

WI-IUCN SSC Crane Specialist Group



2016-2017 Report



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Co-Chairs

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Location/Affiliation

⁽¹⁾ International Crane Foundation, Baraboo, Wisconsin, US (J. Harris located in Harbin, China)
⁽²⁾ Endangered Wildlife Trust, Johannesburg, Gautang, South Africa

Number of members

320



Mission statement

The mission of IUCN SSC Crane Specialist Group is to promote the study of cranes and their threats, develop and disseminate solutions to those threats and enhance conservation of cranes and their habitats worldwide.

Main activities by Key Priority Area (2016 & 2017)

Barometer of life

■ Documents review

i. The Crane Specialist Group held a Knowledge Café at the 2016 WCC to receive comments from 15 invited specialists from different backgrounds; we received valuable advice for making the Handbook for Cranes and Agriculture more useful to its diverse audiences.

■ Research activities

i. We prepared/updated more accurate range maps for all 15 species identifying breeding, migratory stopover and wintering sites. For some species, we documented reductions in range, loss of key sites and use of new unprotected sites. This information will be used to guide protection and research efforts.

Bolster work at national scales

■ Scientific meetings

i. We prepared two threat assessments on illegal hunting and poisoning, accidental poisoning from agricultural chemicals and poisoning in response to crop depredation with key research needs and targeted actions.

Capacity building

■ Capacity building

i. Two wetland hydrology training workshops were conducted on White-naped Crane breeding habitat in Mongolia in August 2016 and 2017. The focus was conservation of wetland and aquatic resources through monitoring, assessment, restoration and collaborative man-

agement with the goal to develop an understanding of the function and role of wetlands, and to introduce assessment, monitoring and restoration approaches among participants. Participants included university students and lecturers, biologists, protected area specialists, environmental inspectors and environmental consulting companies. (KSR #18)

ii. To enhance the capacity of reserve staff, a Wetland Management Workshop was held in August 2017 with staff of Momoge and Xianghai National Nature Reserves. Three wetland specialists from the USA provided classroom and field training, serving 25-30 reserve staff at key stopover sites for Siberian Cranes. (KSR #17)

Communications

■ Communication

i. Through GSM tracking of a White-naped Crane marked in Mongolia, we documented a poisoning incident of six WNCs at Shandong, China. The cranes ate grain treated for invertebrates. Local farmers reported the incident and a local zoo rehabilitated five birds and released four. Television footage informed the public of risks to cranes and praised the positive intervention. (KSR #28)

Conservation action

■ Conservation activities

i. Assessed distribution and status of key sites, ecology, numbers and trends, major threats, major conservation and research actions underway and identified top priorities for conservation actions. (KSR #15)

ii. Prepared threat matrix for all 15 crane species and prepared assessment of 19 direct threats, including species and key locations most at risk, research and monitoring needs and top priority conservation actions. (KSR #15)

iii. For each of 19 direct threats to cranes, we established a clear objective and the top priority



Red-crowned Crane (*Grus japonensis*), Endangered
Photo: CSG archives

SMART actions required from 2018-2022, along with the lead organization and major contributors. (KSR #16)

iv. Using Open Standard Planning Tools, we have developed a conservation strategy for the eastern population of the Siberian Crane. Measurable objectives and indicators have been established with bi-annual progress assessment. (KSR #16)

v. The Khurkh and Khuiten River Valleys (KKRV) were designated as a provincial level protected area in May 2016. The provincial administration agreed to restrict agricultural activities and livestock numbers. In February 2017, the Khentii provincial administration issued a decree to propose the establishment of the KKR Nature Reserve to the central government. (KSR #22)

vi. A management plan has been drafted and revised to guide management of sub-lakes within the Poyang Lake National Nature Reserve, China specifying water levels to provide good foraging habitat for wintering Siberian Cranes as well as sustainable fisheries for the local communities. (KSR #22)

vii. We helped the two reserves prioritize their wetland resources and develop specific management actions to improve biodiversity values of those sites. (KSR #16)

■ Documents review

i. Representatives of the six range countries met in Mongolia and reviewed and approved a species assessment for the White-naped Crane and identified SMART actions to address key threats.

■ Synergy

i. Annual meetings were held in China to review and update conservation plans. (KSR #29)

Policy

■ Policy advice

i. The Black and Grey Crowned Cranes were maintained on the CITES Significant Trade

Review process and moratoriums in trade were maintained for Tanzania, Guinea and Sudan. (KSR #26)

Acknowledgements

We thank the host organization, International Crane Foundation, which provided salaries for the Chair and Program Officer as well as administrative support and also the Endangered Wildlife Trust that supported activities by the Co-Chair. We also thank well over 150 Specialist Group members who volunteered their time and knowledge for our activities. We had numerous sponsors for the activities completed in 2016-17, including Disney Conservation Fund, ConocoPhillips, U.S. Forest Service, the Erica P. John Fund, Hanns Seidel Foundation and individual donors.

Targets for the quadrennium 2017-2020

Barometer of life

Conservation activities: implement Crane Conservation Strategy.

Research activities: in cooperation with the Max Planck Institute, Crane Specialist Group members will deploy GSM trackers on cranes in Africa and Eurasia to study crane movements, identify priority sites for conservation and seek to identify sources of mortality.

Capacity building

Capacity building: four field training courses completed.

Communications

Research activities: publish and disseminate Cranes and Agriculture Handbook. This handbook will serve practitioners who want to understand the crane-agriculture interface and develop programmes to address their specific local challenges to protect cranes.

Conservation action

Conservation activities: (1) publish the Crane Conservation Strategy, which will prioritize and guide conservation actions aimed at reducing threats leading to stable or growing populations for all 15 species of cranes; (2) develop a user friendly resource of the Cranes and Agriculture document; (3) implement Single Species Action Plan for Grey Crowned Cranes; (4) implement Conservation Plan for the Eastern Population of the Siberian Crane; (5) estimate impact of power lines on threatened crane species and work with power utilities in high impact areas to reduce / mitigate their impact.

Research activities: estimate impact of poisoning on threatened crane species and identify strategies.

Synergy: hold regular meetings of species level networks for Red-crowned, White-naped, Hooded and Black-necked Cranes.

Policy

Policy advice: (1) advocate for reduced poisoning at hot spots; (2) secure or upgrade level of legal protection for three or more crane sites.

Summary of activities (2016-2017)

Key Priority Area ratio: 6/7

Key Priority Areas addressed:

- Barometer of life (2 activities)
- Bolster work at national scales (1 activity)
- Capacity building (2 activities)
- Communications (1 activity)
- Conservation action (9 activities)
- Policy (1 activity)

Main KSRs addressed: 15, 16, 17, 18, 22, 26, 28, 29