities of Rudnyi and Lisakovsk, and several rural regions annually celebrate this day with competitions of pictures and essays, with theatrical performances, and with the organization of music festivals, eco-tours, and lots of other activities. PEO "Naurzum" provides schools, higher institutions, and children's associations of the region with colorful brochures, badges, stickers, and informational materials developed by Crane Working Group of Eurasia with funding from the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS), and the Siberian Crane Wetlands Project (SCWP) of the United Nations Environmental Programme/Global Environmental Facility (UNEP/GEF) and International Crane Foundation (ICF). The main goal of our organization is to inspire the youth to embrace the event and to initiate conservation activities and actions for cranes and their habitat conservation. This idea finds its followers. The most active supporters are the students of Kostanai Pedagogical Institute and the school under their patronage, city schools #2 and #7, boarding schools named after Ybrai Altynsarin, children's art schools of Kostanai and Rudnyi, the orphanage for children "Dolphin", Druzhbino and Taldykol village schools of Kamystinskiy region, and Dosuchayevskaya secondary school of Naurzum region. In 2005, when the International Crane Pictures Competition was announced, we received art work from the Karaganda and Pavlodar regions of Kazakhstan. More than 15 students became the prize-winners of Kazakhstan and International Competition. Some of pictures of the winners were selected for display at the International Crane Foundation in the United States. And the picture of Yuliya Beskaravayeva, from Rudnyi city of Kostanai oblast, was used as a blueprint for a special badge, "Crane – the Bird of the World".



This picture by Julia Beskaravainaya from the town of Rudny, Kostanai Region was selected as the best and used as the logo of the art event, "Crane – the Bird of the World".



Since 2002, Crane Celebration has been celebrated in schools, high schools, and kindergartens of the city of Kostanai, Kazakhstan. Photo by Tatiana Bragina

The event is expanding its boundaries. This year we approached the leaders of NGOs, Protected Area staff, higher educational institutions, and environmental organizations with the suggestion to celebrate the "Crane Day" at their sites. We are happy to announce *Crane Day Report 2006* and *Crane Day Leader 2006* Competitions! We are expecting your reports on Crane Day, 2006 celebrations and claims for the regional leadership for the 2007 celebration.

Winners in the organization-leader category will receive the informational support for the celebration of the event in 2007, and active participants of the current-year celebration will be awarded brochures, badges, and other prizes.

The mission of PEO "Naurzum" is harmonization of the relations of people and nature through environmental protection. Such actions as this celebration create appreciation for nature in the hearts of youth who later become nature's researchers and conservationists.

For more information:
Tatiana Bragina
naurzum@mail.ru

Naurzum – The Siberian Crane Territory (Crane Festival in Kazakhstan)

by Elena Efimova, and Ekaterina Salyutina

UNEP/GEF Siberian Crane Wetlands Project in Kazakhstan

The Crane Festival was widely celebrated in the Kostanai and Zhambyl Regions of Kazakhstan and the Sverdlovsk Region of Russia.

The UNEP/GEF Siberian Crane Wetlands Project experts involved both children and adults in the celebration. On the day of Crane Festival, it seemed that hundreds of cranes gathered in the village of Karamendy, located near the Naurzum State Nature Reserve, the most important stopover site of migrating Siberian Cranes. The slogan "Naurzum is the Siberian Crane Territory" became a pithy saying. Cranes were everywhere: sketched on sidewalks and posters, in children's drawings, and in compositions made of flowers, paper, wood, and other materials. A crane made of a great number of balloons flew over the stage. Posters with Siberian Crane images met the festival guests and participants already on the highway where the Karamendy road turns off, 34 km to the village.

Local people established a shield with a white crane image near the nature reserve, as a symbol of longevity and happy marriage.

In addition to flower-, drawing- and other article contests, the festival programme included contests for the best essay and poem, computer presentations and video films, dances and songs, a relay-race, and a quiz.





Crane Festival included songs, dances, plays, art, articles and flower competitions, presentations on cranes, and video. Photos by Ekaterian Salyutina

The words of "ak tyrna", "bely zhuravl" and "sterkh" were said scores of times. In Dokuchaev School No.1, the Crane Festival started with a dance of little 'cranes' from the kindergarten, followed by

welcoming speeches by representatives of the District Administration, the UNEP/GEF Project, and the Nature Reserve.

Children, some of whom came from hundreds of kilometers away to appear on stage, to sing and play, and receive presents for their creativity, will remember this day for a long time.

Funding for this event was mainly provided by the UNEP/GEF Siberian Crane Wetlands Project through the Kazakhstan National Coordination Group. The Naurzum Nature Reserve, the Administration of Naurzum District, the Naurzum Department for Education, school administrations, the Cultural and Educational Center, the Ak Niyet Rehabilitation Center for Invalid Children, the Naurzum BIO-NET Youth Organization, farmers, business firms, and other organizations contributed to the preparation of presents, diplomas, and certificates.

