

# CRANES of ASIA

From Russia to the Orient and India,  
Conservation Begins with Cranes

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**N**ine of the world's 15 species of cranes are native to Asia. Eight of these species are migratory and one is a resident tropical crane species. Sarus Cranes, the tallest flying birds in the world, are resident from India to Vietnam. The eight migratory species include two abundant species, Demoiselle Cranes and Eurasian Cranes; five endangered species, the Siberian, Red-crowned, Black-necked, White-naped and Hooded Cranes; and Sandhill Cranes, which are primarily North American birds, but one population nests in eastern Siberia and winters in North America.

Cranes are more readily observed at their wintering areas where they congregate in large flocks, than at their breeding grounds, where isolated pairs defend large nesting territories in wilderness regions of Russia and northern and western China. One of the most impressive wintering areas for Asian cranes is Poyang Lake Nature Reserve along the lower Yangtze River in China. There visitors can observe the largest wintering population of Siberian Cranes, along with White-naped, Hooded and Eurasian Cranes, and flocks of thousands of ducks and geese.

Sarus Cranes and wintering Siberian Cranes can be seen at Keoladeo National Park, which is a favorite area for birders who visit India. Among great numbers of wintering waterbirds, the trumpeting calls of these two species can be heard. However, only five Siberian Cranes were counted during the 1992-93 winter census, a dramatic decrease from 75 birds only 15 years ago.

Red-crowned Cranes are considered by many people to be the world's most beautiful cranes, and

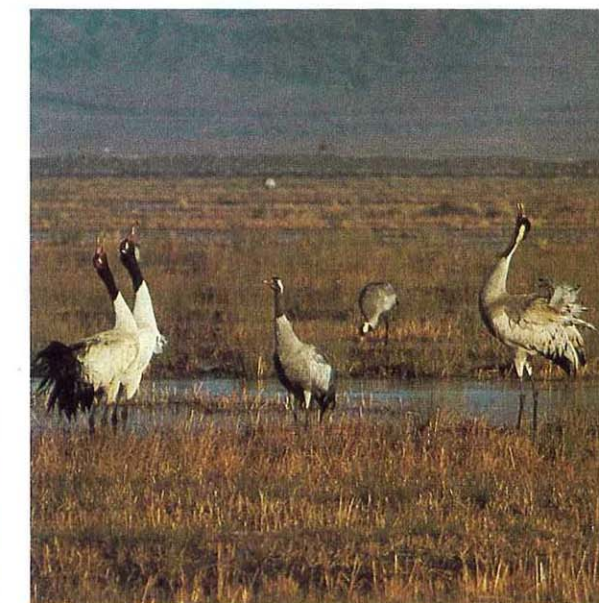


ric of oriental cultures. Wild Red-crowned Cranes can be readily observed and photographed at close range at several winter feeding stations near Kushiro on Japan's northern island of Hokkaido. Nesting Red-crowned Cranes can be observed at a distance at Zhalong Nature Reserve in northeast China, and at Khinganski and Lake Khanka Nature Reserves in southeastern Siberia, along with nesting White-naped Cranes.

Until recently, the least known of the cranes was



**A mosaic of Asian Cranes:**  
Sarus Cranes (far left), Siberian Cranes (left), a Red-crowned Crane (above), White-naped Cranes and Hooded Cranes (below left), and Black-necked Cranes and Eurasian Cranes (below).



decade ornithologists have identified major wintering areas in China, notably in Guizhou, Yunnan and Tibet. These wintering populations of Black-necked Cranes are known to total over 5,000. The easiest place to observe these interesting cranes is at Cao Hai (Sea of Grass) Nature Reserve in Guizhou Province, where facilities are available for visitors and the Black-necks are readily observed with Eurasian Cranes, Ruddy Shelducks and Bar-headed Geese, which also frequent the high-altitude plateaus of western China.

As the Director of the International Crane Foundation, I have had the pleasure of working with people who share my interest in wildlife in Asia and other areas of the world. An interest in the welfare of endangered cranes has stimulated many nations to preserve important natural resources for these spectacular birds, and other wildlife and humans alike have prospered from these reserves and parks. **WB**

Dr. George Archibald is the Director of the International Crane

## JOIN THE ASIAN CRANE CONSERVATION EFFORT

**T**he International Crane Foundation is a member-based organization with a mission to help conserve cranes worldwide. Each year, foundation staff members lead groups of volunteer workers to study cranes in Russia, the People's Republic of China, Vietnam and other countries. Volunteers conduct public education programs with local people who live near the crane reserves, help census cranes and record other scientific information, and photograph wildlife in crane blinds. These expeditions provide a unique opportunity to experience Asian cultures, observe the wildlife and to become active in the conservation work. For information, contact the International Crane Foundation, E-11376 Shady Lane Road, Baraboo, WI 53913.