

DISTRIBUTION AND PROTECTION OF CRANES AND STORKS IN INNER MONGOLIA, CHINA

CAO JIANGYING

Environmental Protection Division, Inner Mongolia Environmental Protection and Urban Construction Bureau, Huhehot, Inner Mongolia, China

ABSTRACT

Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region, situated in northern China, is marked with its vast land coverage and rich natural resources. Influenced by climatological and geographical factors, the zonal flora from the west to the east in Inner Mongolia is: desert, desert steppe, typical grassland, meadow and conifer forest. Such a diverse flora provides an great variety of habitats which hosts a large number of rare bird species. Six species of cranes and two species of storks were observed in Inner Mongolia. Their distribution, estimated numbers and their reserve situations are reported here.

DISTRIBUTION AND ESTIMATED NUMBERS OF CRANE

All of the six species of cranes that normally live in northern China are found in Inner Mongolia. Red-crowned Crane (*Grus japonensis*), White-naped Crane (*Grus vipio*), Siberian Crane (*Grus leucogeranus*) and Hooded Crane (*Grus monacha*) are mainly found in the eastern part of Inner Mongolia (over 116° 23'). Their populations are quite small, particularly with the Siberian Cranes and Hooded Cranes. In explorations carried out in recent years, only few of them were occasionally observed. Demoiselle Cranes (*Anthropoides virgo*) and Common Cranes (*Grus grus*) have large populations and extended distribution areas. They are found in desert and typical grassland and large flocks (up to several tens) were often observed in spring and autumn. The largest Demoiselle Crane breeding population in China was found in Hulunbeier League, Inner Mongolia.

Breeding populations of Red-crowned Cranes, White-naped Cranes and Demoiselle Cranes were observed in Inner Mongolia. It had been reported that breeding population of Siberian Cranes and Common Cranes were observed in Dalai Lake areas, but no similar findings was made in recent explorations.

DISTRIBUTION AND ESTIMATED NUMBERS OF STORKS

Two species of storks, Oriental White Stork (*Ciconia boyciana*) and Black Stork (*C. nigra*) were observed with small populations in Inner Mongolia. White Storks were mainly distributed in eastern part of Inner Mongolia. Recent explorations reported the observation of White Storks in Dalinor, Kerqing and Zarlote only. Black Storks had a larger distribution area. They were observed in an extended land area from the Mazhong Mountain in Arlasan League (west edge of Inner Mongolia) to Dalai Lake (eastern part of Inner Mongolia). It seemed that the number of Black Storks in the western part was larger than in the eastern part; flocks of over twenty were observed in the western part. Black Stork has a larger population than the White Stork in Inner Mongolia. Breeding populations of the two species were observed in Inner Mongolia.

PROTECTION OF CRANES AND STORKS IN INNER MONGOLIA

Protection efforts for cranes and storks in Inner Mongolia were started in the early 1980s. An exploration for crane distribution was made during 1983 to 1984 in the eastern part of Inner Mongolia, followed by a preliminary exploration on the grassland areas in 1985. During 1987-1988, a comprehensive Inner Mongolia fauna exploration was launched and three sites, Wulingsu Lake, Kerqing grassland and Dalai Lake, were extensively investigated for the distribution and estimated numbers of these birds. Promoted by the information obtained in this investigation, Wulingsu Lake Sanctuary, Kerqing and Dalai Lake Refuges were set up. According to a natural resource reserve plan on Inner Mongolia, two more refuges in Wulagai and Huihe will be set up in the 1990s for protection of rare wetland birds. More studies on the distributions, population numbers, breeding and migration behaviors of the two birds are on the way and preliminary trials on artificial breeding of these two birds will be initiated.