



ZHURAVL

A Newsletter of Friends of Muraviovka Park – March 2021

The Muraviovka Park Community

by Sergei and Elena Smirenski

The turbulent and challenging year 2020 has been extremely hard on people, organizations, and businesses around the globe. At the same time, and in many cases, due to lock-downs and travel restrictions the wildlife got an unexpected break from human pressure. For example, the ban on spring hunting in the entire Amur River Basin prompted by the pandemic, together with fewer grass fires and record precipitation that restored the surface water levels, created excellent conditions for water birds. As we had to slow down or put on hold some of the Park's activities, Sergei has been able to successfully lead and coordinate the Park's operations remotely, through daily meetings on WhatsApp or Zoom. Some long-term volunteers also found a way to work at the Park. Two qualified and motivated employees joined our team filling critically important vacancies. In summer 2020, Margarita Agulina, the new Education, Visitor & Volunteer Program Coordinator and her husband Andrei Potekhin, the new Site Manager, have settled at the Park's Headquarters with Margarita's two sons. The Park's family is growing, and now our plans for 2021 look a bit more realistic!

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The Muraviovka Park Community (cont.)

29 October 2020

Last night had gladdened us with sudden snow.
Its diamonds glittered in the lantern light,
And snowflakes sparkled with a rainbow fire,
To turn into marvelous pictures at morn...

25 November 2020

And once again the autumn evening dawn
Is playing with the colors.
One of the last ones bestowed by this year.
And I rejoice with each tiny ray, each cloud,
Standing still, enjoying the nature amusement...

By Margarita Potekhina

Our original plans for 2020 included fire management, grassland restoration and reforestation activities, surveys of birds, supporting the wild population of Red-crowned Cranes by raising chicks for release into the wild; planting lure crops of corn, small grain, and sunflower to provide safe feeding habitats for cranes and other birds, international summer camps, and upgrading the Park's nature trail. Below we report on what we were able to accomplish despite the hardships caused by the pandemic.

In mid-March, the Chinese city of Heihe, located across the Amur River from Blagoveshchensk (Blago for short), celebrated the end of isolation by fireworks. There were no cases of COVID-19 in Blago at that time, so we hoped that the normal life will be back soon. Due to scarce information about the virus origin, dissemination, level of the threat it presented to people, and new cases daily reported from other countries, we decided to postpone our summer camps, festivals, and other public events indefinitely.

At the end of the second decade of April, when

the ground became free from snow, the air temperatures rose to 68°F, and mass bird migration began. A cyclone on April 18 brought heavy snow, and air temperatures dropped to 25°F. The land was covered by snow up to one foot deep (see Fig.1 – Dusky Trush diving into snow to search for food). Some birds



FIG. 1

tried to fly south, some retreated to human settlements. According to local ornithologist and Muraviovka Park volunteer Dr. Vasily Dugintsov, thousands of migratory songbirds in the southern portion of the Amur Region were killed by these conditions.

Many people were feeding birds and made appeals for help in social media and by posters (Fig. 2).



FIG. 3

In May, ornithologist Anton Sassin from the Amur Region Socio-ecological Union conducted surveys of waterbirds in the southern Amur Region using a quadcopter drone. His team sighted 17 pairs of White-naped Cranes (14 nests with eggs or recently hatched chicks, and three families walking with chicks) and 20 active nests of Oriental Storks in Muraviovka Game Refuge (mostly in the area overlapping with the Park land) but found only one breeding pair of Red-crowned Crane. Overall, in 2020, according to Anton Sassin and Mikhail Parilov from Khingansky State Nature Reserve, 179 nesting pairs of White-naped and only nine

for wintering birds and for the bird feeders.

On Fig.3, Olga Beriozkina (on the right) is greeted by the Park's Deputy Director Anastasia Fedichkina.

However, snow also stopped grassfires and added more water to wetlands, restoring the optimal surface water level for

waterbirds. The snow, in combination with the ban on spring hunting in the entire Amur River Basin caused by the pandemic, resulted in fewer grass fires and created excellent conditions for waterbirds.

Field Research



FIG.2

We are very thankful to Olga Beriozkina from Blago who has been bringing sacks of sunflower seed every year since 2015 (3 in 2020 and 7 in 2021), donated by an internet group *Pathos* to develop a lure crop

pairs of Red-crowned Cranes were counted in the southern part of the Amur Region. In early September, our staff spotted two families of Red-crowned Cranes in the Park – each with one flightless chick. Probably, the second pair began breeding after the drone survey.

