

THE SIBERIAN CRANE MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING UNDER THE CONVENTION ON MIGRATORY SPECIES

The Siberian Crane Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was the first MoU developed under the auspices of the Convention on Migratory Species (1979). The document was approved on 1 July 1993 and revised on 1 January 1999. The greatest threats to the Siberian Crane are hunting during the migration seasons and habitat deterioration at their stop-over sites and wintering grounds. The MoU was signed by twelve Range States including Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, China, India, Islamic Republic of Iran, Japan, Kazakhstan, Mongolia, Pakistan, Russian Federation, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

See Introduction, MoU text and MoU fact sheet.



Introduction

The Siberian Crane Memorandum of Understanding was the first MoU developed under Convention on Migratory Species auspices. It was concluded on 1 July 1993 and revised on 1 January 1999.

Originally concentrating on the Western and Central populations of Siberian cranes, which migrate between breeding grounds in Western Siberia and wintering sites in Iran and India respectively, the scope of the Memorandum was extended in 1998 to cover the larger Eastern Asian population which winters around Poyang Lake, China, and accounts for over 95% of the birds.

The serious threat of the Siberian Crane must be attributed firstly to hunting during their migration routes and habitat deterioration in their wintering ground. Although the shooting of Siberian Cranes is prohibited in most of the Range States, illegal shooting persists.

The MoU area covers twelve Range States including Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, China, India, Islamic Republic of Iran, Japan, Kazakhstan, Mongolia, Pakistan, Russian Federation, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. An up to date list of the Agreement's Parties is found in its Agreement Summary Sheet.

The Conservation Plans

The Conservation Plans for the Western, Central and Eastern Siberian Cranes, agreed in May 2001, are structured according to the MoU's basic objectives, followed by a number of programmes and specific activities that recognize both the similarities and differences in the actions required to restore the populations.

Overall aims of the three plans are to reduce mortality in the remaining populations, to protect and manage their habitats and enhance co-operation among the Range States and other concerned agencies. The plans for the Western and Central populations strive also to increase numbers and genetic diversity.

The implementation of the Conservation Plans is reviewed regularly during a meeting of Siberian crane Range States. Here, the Conservation Plans for all three populations are updated.

Activities under the MoU

There are signs that the work under the MoU is beginning to show results: important new information about critical sites has been gathered, recovery efforts are better co-ordinated and the remaining Western/Central Asian populations are managing to maintain stable numbers.

The International Crane Foundation (ICF) is a CMS partner organisation for which the Convention co-funds the post of the Siberian Crane Flyway Coordinator. In 2002, ICF teamed up with the All Russian Research Institute for Nature Protection to start a new project. A hang-glider pilot tried to lead a flock of young, captive-bred Siberian cranes along part of their traditional migratory route between Russia and Iran.

This bold initiative is an adaptation of a similar programme using an ultralight aircraft, which has shown promise for endangered Whooping cranes in the United States. Although the full migration route was not attempted in the first year, substantive progress has been made.

The “Asian Wetlands for Siberian Cranes and Other Waterbirds” GEF Project

The Global Environment Facility (GEF) approved a project to develop a wetland site and flyway network to conserve the Siberian crane and other migratory waterbirds in Asia. The project had been proposed by ICF and CMS. GEF will contribute a total of US\$10 million over a 6-year period. An additional US\$12.7 in co-financing has been committed.

The project will be carried out by ICF, under the aegis of the United Nations Environment Programme as well as in cooperation with CMS, and the Governments of China, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Kazakhstan and the Russian Federation.

It will focus specifically on conserving the international network of wetlands upon which the Siberian crane depends, together with a wide range of other wetlands biodiversity. The results of this project will provide a basis to expand the wetland site networks and more widely apply the approaches that have been developed in each participating country.

http://www.cms.int/species/siberian_crane/sib_bkrd.htm

Memorandum of Understanding concerning Conservation Measures for the Siberian Crane (text and amendments)

http://www.cms.int/species/siberian_crane/sib_text.htm

The Chairman, State Committee on Ecology and Nature Utilization Control, Azerbaijan
The Director General, State Forestry Administration, China
The Secretary, Ministry of Environment and Forests, India
The Head of the Department of Environment, Islamic Republic of Iran
The Minister of Ecology and Natural Resources, Kazakhstan
The State Secretary, Ministry of Nature and Environment, Mongolia
The Minister of Environment, Local Government and Rural Development, Pakistan
The Chairman, State Committee on Environmental Protection, Russian Federation
The Minister of Natural Resource Use and Environmental Protection, Turkmenistan
The Chairman, State Committee for Nature Protection, Uzbekistan
The Ambassador of Afghanistan to Germany

The undersigned, acting on behalf of the respective authorities named above,

Aware that the western and central populations of the Siberian Crane, *Grus leucogeranus*, have been reduced to the brink of extinction, and that the status of the eastern population is threatened;

