

THE UNISON CALL

- A Newsletter of the North American Crane Working Group -

Spring/Summer 2007
Vol. 18 No. 1

A Note from the Editors

(Glenn Olsen, our president, must be away so David tried to fill in)

As in most wildlife studies, there is usually sad news to go with the good. The loss of 17 of 18 migratory juvenile whooping cranes in Florida last winter was as great a blow as Hurricane Katrina. Our sympathy goes to those who labored so diligently to rear those birds, lead them on migration, etc. The drought in Florida limits success there also. Those who lead those efforts need to know that we who have not suffered recent misfortunes support their efforts and share their concerns. Those of us who have been around for some decades have all had our opportunities to face losses. I remember the mycotoxin event at Patuxent in 1986, and then the blizzard of 1987 that collapsed pens and released whoopers, Mississippi, and a few condors. Then there were the various virus "invasions" that have us all wondering what will be the continent-wide effects on cranes and other birds.

Yet through it all, our sense of mission and the support we sense from the like-minded bolster our courage and we go on. In the long haul, look at what has been accomplished. In the preceding half century, it became routine to breed whoopers and now there are wild flocks in Florida and the midwest. The population migrating from Canada to Texas is now burgeoning. We now have three or more flocks in captivity and plans for a wild flock in Louisiana. And the Mississippi sandhill crane has made a big comeback. These accomplishments and more are recounted in this issue.

I feel sure that Jake Valentine and Larry Walkinshaw, though gone from us, would cheer our efforts and revel in our successes. And that pioneer, Ray Erickson, is still around to see the fruits of the seeds he planted so long ago and fostered for many years. These and many more (Ernie Kuyt in the fore) have played their role, retired from the scene, but cheered us on from the sidelines. So to all who read this newsletter, please empathize with those whose efforts falter and offer a word of cheer to those who have labored and now labor to make North America a better place for cranes and the plethora of wildlife that have safe haven wherever cranes thrive.

David H. Ellis, Editor

P.S. We note that these pages are filled almost entirely by news of endangered cranes. We thank Hank Lentfer and Krista Roessingh for news on non-endangered races of the sandhill and invite more such reports in future issues.

Whooping Crane Recovery Plan Available

As of May 30, the Whooping Crane Recovery Plan is posted on the Internet at:
http://www.fws.gov/southwest/es/Documents/R2ES/Whooping_Crane_Recovery_Plan_FINAL_21-July-2006.pdf

*Thomas V. Stehn, Whooping Crane Coordinator,
FWS, Aransas National Wildlife Refuge*

Regional Reports

Pacific-Flyway Sandhill Cranes

The 20,000 sandhill cranes migrating between the Central Valley of California and Alaska stop to rest and feed on the Gustavus Forelands in southeast Alaska. The flat mosaic of wetlands and forest offers a unique habitat along Alaska's otherwise steep, forested coastline. As well as an ideal roost for cranes, the Forelands are home to the 400 human residents of Gustavus. Gustavus serves as the Gateway to Glacier Bay National Park and has seen a steady growth in tourism-related businesses over the last few decades. Habitat loss associated with the town's growth prompted local residents to explore options to conserve wetlands surrounding the town.

The local effort got the attention of The Nature Conservancy which helped forge partnerships with private donors, state and federal agencies, and Ducks Unlimited. Eight years of work culminated in the purchase (November, 2004) of over 4,000 acres of coastal wetlands. The Gustavus Forelands Preserve (owned and managed by the Conservancy) abuts 6,000 acres of state land designated as critical habitat for the cranes. The combined 10,000 acres of wetlands will insure that the Pacific Flyway cranes will always have access to this crucial stopover.

For more information about the Gustavus Forelands Preserve contact *Hank Lentfer, Preserve Manager*, at P.O. Box 162, Gustavus, AK 99826, (907) 697-2221, e-mail: hrentfer@tnc.org.

