



### Welcome

Welcome to the second newsletter of the Great Crane Project - the project that aims to re-establish a population of these magnificent birds in the Levels and Moors and enrich the Somerset landscape in an inspirational way.

This regular newsletter will keep you updated on the project's progress as it unfolds over the coming years as well as providing what we hope will be insightful snippets into crane behaviour, science, history, mythology, literature and art.

### From Germany – with love!

The time is approaching when these birds will once again roam freely over the Levels and Moors. This Easter, around 15 pairs of cranes that lay their eggs in the Schorfheide-Chorin Biosphere Reserve in Brandenburg, Germany will be providing for the future of the species in the UK.

[www.schorfheide-chorin.de/englisch\\_index.htm](http://www.schorfheide-chorin.de/englisch_index.htm)

There are around 300 pairs of cranes in this wonderful and protected part of Eastern Germany that borders Poland and the plan is to remove eggs as early in the season as possible to allow the birds to re-lay. Conservationists will be closely monitoring the birds in Germany to ensure that this project does not effect the local population.



The Schorfheide-Chorin Biosphere Reserve in Germany

### Recent news

- In an independent poll undertaken just before Christmas, 472 local people were asked what they felt about the reintroduction of cranes. A huge majority - 95% - responded that they would like to see them back in the Somerset landscape.
- The hatching and rearing facilities have been constructed at the WWT Slimbridge Wetland Centre ready to house up to 30 birds.

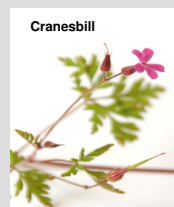


The Rearing facilities under construction at Slimbridge

- Two aviculturist (bird rearing) posts are currently being advertised to start early spring. The successful candidates will be responsible for rearing the first generation of birds for release – no easy job - but with it comes the opportunity to be part of a project that will shape Somerset's future.
- Work has begun on a land management advice leaflet for those farmers and landowners in The Levels and Moors that want to encourage these iconic and inspirational birds onto their land and to help the cranes' return.

### Crane Connections....

The plant, cranesbill, is named after the long pointed fruit that forms after flowering, and is reminiscent of a crane's bill. The cranesbill is part of the geranium family, and the origin of the word geranium is the ancient greek word 'geranos' which means...Crane. A Geranos is also a type of dance - based on the dance of the crane.



Cranesbill

### Cranes elsewhere in the UK

Cranes are thought to have become extinct as a breeding bird over 400 years ago through a combination of drainage and hunting. However, in 1979 three birds spent the winter in the Norfolk Broads, liked what they found and stayed put. Initially the presence of these birds was a closely guarded secret, as their tenuous hold in the UK was foremost in the minds of those seeking to protect them. This population is still centred in Norfolk but birds have now also bred in Suffolk and on Humberside. There are currently around 50 birds resident in the UK.

If you are in East Anglia, good sites to see wild cranes are the Norfolk Wildlife Trust's Hickling Broad Reserve; the area around Stubb Mill (GR TG437 220); at RSPB Lakenheath Fen Reserve and at Pensthorpe Nature Reserve, where a wild male bird has formed a close bond with a captive bred, free flying female.



Hickling Broad NWT Reserve

Research is being undertaken this year funded by Natural England, RSPB and The Norfolk Wildlife Trust to understand more about this existing UK population. The results of this work will undoubtedly help ensure the future success of the crane in the UK.

### I want to know more!

For more info on the project contact Damon Bridge on 01458 254414

A unified Great Crane Project website is currently under construction and for now you can find information at any of the partner websites below:

[wwt.org.uk](http://wwt.org.uk)  
[rspb.org.uk](http://rspb.org.uk)

[pensthorpetrust.org.uk](http://pensthorpetrust.org.uk)  
[viridor-credits.co.uk](http://viridor-credits.co.uk)

## A brighter future for Somerset's wetlands

The Great Crane Project (GCP) is a partnership between the Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust (WWT), the RSPB, Pensthorpe Conservation Trust and Viridor Credits Environmental Company. The project aims to re-establish a population of common cranes in Somerset and help the restoration of cranes to suitable habitats throughout the UK.