Recognizing that the Siberian Crane has the longest migration route of all crane species, ranging from breeding areas in the Arctic regions of Asia to wintering grounds in southern Asia, and that the species is highly dependent on the conservation of shallow wetlands for its survival;

Concerned that hunting and loss of wetlands, particularly in southern Asia, are thought to have been responsible for the decline in the numbers of Siberian Cranes;

Conscious that concerted, co-ordinated action must be taken immediately to prevent the disappearance of the remaining populations;

Acknowledging their shared responsibility for the conservation and wise management of the Siberian Crane and the wetland habitats on which the species depends, and the desirability of involving all Range States of the western, central and eastern populations of the species in common initiatives;

AGREE to work closely together to improve the conservation status of the Siberian Crane throughout its breeding, migrating and wintering range.

To that end, in a spirit of mutual understanding and co-operation, they shall:

1. Provide strict protection for Siberian Cranes and identify and conserve the wetland habitats essential for their survival;
2. Subject to availability of resources, implement in their respective countries the provisions of the Conservation Plan annexed to this memorandum as a basis for conserving the western, central and eastern populations of the species. The Conservation Plan shall aim to reduce mortality, increase numbers and genetic diversity, and enhance international co-operation, and

shall include inter alia: measures to protect the traditional breeding, staging and wintering areas of the Siberian Crane; provisions for the identification of key sites for breeding, migrating and wintering Siberian Cranes and the preparation of national action plans; detailed proposals for monitoring, research and practical measures for the rehabilitation of Siberian Crane populations; and proposals for the establishment of a funding mechanism for these conservation measures. Implementation of the Memorandum, including the Conservation Plan, shall be assessed at regular meetings to be attended by representatives of each of the Governments concerned and persons or agencies technically qualified in the conservation of Siberian Cranes. Such meetings shall be convened by the Secretariat of the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (1979), and shall be hosted by and organized in collaboration with one of the Range States or Co-operating Organizations.

3. Facilitate the expeditious exchange of scientific, technical and legal information needed to co-ordinate conservation measures; and co-operate with recognized scientists of international organizations and other Range States in order to facilitate their work conducted in relation to the Conservation Plan;
4. Designate a competent authority to serve as a contact point for the other Parties and communicate without delay the name and contact details of this authority (and any changes thereto) to the Secretariat of the Convention on Migratory Species;
5. Provide to the Secretariat of the Convention on Migratory Species, by 31 March of each year, a report on implementation of this Memorandum of Understanding in each of the respective countries. The Secretariat shall transmit to each of the Range States all of the reports received, together with an overview report which it shall compile on the basis of information at its disposal.

Basic principles

1. This Memorandum of Understanding shall be considered an agreement under Article IV, paragraph 4, of the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals. It supercedes the Memorandum of Understanding of the same name adopted at Kushiro in June 1993. The Memorandum shall take effect on 1 January 1999 for those two or more Range States that have signed it. It shall remain open for signature indefinitely, and shall become effective for all other signatory States on the first day of the first month following the date on which they sign. The Memorandum of Understanding shall remain in effect indefinitely subject to the right of any Party to terminate its participation by providing one year's written notice to all of the other Parties.

2. The Memorandum of Understanding, including the Conservation Plan, may be amended by a consensus of all of the signatory States.

3. The working language for all matters related to this Memorandum of Understanding shall be English.

Done at Ramsar on this thirteenth day of December, 1998.

Amendment to the Memorandum of Understanding concerning Conservation Measures for the Siberian Crane

26 April 2004

Pursuant to paragraph 2 of the Basic Principles of the Memorandum of Understanding, and the unanimous decision of the Fourth Meeting of Siberian Crane Range States (Baraboo, Wisconsin, May 2001) to extend an invitation to the Government of Mongolia to sign the instrument, the Memorandum of Understanding is hereby amended by a consensus of all of the Signatory States to provide for the inclusion of the Minister of Nature Environment, Mongolia, among the list of authorities eligible to sign the Memorandum of Understanding.

Amendment to the Memorandum of Understanding concerning Conservation Measures for the Siberian Crane

Almaty, Kazakhstan, 15 May 2007

Pursuant to paragraph 2 of the Basic Principles of the Memorandum of Understanding, and the unanimous decision of the Fifth Meeting of Siberian Crane Range States (Moscow, Russian Federation, April 2004) to extend an invitation to the Wetlands International and to the Cracid and Crane Breeding and Conservation Centre to sign the instrument as Co-operating Organizations, the Memorandum of Understanding is hereby amended for that purpose.

Co-operating Organizations:
Secretariat of the Convention on Migratory Species
International Crane Foundation
Wild Bird Society of Japan

Wetlands International
Cracid and Crane Breeding and Conservation Centre

* Amendment introduced in April 2004, by consensus of all Signatory States.

** From 2002, the Minister of Natural Resources, Russian Federation.

*** Signature effected in 2006