

The Somerset Crane Chronicle

The newsletter of the Great Crane Project

Issue 14
April 2014



Welcome

Welcome to the fourteenth newsletter of the Great Crane Project - the project that aims to re-establish a population of Eurasian cranes in the Levels and Moors and enrich the Somerset landscape in an inspirational way.

Water, water everywhere....

Floods across large areas of the Levels and Moors caused problems for many people and devastation for some.



People asked us how the cranes were coping, but actually they thrived. Many of their usual feeding grounds were under water, but they just moved to fields beyond the floods. Here the high water table had driven lots of worms and other creatures to the surface, so the cranes had a high protein diet not usually available in winter. This should mean they are in excellent condition for the spring breeding season.

Safari success

Despite the floods, almost all the Crane Safaris ran and all our 140 guests saw cranes! We are very grateful to our wonderful volunteers who hosted the guests and to our lovely partners at the Willows & Wetlands Centre. Feedback was very positive, so we will be running them again next winter. Bookings will open in October and will be announced on the website and in this newsletter.

The last eggs from Germany

The egg collecting team are back at the Schorfheide-Chorin Biosphere Reserve. They will bring back the fifth and final batch of crane eggs for hatching and rearing at WWT Slimbridge, and our last group of young cranes will be released in Somerset this autumn. We hope to mark the end of this phase of the Great Crane Project with a celebratory event. More about this in the next newsletter.



Amy and Harry

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Crane World Fact-file: No 7

There are 15 crane species spread across the world in all continents except Antarctica and South America. Each issue of the newsletter will highlight a different species.

Black-necked Crane. *Grus nigricollis*

This species breeds in the high altitude wetlands on the Tibetan Plateau and winters on farmland in the valleys of Tibet and neighbouring regions of China, with a few wintering in Bhutan and North-east India. Perhaps because the local Buddhist culture protects them, they are very tolerant of people, and often feed around homesteads.



In Bhutan a festival is held, with dancers in crane costumes, to celebrate the cranes' return to their winter home. The world population is estimated to be only about 5,000 to 6,000, and declining.

More crane information at www.savingcranes.org

The first eggs in Somerset?

As one phase of the project draws to a successful close, there are excellent signs that the next phase is getting into action. The Somerset cranes have been observed pairing up and, even more exciting, several pairs have been wandering around a lot, which we hope means they are searching for suitable nest sites. All our fingers are crossed!



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Children's resources online

Schools and families can now access wonderful art and craft activities themed around cranes and wetlands. All were developed by artist Melanie Tomlinson, commissioned with Somerset Art Works, and have been made available through InspirED. Go to www.thecompanyofcranes.net to find out how to make beautiful crane masks, fish mobiles and much more.



More information



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