Whooping Crane Numbers^A – July 8, 2007

Wild Populations

	Adult	Young	Total	Adult Pairs
Aransas/Wood Buffalo	191	45	236	71
Rocky Mountains	0	0	0	0
Florida non-migratory	40 ^B	4	44 ^B	17
Wisconsin/Florida migratory	54	3 ^C	57	5
Subtotal in the Wild	285	52	337	93

^A Numbers do not include chicks hatched in 2007.

^B This number reflects the birds regularly monitored in Florida. A few additional cranes could be present at unknown locations. Four chicks fledged in the wild in 2006.

^C One pair hatched twin chicks, the first whooping cranes to hatch in the wild in Wisconsin in over 100 years. One of the twins survived. Eighteen captive-reared juveniles completed the migration between Wisconsin and Florida following ultralight aircraft, but 17 of these died in a tragic loss in the release pen during a storm surge caused by severe thunderstorms on Feb 2. Four captive-reared young were released into the wild at Necedah National Wildlife Refuge in central Wisconsin and successfully completed their migration to Florida with wild cranes. One of these subsequently died in Florida from suspected bobcat predation.

Captive Populations

	Adult	Young ^A	Total	Breeding Pairs
Patuxent WRC, Maryland	57	3	60	15
International Crane Foundation, WI	31	5	36	11
Devonian Wildl. Cons.Cent./Calgary	18	3	21	6
Species Survival Center, Louisiana	8	0	8	1
Calgary Zoo, Alberta	2	0	2	0
New Orleans Zoo, Louisiana	2	0	2	0
San Antonio Zoo, Texas	8	0	8	1
Homosassa Springs Wildl State Park	2	0	2	0
Lowry Park Zoo, Tampa, Florida	2	0	2	0
Jacksonville Zoo, Florida	0	2 ^B	2	0
Milwaukee County Zoo, Wisconsin	0	1 ^C	1	0
Subtotal in Captivity	130	14	144	34

^A Numbers are of young remaining at the captive centers after eggs and/or birds were shipped out for reintroductions in 2006. In most cases, these young are genetically valuable and will become future captive breeding stock.

^B Two juveniles at the Necedah NWR had health problems and were shipped to the Jacksonville Zoo in Florida in October, 2006.

^C One juvenile scheduled for wild release in Wisconsin broke its wing and is undergoing rehabilitation at the Milwaukee County Zoo and will remain there in captivity.

TOTALS (Wild + Captive) 337 + 144= 481

Whooping Crane Recovery Plan

In a process started 7 years ago, the whooping crane recovery plans from Canada and the United States were combined into a single document, updated, and finalized at the end of May, 2007. This is the third revision of the original U.S. plan published in 1980. Canada will publish a shorter but extremely similar Whooping Crane Recovery Strategy and Action Plan to meet requirements of their Species at Risk Act.

The plan's recovery goal is to establish multiple self-sustaining populations of whooping cranes in the wild in North America, allowing initially for reclassification to threatened status by the year 2037, and ultimately, removal from the List of Threatened and Endangered Species. Populations may be migratory or non-migratory. The principal strategy is to augment and increase the one self-sustaining population by reducing threats, and through the establishment of two additional and discrete populations. Offspring from the captive breeding population will be released into the wild to establish the additional populations. Production by released birds and their offspring will ultimately result in self-sustaining wild populations. The continued growth of the Aransas-Wood Buffalo population and the two additional populations will also stem the loss of genetic diversity.