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

International Children Art Exhibition in Asian Countries

by Elena Ilyashenko

CMS/ICF Siberian Crane Flyway Coordinator
International Crane Foundation

An unusual Children's Art Exchange, "Crane – Bird of the World", was organized in autumn 2005 – winter 2006 by the Crane Working Group of Eurasian with financial support from the International Crane Foundation, the UNEP/GEF Siberian Crane Wetlands Project, and Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) in Eurasian countries. Its goal was to focus attention on the conservation of cranes and their habitats, which are declining rapidly. Students from 6 to 18 years old, from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Ukraine sent more than 1,000 of their best artworks of crane species and nature scenes depicting cranes to the Crane Working Group of Eurasia.

In the first stage, the children's artworks were selected by jury in each site of every country. Then a high-level jury including professional artists and scientists worked hard to select the 30 best pieces of art that were to be exhibited at the International Crane Foundation in Baraboo, Wisconsin, USA. The jury paid attention not only



"Don't worry, I am with you". Madina Timurkhodjiyeva, 15 years old, Tashkent, Uzbekistan



"Crane in my Heart" Orazkuli Penjayev, 12 years old, Ashgabat, Turkmenistan



"Siberian Cranes above Lifeless Volcano "Momsky". Anastasia Arbykina, 12 years old, village of Khonuu, Momsky Region, Yakutia, Russia

to the quality of the art, but also to the special way that it expressed the children's feelings about cranes. The best pictures came from students who lived near crane habitats and could see cranes in the wild.

Other pieces of the best art were exhibited at the Moscow Zoo, and the Zoological Museum of the Moscow State University, Russia. Such exhibitions were also organized in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan.

All participants received certificates, buttons and small prizes, and the winners were sent special prizes.

For more information:

Elena Ilyashenko

eilyashenko@savingcranes.org

UNEP/GEF Siberian Crane Wetlands Project

The UNEP/GEF Siberian Crane Wetlands Project – Status at the End of Phase 1

by Crawford Prentic, and Patricia Gleason

**UNEP/GEF Siberian Crane Wetlands Project
International Crane Foundation**

The UNEP/GEF Siberian Crane Wetlands Project started in March 2003, and has just completed its first phase after three years of preparation. A comprehensive mid term review of the project was completed in September 2006. The main results of that review are summarized here.

The project's goal is to secure the ecological integrity of the network of critical wetlands needed for the survival of the Siberian Crane, migratory waterbirds and other globally significant wetland biodiversity in Asia. This is being accomplished by a wide range of activities at site, national and flyway levels, focusing on selected sites in the four main participating countries--China, Russia, Kazakhstan and Iran. Further information can be found on the project websites at www.scwp.info and www.sibeflyway.org

The project's mid term review assessed the progress to date, and made recommendations concerning project management approaches and activities for Phase 2 of the project, which have now been incorporated into workplans.



Mid Term Review Meeting in Russia in June of 2006. Photo by Crawford Prentice

In general, project programme delivery against Phase 1 benchmarks for all countries was rather limited (mostly below 60% achievement). This was due to many factors, and differing factors in each of the countries. Overall, Phase 1 delivery of funds was very low and it will be difficult for most countries to

achieve levels of spending necessary to improve this delivery in Phase 2. Most progress was made on aspects such as equipment procurement, training, education and awareness building, management planning and applied research. One of the most disappointing aspects of the project was the progress made in participatory wetland management and the establishment of site and community co-management committees – although there were some highlights in this regard from Iran.

During Phase 1, there were 149 activities implemented in China, where progress was rated as very satisfactory. Highlights included the following:

- multi-sectoral involvement in developing water management and wetland restoration plans for sites in NE China;
- comprehensive waterbird surveys and applied research in Poyang Lake Basin; and
- coordinated monitoring programme for large waterbirds at key wetlands along the East Asian flyway for the Siberian Cranes within China.

In Russia, progress was delayed significantly by management problems, institutional re-organization and bureaucratic obstacles. A total of 74 activities were implemented, with highlights including

- active public awareness programme led by the Sterkh Foundation in West Siberia;
- conservation research and monitoring programmes in Yakutia; and
- adaptation to administrative reforms at Kunovat in West Siberia.

In Kazakhstan, project implementation started 2 years behind schedule in January 2005 due to ministerial re-structuring, but good progress has been made with 38 activities initiated. Highlights were

- significant expansion of the boundaries of Naurzum Zapovednik and creation of a buffer zone for the reserve; and
- wide range of printed outputs based on project activities.

Since the MTR was completed, Kazakhstan has acceded to the Ramsar and Bonn (CMS) Conventions.