Due to travel restrictions, we were not able to proceed with the planned surveys of endangered species and other bird studies. On May 11, our Bird Keeper Sergei Rozhkov filmed 17 Siberian Cranes flying over the Park Headquarters. This flock made a 3-4-day stopover at the Park prior to continue flying north. Mr. Rozhkov also filmed a one-year-old Mute Swan (first sighting in the Park!).

In June, unprecedented rainfall lasted for days, and in September, a several days typhoon brought more heavy rains. December was unusually dry (2 mm of precipitations) but total 2020 annual precipitation (892.6 mm) was a historic record. Water covered vast lowland areas and even some crop fields on terraces, creating excellent conditions for insects, snails, amphibians, and fish - important source of food for many birds. Even in October, some crop fields were still under water or too muddy for

agriculture machinery and impassible for people.

Supporting the Wild Population of the Red-crowned Crane at Muravioovka Park

The striking difference in how the Red-crowned and the White-naped Cranes responded to the improved breeding conditions in the Amur Region reflects the recent critical decline of the western mainland flock of the Red-crowned Crane. Currently, there are not enough birds left in the wild to fill even high-quality breeding habitats.

Unlike White-naped and Hooded Cranes that migrate in big flocks, Red-crowned Cranes now leave the Amur Region by families or in small groups. In 2020, due to the above-mentioned decline, there were only two families with one chick each and a pair of Red-crowned Cranes at the Park. Sadly, in addition to land reclamation and poisoning in wintering grounds and along the flyways, significant numbers of Red-crowned Cranes are now being captured in China for commercial purposes (to sell them as pets or use in public shows). In 2019, only 353 Red-crowned Cranes belonging to the western flock of the mainland population were counted in wintering grounds, with over thousand captive birds

found in state zoos and nature reserves only (number of birds kept by private individuals is unknown). These threatened birds have no time to wait for these practices to die out or for the law enforcement upgrade. In this situation, in addition to wetland conservation and public education we have to do our best to expand the crane captive breeding and release programs.

According to Mikhail Parilov, seven out of nine pairs of wild, Red-crowned Cranes counted in the Amur Region in 2020 nested in Khingansky Nature Reserve. Five of these pairs built nests in the area where the Station of Reintroduction of Rare Birds annually releases into the wild cranes raised in captivity. Some of such birds come back paired with wild birds and nest close to the release area. Probably it is one of the main reasons of comparatively high density of breeding cranes near release site. Whereas restoration of western flock could happen only if main threats are eliminated or significantly reduced, release of cranes raised in captivity is an essential activity to support the remainder of the species

breeding population in the Amur River basin.

Therefore, releases of birds raised in Muraviovka Park pens by their parents became an important part of our program to support the wild population of the Red-crowned Crane. During Sergei's February-March trip to the Park, he discussed a plan for joint efforts in this program with the Wildlife Service of the Amur Region. In May, the one-year-old, Red-crowned Crane named Quarter (to mark the 25th anniversary of the land lease for the Park), raised by its parents in the Park's pen and marked by a GPS tracking device, was released into the wild (see article by Anton Sassin on p 9).

In late November, unprecedented freezing rains that lasted almost a week caused natural and humanitarian disaster in Primorsky Region, where Quarter ended his migration (see article by Sergey Surmach on p 11).

Sergey Surmach also filmed Quarter's Life in the Cold (watch Vladivostok TV news in Russian here):

<https://youtu.be/Lr8ID22o6H0>
<https://youtu.be/uPriwwijZ-E>

which raised great interest and concern of the general public about Quarter and cranes in general.



FIG. 4

In 2020, Oka and Kivili, Quarter's parents and our reliable breeding pair of Red-crowned Cranes successfully incubated two eggs and raised two healthy chicks – good candidates for the release in spring 2021.

Our plans for the year 2021 include construction of a new outdoor pen for cranes. The Park's second captive pair of Red-crowned Cranes, four-year-old male May and female Kanazava, became mature, bonded, and may begin breeding this year. We are searching for a biologist who would oversee this expanding program. We also hope for adequate volunteer assistance during the breeding season.