The recovery plan sets forth two criteria, which when attained, will ensure healthy, self-sustaining populations of whooping cranes in North America such that the species is no longer in danger of extinction and can be reclassified as threatened. Both of these criteria must be met to reclassify the species:

1. Establish a minimum of 40 productive pairs in the Aransas-Wood Buffalo Population (AWBP) and a minimum of 25 productive pairs occurring in wild self-sustaining populations at each of two other discrete locations. A productive pair is defined as a pair that nests regularly and has fledged offspring. Population numbers would have to exceed 160 adults in the AWBP, and 100 adults in both the Florida non-migratory population and the eastern migratory population. Numerical objectives are based on a population viability assessment of what is needed to maintain genetic diversity in the population. All three populations must be self-sustaining for a decade at the designated levels before down-listing occurs. Recovery actions may result in migratory and non-migratory populations as occurred historically in North America. If only one reintroduced population can become established, then the AWBP must reach 100 productive pairs and the reintroduced population total 30 productive pairs to reach down-listing targets. If reintroduced populations do not become self-sustaining, then the AWBP must remain above 1,000 individuals for a decade (i.e., 250 productive pairs). These higher numbers are needed because the AWBP currently has a very limited range in both summer and winter and could be highly impacted by a catastrophic event.

2. Maintain a minimum of 153 whooping cranes in captivity (21 productive pairs) as a safeguard to ensure long-term survival of the species. Genetic analysis demonstrates that these numbers can maintain 90% of the genetic material of the species for 100 years.

Whooping Crane Recovery Team Meeting

The Whooping Crane Recovery Team meeting was held February 1-2 in Lafayette, Louisiana with field trips to White Lake and Marsh Island. A big "thank you" goes to Mary Courville, Sara Simmonds, Sammy King, the Louisiana Department of Fisheries and Wildlife, and to multiple sponsors for all their help organizing the week-long crane meetings. The next Recovery Team meeting may be held in conjunction with the North American Crane Workshop scheduled for September, 2008 in central Wisconsin.

The meetings were very productive with plans formulated for future recovery actions. Chicks produced in 2007 will be used to increase the genetic diversity of the flock and support the reintroduction of the eastern migratory population. Florida did not request any chicks for the nonmigratory flock in 2007 because of the ongoing drought. The Whooping Crane Recovery Team supported the State of Florida policy that no more hatched whooping cranes should be released in the non-migratory flock in Florida until the results of the Patuxent viability analysis are received or until there is a notable turnaround in adult survival and/or flock productivity. New initiatives approved by the Recovery Team for an unspecified time in the future include (1) a satellite radio-telemetry study of fledged whooping cranes to learn more about migration patterns and especially mortality, and (2) resumption of a limited egg pickup to evaluate the affect of egg pickup on productivity. Funding for a radio-telemetry project may be available from the Platte River Cooperative Agreement. Multiple conditions need to be met before egg pickup would resume, including prior genetic studies, having a use for the eggs and room in the captive facilities to handle the eggs, and having a research plan for the egg pickup to be able to evaluate impacts to the population. Finally, funding must be secured for the egg pickup.

The Recovery Team endorsed a process that, if results are all positive, could lead to a reintroduction of whooping cranes in Louisiana. A nonmigratory flock of whooping cranes was present historically near White Lake, Louisiana, with the last bird dying in 1950. It makes sense biologically to try a reintroduction program in the heart of the historic range of the species if suitable habitat still exists. With the projected growth of the human population in Florida and the associated loss of wildlife

habitat over the next 50 years, the Recovery Team would like to take advantage of the tremendous wetland resources in Louisiana for whooping crane restoration. No decision was made about whether a reintroduced flock in Louisiana would be migratory or nonmigratory. The team asked the Whooping Crane Health Advisory Team to prepare a report by September on the potential health risks if whoopers reintroduced into Louisiana were to mix with cranes in the AWBP.

The Team also called for research to look at potential reintroduction sites and to assess additional reintroduction issues. Two main sites for future consideration are White Lake and Marsh Island. Dr. Sammy King of the Wildlife Cooperative Research Unit at LSU is working closely with the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries to secure funding for the research. In a project of interest to the Recovery Team, some of the sandhill cranes radioed by Dr. King's students in the past two years have migrated north to both the Platte River in Nebraska and to Wisconsin, indicating the wintering sandhills in Louisiana are coming from two different flyways.

