



Welcome

Welcome to the fifth 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.

Six months in the wild

The cranes are now approaching nine months old, and are beginning to develop more adult – looking plumage. Of the original 21 released, 18 are alive and doing well and we are well on track to meet our target of 50% survival in the first year. The birds are receiving some supplementary food to keep them healthy through their first winter. This has mainly been provided by local farmers who have helped the return of these marvellous birds to Somerset.



Green Blue Red (Michael) January 2011

The coldest winter on record

December was a particularly harsh month for the cranes. Not only was the ground frozen, preventing the cranes from digging for roots and creepy-crawlies, but the relative safety of their night-time roosting pools was seriously compromised due to ice-cover. With some of the cranes fitted with satellite tags, we were able to establish that during the freeze-up, they sometimes moved roost location up to three times a night – presumably in response to disturbance. Amazingly none were lost during this period.

Monty, Twinkle, Ruby, Cosmo, Tamsin, and Mennis

Inspiring the rural communities of the Levels and Moors is an important step in safeguarding the future for Somerset's cranes & wetlands. Six of this year's cranes (those above) have been championed and named by local primary schools at Burrowbridge, Stoke St Gregory, High Ham, Monteclefe, Othery, North Curry and Middlezoy.



The schools have received an educational session on cranes and wetlands led by the project's volunteers and the pupils have created some wonderful crane-inspired artwork facilitated by a Somerset Art Works project and local artist Fiona Campbell. More visits are planned to rural schools over the spring term.

Nature in Art Community Days

Two community days were held over the winter too – where local people created their own glorious technicolour crane decoys. We plan to have these on view in Somerset Art Weeks 2011.



You can read all about this and other crane community work at:
<http://greatcraneart.blogspot.com/>



Where are they now?

The best way to find out the recent whereabouts of the cranes is to look on the mapping pages of the website.

Members of the public are welcome to come and look for the cranes, now that they are out and about in the wild, but we request that the crane watching guidelines on the website are followed. When the birds are found, it is now possible to record the sighting via the website's interactive mapping pages too.

Cranes – stars of Radio 4

The story of the crane reintroduction has been covered throughout by the wonderful 'Saving Species' programme on BBC Radio 4. The programme's presenter Brett Westwood visited the Levels to record an update early in the new year – Episode 37. Find out what he found out by going to the listen again facility on the BBC website:
www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b00x95h4



The cranes on Aller Moor - Dec 2010

For more information, please visit

www.thegreatcraneproject.org.uk

Or contact Damon Bridge

Tel: 01458 254414
Mob: 07736 633138

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.