We are grateful to Vyacheslav Loginov, the Amur Region Legislative Assembly Chairman, Valentina Tolmachiova (Fig. 4), the Head

of the Tambovka District Women Association, and to many friends in Tambovka District for supplying fresh food (pumpkins, zucchini, and chicken eggs) for our birds.

Fire Management and Suppression

In late February / early March, we discussed the workplan for 2020 with our staff and the Amur Region and Tambovka District authorities. A plan was developed for prescribed burns in spring, with a goal to prevent impact of wildfires on crane habitats. Unfortunately, we had to postpone these activities indefinitely due to the concern of spreading COVID-19. On the other hand, due to the same concern, the local government banned the spring hunting season on waterbirds for the first time in recent decades. Also, limited spring grassfires

did not reach the crane and stork nesting habitats in the Park. There were also no wildfires and no prescribed burns in the fall of 2020. This means, however, that the huge amount of accumulated fuel (dry vegetation) may feed damaging fires next spring.



FIG. 5

Lure Crops for Birds

Due to shortage of funds, we were not able to plant the planned lure corn and small grain fields (for the first time since 1998). We still managed to develop a 7-acre lure sunflower field for songbirds and maintained all our fields to suppress weeds.

Environmental Education

In January 2020, we participated in North American Crane Working Group Workshop in Lubbock, Texas along with several ICF staff and board members (Fig. 5) and gave a poster presentation about environmental education programs at the Park.

In early February, when COVID-19 began spreading but was not yet recognized as a

pandemic by the World Health Organization, a team of ten Russian students, one Russian teacher, and two American educators (all participants in the summer environmental school at Muraviovka Park in June 2019) participated in the *Second Winter Korean-Russian-American Crane School* on the wintering grounds of Red-crowned and White-naped Cranes in the Cheorwon area near the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) of South Korea. Ten South Korean students had initially signed up for the school, but eight of them were pulled out by their parents due to growing COVID-19 concerns several days before the camp opening. All participants used masks for protection, and no one became ill. The event was highly successful, and we discussed a plan to conduct a joint summer school at the Park

in summer 2020, which soon had to be canceled. (See also article by Ksenia Pudova on p. 15).

In February/March, we put together a team of American and Russian educators to lead the 2020 Summer School at the Park, began developing a program for this camp session, and worked on preparation of the camp facilities. Due to COVID-19

travel restrictions and stay-at-home orders in the US and Russia introduced in late March, we had to cancel the summer school for the first time since 1994. Our US teacher team is standing by to participate in future summer programs, but chances to run an international summer camp in 2021 look miniscule at this time. We are currently developing a small-scale on-site summer school and visitor programs run by our staff and on-line interactive educational materials.

In summer 2020, we were delighted to welcome Ms. Margarita Agulina as the Park's new Education, Visitor & Volunteer Program Coordinator (Education Coordinator for short). In May/June, our staff made repairs and renovations in the staff apartment to prepare it for

Margarita and her two teenage sons, and she began her employment with the Park on 29 June. Sergei has been in frequent communication with her and Anastasia Fedichkina, Deputy Director since his trip to the Park in February/March 2020. Margarita is an English and German language teacher from Khabarovsk who has participated in seven of our Russian-American Summer Schools since 2012. She is well familiar with the Park’s mission and projects, and along with her two sons, is a huge fan of the Park. She was one of the leading teachers of the *Repetitor (Tutor)* Foreign Language School in Khabarovsk – the Park’s longtime partner in our international summer school program. Accepting this job was a good fit with her plans to move back to Blago, where she is originally from, to be closer to her elderly mother.

However, these were not the only good outcomes of Margarita’s move to the Park. We were overjoyed when Margarita and Andrei Potekhin, her university classmate, and the new Muraviovka Park Site Manager, had announced their plans to get married! In December 2020, Margarita and Andrei tied the knot (Fig. 6), and Margarita took her husband’s last name.



FIG. 6

(See also article by Margarita Potekhina on p.16.) We extend our best wishes to this new family!

Margarita beautifully expressed her feelings and thoughts regarding her life at the Park in several short poems, which original Russian verses are nicely rhymed. See samples of Margarita’s poetry (translated into English by Elena Smirenski) on pages 2 and 24.

In December, Margarita began working with Wisconsin teachers on development of interactive on-line ways of environmental education. In the current uncertain situation with the pandemic, such tools have become particularly important.