Thomas V. Stehn, Whooping Crane Coordinator, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Patuxent Wildlife Research Center

Patuxent Wildlife Research Center's crane program concentrated again this year on raising and training whooping crane chicks for release. Thirteen whooping crane females produced eggs in 2007, including one pair that produced fertile eggs for the first time. The 12-year-old female has a colorful history, having been released in Kissimmee, Florida, taken to the White Oak Plantation after a wing impairment, and returned to her natal Patuxent for breeding. She and her mate have been unable to fertilize eggs on their own, but they did this year with a little artificial insemination help. This genetically valuable pair produced three chicks; two will be held in captivity and one is scheduled for release. Patuxent staff, with the help of volunteers and Operation Migration staff and interns, raised another year's worth of chicks for the Whooping Crane Eastern Partnership's ultralight migration project. In addition to our own production, eggs were received from the Calgary Zoo, Audubon Species Survival Center, the San Antonio Zoo, Necedah NWR and the Florida non-migratory population. Birds were reared and trained for about 40-50 days before being transferred to Necedah NWR. Despite a heartbreaking season with high chick mortality, we hope to have about 18 whooping crane chicks sent to Necedah by mid-July.

Patuxent welcomed two new folks to our crane program staff this season—biological technician Tammy Otto and biologist Dr. Sarah Converse.

Jane Chandler, Patuxent Wildlife Research Center

Whooping Cranes at Wood Buffalo National Park

We have had an exceptionally good year so far in Wood Buffalo National Park. A record 65 pairs nested in 2007, surpassing the 2006 record of 62 pairs. An additional four pairs that previously nested have also been seen for a total of 69 known territorial pairs. Another four pairs are present and appear to be scouting out future breeding territories. Breeding pair and nesting surveys, were carried out May 16-23 by Brian Johns and Lea Craig-Moore of the Canadian Wildlife Service in a locally

chartered aircraft. On May 23, nest contents were checked and 56 nests contained two eggs, three contained just single eggs, two nests were depredated, and one nest had no eggs. This is the fifth year in a row that the same pair has incubated a nest with no eggs. Evidence of the remaining three nests would be discovered later in June.

Hatching success and summer range surveys were carried out June 13-18 by Brian Johns (CWS) and Jim Bredy and Tom Stehn of the United States Fish and Wildlife Service in a USFWS aircraft. From the 65 nests present, a record 84 young hatched, including 28 pairs with two young and 28 pairs with single young. Nine pairs had no young (two nests had their eggs predated, one nest had no eggs, and the remaining six pairs either failed to hatch their eggs or had already lost their young by the time the surveys started).

Water conditions at the beginning of the breeding season were near normal, however, they began to deteriorate during June after six weeks without any precipitation. Large lightning induced fires are burning south of the crane nesting area and are threatening the communities of Peace Point and Garden River. Another smaller fire burns along the Klewi River in the territory of one of the nesting pairs.

The Canadian Recovery Strategy is due for posting on the Species At Risk Registry in July 2007. In it we describe some of the first Critical Habitat for an endangered species ever identified in Canada. The critical habitat identified to date is protected under both the National Parks Act and the Species at Risk Act and includes the habitat of over 95% of the breeding birds. Further study and consultations with nearby communities are currently underway to identify and protect additional critical habitat for future expansion of the population.

For more information on Wood Buffalo Whooping Cranes see: <http://www.pnr-rpn.ec.gc.ca/nature/endspecies/whooping/index.en.html>. For more information on Canadian species at risk and the SARA Registry see: http://www.sararegistry.gc.ca/default_e.cfm.

Brian Johns, Whooping Crane Coordinator, Canadian Wildlife Service

Mississippi Sandhill Crane National Wildlife Refuge

The 2006/7 release cohort continues to do well. Cranes 661 and 662 remained in the Fontainebleau Unit (where they were acclimated and released in November 2006) and nearby private lands to the south until early summer when they moved four miles northeast onto the south Gautier Unit. For a while, they were roosting in Graveline Bay very close to my residence.

