

The Somerset Crane Chronicle

The newsletter of the Great Crane Project

Issue 6
May 2011



Welcome

Welcome to the sixth 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.

2nd year begins in earnest

The second year of the project has begun with 24 eggs taken under licence from nests in eastern Germany and transported back over Easter.



Photo Credit - Paul Hann

Twenty chicks are now growing big and strong at the WWT Slimbridge rearing facility (crane school) with exercise and feed provided by their surrogate human 'parents'.



Photo Credit -
Marie-Ann
D'Aloia

The young cranes grow incredibly fast. Over their first ten weeks they grow into a bird standing well over a metre tall with a two metre wingspan! These early days are a very busy time for the surrogate parents who have twenty hungry mouths to feed.

Exploring and expanding

Meanwhile, last year's release birds – 'The Somerset Eighteen' continue to prosper and expand their range. All supplementary feeding ceased in early April, and the birds are fully fending for themselves – and thriving.



Photo Credit - John Crispin

They have turned up as far away as Catcott, (where a small group spent the night) Shapwick and Greylake Nature Reserves, and have been seen flying up to around 1000 ft. high, soaring effortlessly on the thermals and checking out their new world.



Photo Credit -
Michael Leigh-Mallory

Volunteer involvement continues to be essential to the project with over thirty local people now involved in the daily monitoring of the cranes. Information is gathered on the cranes' health, their behaviour and interactions and their foraging and roosting habitats.

Crane droppings are also gathered weekly for analysis. It seems that worms, leatherjackets and some kind of plant root have all featured large on their list of tasty treats this last month.

Crane people of Somerset!

The cranes have been taken to the heart of many local communities – not least the local farming community whose support has been and continues to be essential to long term success of this project. As well as carrying out some supplementary feeding on arable land, the project has supported the creation of small blocks of unharvested maize and other crops to provide some extra winter feed for the cranes in these early years of the project.



Local community groups, Huish Academy, and many local primary schools have also been busy creating crane-inspired artwork, in combination with Somerset Art Works. Much of this is going on 'tour' to WWT Slimbridge from mid June to early August, and then will be displayed at Muchelney Abbey during Somerset Art Weeks in September. (15/09/2011 - 30/09/2011)



Wirework Crane - Monteclefe Primary School, Somerset

More information



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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 sustainable population of common cranes in Britain, securing its future as a breeding species.