Report of the Meeting on Suggestion of Dispersal of Wintering Cranes at Izumi, Japan

Beijing and Dongying
People's Republic of China

13 – 18 March 2001

Asia Council
BirdLife International

I. Introduction

The cranes in North East Asia suffered a decline to the brink of extinction in the first half of the 20th century. Since the 1950s, because of better protection and a higher public awareness in the range countries, some crane populations gradually recovered.

One of the best examples of such recovery is the increase of wintering cranes at the plains of Izumi, Kagoshima Prefecture, Japan, where wintering Hooded Cranes and White-naped Cranes were only about 250 birds and 30 birds in the late 1940s respectively. In 2000 their numbered reached about 8,500 (Hooded Cranes) and 3,000 (White-naped Cranes)

This increase should be welcomed, as it shows with support from both government and local communities, we can save threatened species from extinction. However, as the number of cranes at Izumi increases, a new problem arises. The feeding and roosting area at Izumi is only about 60 hectares. This high concentration of cranes makes them vulnerable to infectious disease and natural catastrophe. It is a potential threat of global concern because the wintering Hooded Cranes at Izumi consists about 80% of the world population, and White-naped Cranes about half of the world population.

In recent years many ornithologists proposed identifying new wintering grounds for the over-concentrated cranes at Izumi (Ohsako 1994, Meine and Archibald 1996, BirdLife International 2000). The first international attempt was this meeting held in Beijing, March 2001. The meeting invited 13 crane specialists from China, Japan and South Korea to discuss the favorable factors of wintering cranes.

This meeting hopes to initiate the discussion and planning for the dispersal of cranes from Izumi.

II. Discussion at the meeting

Date of the meeting:

13 March 2001	First meeting on information exchange and suggestions on deisperal.
14-16 March 2001	Presentation of the plan at the workshop of the North East Asian Crane Site Network, Yellow River Delta Nature Reserve, China
17 March 2001	Group discussion and summarized the result.

Venue:

13 March 2001	Institute of Forestry, Beijing, China
14 – 17 Mrahc 2001	Dongying Hotel, Dongying (Yellow River Delta Nature Reserve), Shandong Province, China

Participants of the 13 March 2001 meeting:

People's Republic of China:

Prof. Wang Qishan, Anuhi University

Dr. Yu Weidong, Shanghai Teachers' University

Mr. Qian Fawen, National Bird Banding Cneter

Japan

Prof. Hiroyuki Masatomi, Senshu University, Hokkaido

Mr. Sueharu Matano, Warden of cranes at Izumi

Mr. Nobuki Kawamura, Tsuru Ikoinosato Koryu Center, Yashiro.

Republic of Korea

Dr. Kim Jin-han, National Institute of Environmental Research

Dr. Pae Seong-hwan, The Korean Institute of Ornithology

Mr. Park Jong-yong, Cholwon

Mr. Hwang Jin-wan, Cholwon

Mr. Shin Dong-shok, Kumi

Mr. Kim Young-dae, Suncheon

Crane Flyway Officer

Mr. Simba Chan, Wild Bird Society of Japan

1. Status of wintering Hooded Crane and White-naped Crane reported by delegates from wintering countries:

A. People's Republic of China
Numbers of cranes are counts from 2000 unless specified.

Hooded Crane

Site	Number	Trend
Chongming Island, Shanghai (31.40N 121.30E)	150	increasing?
Lake Caizi Hu, Anhui Province (30.50N 117.07E)	152	?
Lake Shengjin Hu, Anhui Province (30.23N 117.05E)	251	stable
Lake Longgan Hu, Anhui and Hubei provinces (29.56N 116.10E)	(est.) 50 – 60	decreasing
Lake Dongting Hu, Hunan Province (29.19N 112.54E) (Number of 1998)	17	decreasing
Lake Poyang Hu, Jiangxi Province (29.04N 116.18E) (Number of 1998)	212	stable

The estimated number of wintering Hooded Cranes in China is about 1,000 birds. The overall status is probably stable.

Shengjin Hu is the most important wintering site since the 1990s. Formerly the most important wintering ground was Longgan Hu (300 – 400 birds). In recent years, conversion of rice paddies into cotton field changed the habitat and wintering birds declined.

White-naped Crane

Site	Number	Trend
Huai He river basin, northern Anhui Province (Approx. 32.10 – 33.10N 115.00-118.30E)	60	?
Lake Shengjin Hu, Anhui Province (30.23N 117.05E)	23	decreasing?
Lake Dongting Hu, Hunan Province (29.19N 112.54E) (Number of 1998)	at least 1	decreasing
Lake Poyang Hu, Jiangxi Province (29.04N 116.18E) (Number of 1998)	2,663	stable

The total number of White-naped Crane wintering in China is 2,500 – 3,000 birds. The total number is stable, but seems to be declining at some formerly important sites

Almost all wintering White-naped Cranes in China concentrated at Poyang Hu.

B. Japan

Hooded Crane

Site	Number	Trend
Yashiro, Yamaguchi Prefecture (34.10N 131.54E)	21	stable
Izumi, Kagoshima Prefecture (32.05N 130.20E)	about 8,500	increasing

White-naped Crane

Site	Number	Trend
Izumi, Kagoshima Prefecture (32.05N 130.20E)	about 3,000	increasing

Occasionally cranes were found wintering at other localities in Japan (about 1,500 records of wintering cranes since the 1970s). However, none of these sites are regular sites and they do not support a large number of cranes. Most of the wintering cranes in Japan are found at Izumi only, with another small regular wintering population at Yashiro.

The highest record of Hooded Cranes at Yashiro was 355 birds in 1940-41. But the population crushed during the Second World War. After the war the number remained stable at 100 – 200 birds from the late 1940s to mid-1960s. Then the number slowly declined. The lowest record was 17 birds in 1998-99. Yashiro has started to place Hooded Crane decoys in 1998 to attract wintering cranes.

Izumi has long been an important wintering

Republic of Korea

III. Recommendations

Reference

BirdLife International (2000) Threatened Birds of the World. BirdLife International, Cambridge, U.K.

Ohsako, Y. (1994) Analysis of crane population changes, habitat selection and human disturbance in Japan. In pp. 107 – 113. Higuchi and Minton (1994) The Future of Crane sand Wetlands: Proceedings of the International Symposium. Wild Bird Society of Japan, Tokyo.

Meine, C.D. and Archibald, G.W. Archibald (1996) The Cranes: Status Survey and Conservation Action Plan. IUCN, Gland, Switzerland, and Cambridge, U.K.