The first confirmed identification of banded Mississippi sandhill cranes on Grand Bay NWR was documented in June when three subadults were observed at close range. A carcass was recovered in April. Grand Bay NWR is about 14 miles east of Mississippi Sandhill Crane NWR on the Mississippi-Alabama border and was established in 1991. In addition to savanna and flatwoods habitat like MSCNWR, it also contains estuarine habitat. One of the long-term goals of Grand Bay NWR is to support 5-7 crane pairs.

In our second most productive trapping season ever, 13 cranes were caught in 12 trapping events in January and February, all using foot nooses. The cranes were fitted with new leg-band-mounted radio transmitters. All but one crane was an adult; three were unbanded. Included in the 13 was crane #628, believed to be in his late 20s; he was banded as an adult in 1984. We were successful for the first time

ever in capturing a pair using a crane decoy surrounded by nooses while a remote audio unit broadcasted unison calls to lure in the pair. Interns Kiely and Hockman did a great job.

After a disappointing nesting season last year with Hurricane Katrina, 2007 looks much better. There were 23 pairs producing 29 nests. There were at least four new territories and a record high seven new pairs. There was the first record of a nest on restored property of The Nature Conservancy between the refuge's two largest units. Eleven nests were successful in hatching at least one chick. However, low recruitment persists as only 2-4 survive, including one from a nest that was laid in a newly rebuilt release acclimation pen. Federal budgets were not delineated until June so no predator control was conducted.

Remains of two cranes were recovered in the first half of 2007. Crane #537 was found near Grand Bay National Wildlife Refuge, apparently hit by a vehicle. A HY03 breeding female, #324, was killed at the nest by a predator.

Progress on the new refuge Headquarters/Visitor Center and four crane pens continued and completion is still expected by this autumn. Lauren Billodeaux, the new "Junior" Wildlife Biologist, began work in late June. Lauren is a Louisiana native, has completed wildlife degrees at Virginia Tech and Auburn, and transferred over from Santee NWR in South Carolina. Wildlife Interns Erin Kiely, Emily Hockman, Ingrid Kobler, and Jennifer D'Antonio provided important field support in 2007.

Scott Hereford, Mississippi Sandhill Crane NWR, Gautier, Mississippi

Eastern Migratory Whooping Crane Reintroductions

Winter 2006/07 and Spring Migration 2007.—Winter distribution, not including ultralight-led juveniles, was Florida (47), Georgia (2), Tennessee (4), South Carolina (4), Alabama (2), Indiana (5), and Louisiana (1). The birds in Florida included the four juveniles that had been released by the direct autumn release (DAR) method in Wisconsin. The flock of 18 juvenile ultralight-led whooping cranes arrived at the holding site on Halpata Tasthanaki Preserve, Marion County, Florida, on 19 December. They were led to the pensite on Chassahowitzka NWR, Citrus County, on 11-12 January. During the early morning hours of 2 February, 17 members of the ultralight flock perished during high water and lightning while they were in a top-netted pen at the latter site. In addition, six individuals in the free-flying population, including the only surviving juvenile of the ultralight-led flock and one of the DAR juveniles, also died during the winter. An additional DAR juvenile was killed by a predator during spring migration in Indiana.

Reproduction.—Four pairs (three on Necedah National Wildlife Refuge and one on Meadow Valley State Wildlife Area) nested in early or mid April 2007. At least three (possibly all) of these pairs abandoned their nests in apparent response to a surge of warm weather on 20-21 April. One pair re-nested but produced only one infertile egg.

Current Population Size.—As of 30 June 2007, the eastern migratory population consisted of an estimated 57 birds (33 males and 24 females). Two of these birds were in Michigan, one in New York, and the remainder were in Wisconsin as of last record. The population total included 50 birds that had been released by the ultralight technique, six by DAR, and one wild-hatched yearling. Total confirmed mortalities since the reintroduction began in 2001 consisted of 23 free-flying birds, 17 birds lost in the

winter tragedy noted above, and one pre-fledgling wild-hatched chick. In addition, two adult females were missing and suspected dead.