Enhancing the Park’s Nature Trail

In May, thanks to the initiative of Ms. Tatiana Smirnova, our long-term volunteer who, with full

endorsement of her boss Ms. Olga Amelchenko, wrote a grant proposal to her company, Far-eastern Power Distribution Network. We received a ~\$9,000 grant to enhance and expand our deteriorating nature trail. Immediately, we developed a workplan for the old trail along the river terrace slope

and for the Education Center at the Park. However, at that time we did not have staff workers who could conduct this project, and because of the growing coronavirus threat we could not bring contractors to the Park. Consequently, we had to put the project on hold for three months, which caused concerns of the donor. Finally, in August we began some work with the help of volunteers. In October, we hired one of these volunteers, Mr. Andrei Potekhin, to continue working fulltime on the trail (Fig. 7).



FIG. 7

Since he did an excellent job and demonstrated good management and construction skills, in November we offered Andrei a fulltime position of the Park’s Site Manager. In recent years Andrei, a high school history teacher by education, worked in archeological expeditions in Sakha Republic / Yakutia. So, we were not surprised that while digging the dirt on the nature trail, Andrei noticed what other people had missed – fragments of pottery from Ossinozersk Culture of the Middle Amur Basin (2,000 BC), which he delivered to the State Center on Preservation of the Amur Region Legacy (Fig. 8).

We are incredibly grateful to the leaders of Far-eastern Power Distribution Network Co., as well as to Olga



FIG. 8

Amelchenko and Tatiana Smirnova for their support to this project, which will allow

the Amurians to learn more about the wildlife and culture of their land.

Community Conservation Action

Despite COVID-19 restrictions, a number of volunteers from Tambovka town worked at the Park several times in 2020. A group of 20 volunteers from Tambovka District came to the Park in May to clean up the premises after winter and develop flowerbeds at the Headquarters. On June 19-20, five student volunteers from the Teacher’s University in Blago came to the Park to clean and organize the Headquarters.

Margarita’s students from Khabarovsk (Fig. 9) helped organize the headquarters site and duplex and developed new hand-out materials for the nature trail (see pieces by Ksenia Pudova on p. 15, Mikhail Prodan on p. 17, Kristina Timofeeva on p. 18, Evgeniy Agulin on p. 19, Angelina Tkachenko on p. 20, Mar’yana Solodukhina on p. 20-21, Vyacheslav Wang on p. 21, and Anna Korotkikh on p. 21).



FIG. 9

In June 2020, Elena Smirenski had completely retired from her long-time position with the International Crane Foundation (1993-2020) and now has much more time to help Sergei with Muraviovka Park projects as a dedicated volunteer. Our hope is that in spring or summer of 2021 the travel restrictions and lockdowns will be lifted around the world, and we will be able to accomplish much more than in 2020 – especially with all the much-appreciated support we have been receiving from the Park’s friends around the world!

Tracking Quarter

By Anton Sassin, Ph.D., Chief Researcher, Amur Region Public Environmental Organization "Amur Socio-ecological Union", Blagoveshchensk, Russia

May 2020, we placed a GPS tracker OrniTrack OT-L45 3G (manufactured by Ornitela Company, Lithuania) on a one-year-old Red-crowned Crane by the name of Quarter, which was then released into the Muraviovka Park wetlands.



This was the first Red-crowned Crane in the Amur Region marked with a GPS tracking device since 2000 (except for Khingansky State Nature Reserve, where several cranes were marked with similar trackers in recent years).

Quarter is the fifth young crane born and raised in a captive breeding facility and released into the wild at Muraviovka Park. Two cranes were released in 2017, two in 2019, and one in 2020. Before

Quarter, however, the released cranes were marked only with plastic bands with numbers. So, after leaving their birthplace, their destiny remained unknown. The GPS device placed on Quarter allows us to track the bird's movements and condition daily.

The device is a 45-gram sealed transmitter, which is attached to a crane's leg. Every 10 minutes, it takes and saves in its memory three-dimensional data on geographic coordinates, ambient temperature, solar irradiance, and acceleration. Accumulated data are transmitted every 12 or 48 hours to an OrniTrack server, from which they can be retrieved and used to monitor the crane's movements and produce graphs for each kind of data. The transmitter is powered by three miniature solar batteries and is designed to last up to five years.