In Iran, initial progress was slow but management capacity has been significantly improved. 82 project activities were implemented during Phase 1, with highlights including the following:

- designation of Fereydoon Kenar as a Non Shooting Area and Ramsar Site;
- expansion and upgrading of Bujagh Non Hunting Area to National Park; and
- establishment of damgah associations and progress towards community dialogue and participation.



Public awareness program in Kazakhstan includes sharing information about UNEP/GEF Siberian Crane Wetlands Project activity. Photo by Crawford Prentice



The Steering Committee of the UNEP/GEF Siberian Crane Wetlands Project, reviewing results of the Mid Term Review at their meeting in Moscow in September 2006. Photo by Crawford Prentice

The regional coordination unit under the International Crane Foundation had overall responsibility for management of the project, development of flyway networks in East and West Asia, and dissemination of project results. Progress was made in strengthening the NE Asia Crane Site Network in China and in strengthening coordination capacity and improving the information base in Yakutia. A West/Central Asian Site Network for the Siberian Crane and other waterbirds was established under CMS and is now seeking site nominations. A regional database/GIS, websites and flyway level newsletters have been established to disseminate information. Progress was

generally good, but few results were available from the countries to support communications, and a communications strategy is in preparation to better focus efforts.

The project aims include speeding up delivery of delayed components during Phase 2, as well as putting strong emphasis on more effective communication of results and exchange of experience between sites and countries. Activities are also being mainstreamed into the work programmes and budgets of the national executing agencies as far as possible to ensure the sustainability of the project's outcomes.

For more information:
Crawford Prentice

Crawford@savingcranes.org

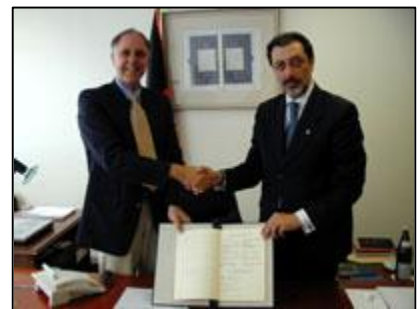
CMS News

Afghanistan Signature Closes Important Last Siberian Crane MoU Gap

Afghanistan's Ambassador to Germany, H.E. Hamidullah Nasser-Zia, signed the Memorandum of Understanding concerning Conservation Measures for the Siberian Crane on 22 June in Berlin. CMS Agreements Officer Lyle Glowka met with the Ambassador to collect his signature and discuss the significance of Afghanistan's membership in the MoU, as well as on-going Siberian Crane conservation efforts in the country led by CMS partner International Crane Foundation (ICF) in cooperation with Save the Environment--Afghanistan (SEA), an Afghan non-governmental organisation.

Afghanistan is the eleventh and final Range State to sign the agreement. Afghanistan's membership fills the last remaining gap in the MoU's coverage for the highly endangered Western Population which, according to ICF, until recently migrated between Russia and India crossing Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Afghanistan and Pakistan enroute. Until now all other Range States were already MoU members.

Along their 5600 km migration route, the Siberian Cranes shared much of their passage with Eurasian Cranes. Hunting along the flyway is thought to have played a major role in the demise of the Central Asian Population despite individuals being well-protected on the wintering and nesting grounds. The last pair was observed on its Siberian nesting grounds in 2002. But, because local people near the nesting grounds continue to report



Signing of the Memorandum of Understanding concerning Conservation Measures for the Siberian Crane by Afghanistan representative, Mr. H.E. Hamidullah Nasser-Zia. Photo by Lyle Glowka

seeing Siberian Cranes, and with reliable reports from Northern Uzbekistan where, in 2003, 4 Siberian Cranes were spotted along a lake, hope remains that the population has not become extirpated.

With the birds apparently not reaching their wintering grounds in India's Keoladeo National Park, focus has shifted 2600 km to the north along the Amu Darya River, an area of lowlands forming the border between Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Afghanistan, where large flocks of Eurasian cranes over-winter.

With a small grant from ICF, SEA has been working on the Afghan side of the river, making regular observations of the over-wintering cranes. Meetings with local people, including hunters and students, have taken place amongst the region's 16 villages to facilitate increased awareness about Siberian Cranes, to enlist them in the search and to promote the need to reduce crane hunting. According to ICF Co-founder George Archibald and SEA Director Ghulam Malikyar, there is an additional need to enable local people to make responsible decisions on the management or release of captive cranes and reduce the risk of culling wild cranes and waterfowl for fear that they may transmit avian influenza to domestic birds and humans.

Lyle Glowka said that "the MoU, and its integral action plan, will provide the Afghan government, and NGOs such as ICF and SEA, with an important tool to catalyze work nationally on Siberian Cranes, to integrate their results into the broader flyway work for the Western population and to work together with the other governments, NGOs and experts in countries located along the flyway. CMS is very excited by the possibilities arising from Afghanistan's membership in the MoU."

***For more information:
Secretariat UNEP/CMS
cms@cms.int***