Richard P. Urbanek, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, for Whooping Crane Eastern Partnership

Florida Resident Whooping Cranes

We currently track 40 birds (16 pairs) in the Florida resident whooping crane flock. The years 2006 and 2007 have been much drier than normal and drought conditions prevail. Wetland water levels recently were at the lowest we have seen within the lifetime of this project. Virtually all wetlands are dry and even some shallow lakes are almost dry. It is in the latter that we had one successful nest this year; a chick hatched on 15 June, our latest hatch date within a breeding season. The chick today is at 25 days of age. The parents consist of an experienced nine-year-old female that has raised three chicks to independence and a rooky five-year-old male. The female lost her mate last winter and took a new one. (Unfortunately males of the Florida resident flock do not live past 10 years of age.)

There were three other nests this year. The first was abandoned. The second nest was in an area of high airboat traffic on Lake Kissimme, and we pulled the eggs to reduce the threat of airboat strike for the parents. The eggs were transferred to Patuxent and hatched for ultralight training (one chick survives at the time of this article). The third nest was by the same pair, in the same area of Lake Kissimmee. We posted an area around the nest in an attempt to protect them from airboat traffic. Airboaters ignored the signs and ran over the nest (the pair was unharmed).

Marty Folk, Florida Fish and Wildlife Service

Pacific Coast Sandhill Crane Project

In May of 2006, Dr. Briony Penn set out on a two-week pilot study, sponsored by the West Coast Crane Working Group, Robert Bateman, and Raincoast Conservation Foundation, to study sandhill cranes that summer on the outer Central Coast of British Columbia (BC). Approximately 4,000 sandhills (probably mostly the *rowanii* morph) are thought to summer along the BC coast, from the northern tip of Vancouver Island up to Alaska. Working out of Raincoast's headquarters in Bella Bella, Dr. Penn and a small team of Heiltsuk First Nation researchers carried out interviews with locals as well as hide (blind) observations, boat surveys, and a helicopter survey. They found that breeding sandhills in this area seem to prefer a distinct habitat complex including estuary, old-growth fringe forest, and upland bog. The remote and unspoiled island archipelago along this coast, often referred to as the Great Bear Rainforest, is a haven for wildlife that prefer seclusion from destructive human activity, although cranes occur in low densities here.

This year a graduate student from the University of Victoria, Krista Roessingh, is carrying on with the coastal study. With the help of pilot Don Arney, we were able to repeat last year's helicopter survey in May. We sighted 45 cranes on islands from Aristazabel Island in the north (53°N) and Hunter Island in the south (52°N), and three nests, each with two eggs. Two more nest sites were since found on foot, and we are still in the process of checking bogs where birds were sighted by helicopter.

On this coast, adults and sub-adults utilize estuaries and beaches extensively for daytime foraging, retreating into forest cover when threatened, or to loaf about at high tide. The cranes eat small mussels and snails living in the abundant rockweed of the intertidal zone, and probably eat the fine roots of silverweed and sedges as well as invertebrates in the grassy estuaries. The cranes here nest and roost mainly on small moss islets in upland muskeg bogs, connected by animal trails to the shoreline for undercover movement. Adults with pre-fledged young remain in the cover of forest, bogs, and marshes to forage.

Locals here remember a time when there were no cranes; it seems they disappeared sometime during the early part of the last century and started coming back about 30 years ago. Aside from threats to habitat in their wintering grounds on the Lower Columbia River and in the Central Valley of California, these cranes now face human dangers in their breeding range. These dangers include the looming menace of offshore oil and gas exploration and an increase in tanker traffic, a massive wind farm development proposed for the bogs of Banks Island, with overland transmission lines all the way to Kitimat on the mainland, and chronic clearcut logging of old-growth forests. The results of this project will be used to inform land-use planners about the habitat requirements of coastal sandhill cranes in BC. We hope to contribute to the preservation of this vast wilderness, for the cranes and for all the myriad forms of life found here.