As of January 2021, Quarter has been surviving in the wild for the last eight months. Here is a list of some of the most important events in its new, free life.

1. **20 May 2020:** Quarter was released into the wild on Lake Kapustikha shore near the Muraviovka Park Headquarters.
2. **20-26 May 2020:** the crane has been gradually adjusting to the independent life and hanging out in a wetland 1.5 miles north of the release site.
3. **27 May:** Quarter flew over to the crop fields in the Giltchin River floodplain outside of the borders of Muraviovsky Wildlife Refuge, 3 miles east of Muraviovka Park. Here, among the crop fields among villages of Kuropatino, Razdol'noye, Giltchin and Muraviovka, the bird stayed until 23 October.
4. **23 October:** Quarter moved to Amursky Wildlife Refuge for one day.
5. **24 October:** Quarter moved to Ivanovsky District north of Amursky Wildlife Refuge where it stayed until 8 November.
6. **9 November:** by then, snow covered most of the Amur Region, and the crane flew south to China, making almost 200 miles in one day. Next day, however, Quarter, instead of continuing flying south, turned back north, flew 56 miles and stopped on the shores of Namar River in Heilongjiang Province of China, about 155 miles south of Blagoveshchensk. The crane stayed there for 18 days, until 28 November, when the night temperatures taken by its tracker dropped to -9°F.

7. **29 November:** the crane moved again—this time in east direction. For three days, stopping at night, Quarter covered 620 miles, reached the Sea of Japan shore in Primorsky Region of Russia, and on 2 December landed near Plastoon town, where he stayed until 6 December (see map).
8. **6 December:** the crane began moving along the shore in south direction, towards Rudnaya Pristan’ town. Once, it tried to fly east across the sea toward Japan, but after flying six miles over open water, the bird turned back towards the shore and never made such attempts again.
9. **7 December:** After roaming around in Primorsky Region, Quarter spotted a harvested cornfield near Monomakhovo village, where the ice and soil had been loosened by wild boars digging for food and decided to stop there to forage. Next to that field, there is a small river with several spots of open water where it was safe to roost.

Data transmitted by the GPS tracker was shared with local ornithologists, who located the bird on the ground, organized daily feeding and observations, eventually captured the crane and placed him to a safe place for the rest of the winter of the winter (see Sergey Surmach’s article on p. 11).

Program to Place GPS Tracking Devices on Birds

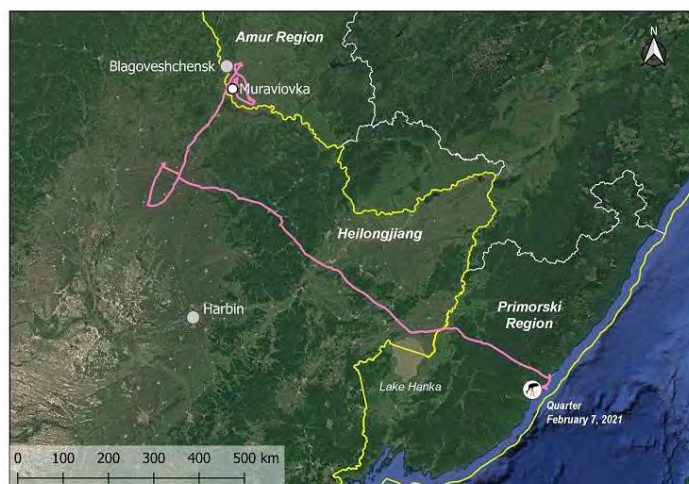
The GPS tracker placed on Quarter was among many more purchased from the Lithuanian company by the Chinese Academy of Science and donated to this program within the framework of the Memorandum of Understanding signed in 2018 by the Research Center for Ecology and Environment of the Chinese Academy of Science, National Nature Reserve Hunhe, Coordinating Council of the Directors of State Nature Reserves in the South of Russian Far East, Federal Office “Zapovednoye Priamurie” (“Pristine Amur Land”), and the Amur Branch of WWF-Russia. This project is part of a five-year international program initiated in 2017 by the Chinese Academy of Science and consequently joined by a number of Russian nature reserves and conservation organizations.

The program planned to place 2,600 transmitters on 59 species of waterbirds, including cranes and Oriental Storks. So far, Quarter is the only crane to participate

in such a comprehensive research program.