This project is supported by the BC Ministry of Environment (Ecosystems Branch), Raincoast Conservation Foundation, West Coast Crane Working Group, and National Science and Engineering Research Council. Contact Krista Roessingh at wolfwillow@gmail.com for more information.

News and Announcements

Whooping Crane Health Advisory Team Workshop

A Whooping Crane Health Advisory Team Workshop will be held September 19-20, 2007, at the International Crane Foundation, Baraboo, Wisconsin. Representatives of all institutions and agencies with interests in whooping crane population health and recovery, both captive and wild, should consider attending. The agenda and arrangements are being coordinated by Drs. Sandie Black (Calgary Zoo) and Barry Hartup (ICF). If interested in attending, please contact Barry at: hartup@savingcranes.org.

Barry Hartup, Veterinary Services, International Crane Foundation

Gary Ivey Joins ICF Staff

Effective July 1, 2007, Gary Ivey will be the Western Crane Conservation Manager of the International Crane Foundation. Gary will be responsible for crane research, education and advocacy in the western states on behalf of ICF. The projects previously supported by the West Coast Crane Working Group will now become ICF projects. The WCCWG has completed its mission and will fade away.

Having the western crane projects under the umbrella of ICF will bring them legitimacy and facilitate fundraising. ICF will offer support in the areas of education, publicity, development, and resources to support basic crane research, such as databases and mapping. Gary brings his wealth of knowledge and experience to ICF. This is a win-win situation.

Gary will be based in Bend, Oregon, and will continue working on his Ph.D. His new e-mail address is: ivey@savingcranes.org.

Thomas J. Hoffmann, President, WCCWG, and Treasurer, NACWG

NACWG Workshop September 16 to 20, 2008 in Central Wisconsin

The host hotel for the 2008 Workshop is the Glacier Canyon Lodge convention center in the Wisconsin Dells. Information is at: http://www.glaciercanyonlodge.com/index/conference_center. Attendees may want to consider bringing their family, since this is a family vacation hot spot. Information at: <http://www.wisdells.com>. Here is the tentative schedule subject to revision.

Tuesday September 16, 2008

4 to 8 pm: Registration 6 to 8 pm: Welcoming Reception on the terrace: Wisconsin Oktoberfest

Wednesday September 17, 2008

Breakfast and lunch at meeting site. 9 am to 4 pm: Morning and Afternoon workshops. Evening on your own. Options: water park, spa, golf, dinner tour of the Dells by boat.

Thursday September 18, 2008

5 am: George Archibald will lead a Wisconsin birding field trip by bus to Necedah. (We will see Operation Migration in action!) Box lunch at Necedah NWR Visitor Center. Birding hot spots (no heavy hiking) George guarantees whooping and sandhill cranes, loons, trumpeter swans, woodpeckers and much more. Tour International Crane Foundation, with visits to Whooping Crane Exhibit, Crane City, Education Center, and isolation chick rearing site.

5 pm: Casual dinner at Aldo Leopold Legacy Center and visits in small groups to the Leopold cabin, "The Shack." Info at: <http://www.aldoleopold.org/visit/center.htm>.

Friday September 19, 2008

Breakfast and Lunch at the meeting site. 9 am to 4 pm: Morning and Afternoon workshops. 6 pm: Reception and closing banquet.

Saturday September 20, 2008

Breakfast on your own.

Additional events:

The preceding Saturday, September 13, 2008, will be the Necedah Whooping Crane Festival. Information about 2007 at: <http://www.whooping-crane-festival.com>. It is anticipated WECP will meet on Monday and Tuesday September 15, 16 2008. The ICF Board will meet Friday and Saturday September 19 and 20, 2008. The Board members will be invited to attend the workshop and in particular the Friday evening banquet.