During the three years of the project to track migration, GPS transmitters were placed on 130 Oriental Stork chicks and only one Red-crowned Crane Quarter). On the Zeya-Bureya Plain in the Amur Region, the participants of this project include experts from the Amur Branch of Socio-ecological Union, Amur Branch of WWF-Russia, Blagoveshchensk Teachers’ University, and the Amur Directorate for Specially Protected Nature Areas.

In Khingan-Arkhara lowland, this work has been led by Khingansky Nature Reserve in cooperation with an NGO, “The Guardians of Khingan.” In Khabarovsk Region and Bolon’sky Nature Reserve, the project has been conducted by staff of the Federal Office “Zapovednoye Priamurie,” and in Primorsky Region – by staff of Khanka Nature Reserve and an NGO “Amur-Ussuri Center for Bird Biodiversity.”



The map of Quarter's movements generated by GPS tracking device

Saving Quarter

By Sergey G. Surmach

*Federal Research Center for Biodiversity, Far-eastern Branch of the Russian Academy of Science,
Vladivostok, Russia*

On 15 December, we received information from Anton Sassin (Amur Branch of the International Socio-ecological Union) about a captive-raised Red-crowned Crane Quarter marked with a GPS transmitter, who ended his fall migration near the Pacific shore. On 17 December, using GPS tracking data, we found the bird in a cornfield near the mouth of a tributary of the small river Rudnaya (44°23'21.96"N; 135°44'42.69"E). For a couple of days, a freezing rain poured over that area and the field was covered with ice. However, we found out then, and many times again, that Quarter, raised by his parents in a Muraviovka Park pen, was fully capable of finding solutions in most difficult situations. The crane inspected wild boars' diggings and found food there. He also foraged on a pile of corn (Fig. 1) that we assumed was left there by hunters to attract the boars – to find out later that it was delivered specially for Quarter by a local villager, who had spotted the crane a week prior to our arrival on the site.



Fig.1. Quarter at his feeding site

The crane roosted on the river and flew out to forage in crop fields nearby. Unusually low air temperatures for the region combined with high winds and snowfall hardly left the bird any chance to survive – and there were nowhere to escape. For the next 310 miles south along the Pacific shore, there were no other corn fields; and flying south-west over the snow-covered Sikhote-Alin mountain range was unrealistic. Open hunting season on wild boars and the appearance of a large dog in the area increased the death risk to the crane. The

only way to save the bird was to capture him. Preparations for that and the capture itself, as well as providing food to Quarter in the meantime, took much more than we bargained for – over two months of hard work in harsh conditions, involvement of experts, and support of concerned local citizens.

On 23-27 December, we made several attempts to capture Quarter with snares, which we had previously used successfully on Blakiston's Fish Owls. Since Eurasian Jays and pheasants also visited Quarter's feeding site, we could not use automated capture technique. At the same time, Quarter once again demonstrated his high adaptability to changing life conditions. Becoming immediately highly suspicious toward the snares, he stopped coming to the feeding site and found other sources of food – fish, frogs, larvae of brooks, some plants in the river, and small rodents in the floodplain forest. Our attempts to chase Quarter at night into a mist net also failed. He could see in the dark very well, and as soon as we tried to drive closer with

headlights, he would fly up and away and then avoided all places where we tried to capture him – a normal wild bird behavior, which in this case can be explained by the fact that Quarter was raised by his parents and was very shy of people.

In late December, Quarter began coming back to the feeding site, especially after local volunteers began bringing fish in addition to corn. Because of jays (Fig.2.) and pheasants, volunteers had to spread the feed twice a day – 11-13 lbs. of corn kernels and 2-6 lbs. of fish daily. Oats, barley, and buckwheat Quarter simply ignored.



Fig.2. Volunteers had to replenish food for Quarter twice a day because of the jays, who took advantage of this free eatery

In January, air temperatures dropped below -4°F, high winds resumed, and only two windows of open water remained on the river. Now the entire daylight hours, Quarter spent in a small spot where people were bringing food. Since other animals and birds would not dare to

approach that spot occupied by a big bird, helpers could now deliver the food every other day. Judging by Quarter's behavior, such life suited him fine, and he showed no interest in searching for other places to spend winter.

In mid-January, a heavy snowfall made the roads impassable for cars, while approaching snowmobiles caused great disturbance to the crane. During several days with air temperatures minus 1°F, Quarter was frequently pulling his leg with the tracking device up and lying down in the snow. We were concerned that his leg had suffered frostbite.