The annual meeting of ICF will be Saturday September 20, 2008. There are daylong activities at ICF and an evening banquet at the Glacier Canyon. Information for 2007 at: http://www.savingcranes.org/about/whats_new/events.cfm?month=9&day=1&year=2007&showmonth=1&week=0#.

Estimated costs: The registration fee will be \$200 per person and room rates will be \$90 for weekdays and \$115 for Friday and/or Saturday, plus 11% tax. Air flights should be to Madison WI, one hour drive, or Milwaukee, 2 hours drive. No direct bus service from the airports.

Remember, bring bathing suit and rain gear. More information and registration form will be available in the Spring of 2008.

Thomas J Hoffmann, Treasurer, NACWG

thoffmann@hoffmanns.com. Home: 740-427-3740. Cell: 740-398-9108.

Lovers of sandhill cranes and other migratory waterfowl lost an important ally and friend with the passing of Sacramento Delta farmer James M. Shanks Sr. on May 26, 2007.

Jim began his career on Staten Island in 1952 and assumed the role of manager of that property in 1976. Jim pioneered techniques for meeting the seasonal needs of sandhill cranes and waterfowl while maintaining overall profitability on the 9,200-acre property. Under his tenure, and with the active help of his wife Sally, Staten became one of the most important areas in the Pacific Flyway for wintering cranes, routinely hosting thousands of roosting and foraging birds. For a generation of policy-makers and resource managers, Jim Shanks personified "wildlife-friendly farming" and Staten Island gave concrete meaning to the term.

Staten Island was purchased by The Nature Conservancy, with funds provided by CALFED and the state's Department of Water Resources in 2001—or, as some insiders characterized it, TNC acquired Jim and the seller "threw in the property too." Jim retired from a formal role on the property in 2006 but maintained an active presence as an advisor to his successor.

At the North American Crane Working Group meeting in Sacramento in 2003, Jim and Sally were honored for their lifetime contributions to crane habitat conservation and enhancement. Jim Shanks brought an intuitive genius to the challenge of managing for agricultural production and waterfowl population health at the same time. He will be missed by his former colleagues and many friends, all of whom will think first of Jim when we hear the call of that first returning crane in September.

Mike Eaton, Resources Legacy Fund, Sacramento, California, meaton@resourceslegacyfun

Editor's Note: *The Unison Call* is a forum to share updates and opinions. Articles are not peer reviewed. Reviews and opinions included in any section of the newsletter are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the views of the NACWG.

The Unison Call is published twice yearly, winter/spring and summer/fall. Membership is based on a calendar year. Contributions, suggestions, opinions, drawings, cartoons, and photographs are welcome. Items can be sent to:

David and Cathy Ellis, Editors
3722 Defiance St., Oracle, AZ 85623
E-mail: dcelllis@theriver.com

Deadlines are normally July 10 and December 10. Please send information as a Microsoft Word attachment (e-mail) whenever possible.

You are invited to join the North American Crane Working Group

Membership is based on a calendar year. A membership directory is periodically mailed to members. Provide the contact information below **that you want printed** in the directory.

_____ Active \$10 _____ Sustaining \$30 _____ Contributing \$50 _____ Other \$

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____

State/Province: _____

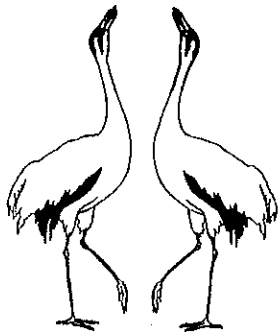
Zip/Postal Code: _____

Email: _____ @ _____

Telephone: _____ (_____) _____ - _____

Mail completed form and check (US\$ payable to NACWG) to:

NACWG
c/o Thomas J Hoffmann
P.O. Box 566
Gambier, OH 43022



Return Address:
NORTH AMERICAN CRANE WORKING GROUP
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