From 21-29 January, we made several unsuccessful attempts to capture Quarter with a device similar to a cannon net which we ordered from Moscow. We tried to catch him on a trail on which he walked all the time, but did not check the equipment first. The net flew for only 5 m out of guaranteed 12 m, and Quarter dodged it. He spotted a hiding capturer and never walked that trail again. Then we set up the trap near the food and built up a snow bar, behind which capturers took turns lying motionlessly in the cold and snow for hours (Fig.3). Twice the bird came close but each time he reacted to the flying net and managed to get out before

the capturer reached it. Later on, Quarter also began avoiding the snow bar. Plus, we discovered that the mesh size of the net was too small for a crane.



Fig.3. Sergey Surmach is lying behind the snow bar waiting for an opportunity to shoot the net

In late January, the river was completely under ice except for one spot where an underground spring was stirring the water surface, and that was where Quarter now spent his nights. Whenever air temperatures dropped, this spot of open water shrunk to 50 or even 10 square feet. Then another, more powerful snowfall covered the area with a foot of snow. Quarter could no longer walk in the deep snow and spent nights on the small feeding spot that we cleared for him. He wolfed the fresh fish that volunteers caught for him but totally ignored frozen sea fish from the grocery store. One night, when the crane was not around, we built a decent blind from the snow – a kind of primitive igloo (Fig.4.) – and

left for a week to give the crane a break. One of our team, Anatoliy Yanchenko from Partizansk town, wove and successfully tested a new net.



Fig.4. Building a shelter from snow in the dark, while Quarter was roosting on the river

While we were away, Quarter often came over to check out the snow blind and eventually decided that it was harmless. The deep snow forced him to stay on the same feeding spot, and he roosted on piles of hay that we spread around. Knowing too well how alert and unforgiving of our mistakes the crane was, on 7 February I hid myself in the snow blind to watch Quarter through an endoscope, with its end stuck out just a tiny bit, and a camcorder (Fig.5).

I had only one chance to shoot the net, and it worked! Both Quarter and we got lucky. On 9 February, after covering around 400 miles on snowy roads, we delivered Quarter to the Bird Rehabilitation Center in Alekseevka Village

(Primorsky Region). We found the crane in perfect shape. His weight upon arrival and before feeding was almost normal – 15.5 lbs., and there were no frostbites, even where the bands and transmitter were attached.

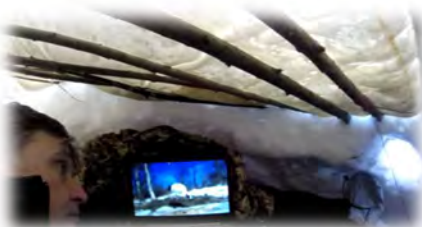


Fig.5. Camcorder allowed us to watch Quarter from the snow blind without disturbing the bird

Thanks to photo traps that registered air temperatures, we were able to find out how Quarter was able to survive harsh winter conditions and temperatures below minus 22°F. Quarter used the microclimate pattern masterfully. At night, air temperatures at the feeding site dropped to minus 24 °F but it never dropped below minus 4 °F on the river where the crane roosted. And during the calm days at the feeding site, the temperatures could rise up to 48 °F. Therefore, not cold weather but the lack of food represented the major threat to the bird's survival.

In March, we hope to release Quarter at Khanka Lake during the time when migratory Red-crowned Cranes arrive there for staging. We would like to monitor his further

movements by GPS tracker and hope very much that our hero will find a match for himself and spend the next winter in good company and in much more favorable conditions!

We were able to save Quarter thanks to the selfless efforts and generous in-kind contributions of staff of the Amur-Ussuri Centre for Avian Biodiversity, Sergey Avdeyuk, Alexei Filintsev and Sergey Gafitsky, as well as local citizens Mikhail Chernyshev and Ivan and Irina Kyalundziga a married couple from Dal'negorsk (Fig.6).



Fig.6. The core team. From left to right: Ivan Kyalundziga, Mikhail Chernyshev, Alexei Filintsev, Sergey Surmach

Strengthening a Crane Conservation and Education Network in East Asia

By Spike Millington

Vice President International – Asia, International Crane Foundation, Baraboo, WI

Cranes in East Asia are highly migratory, breeding in more northerly areas and heading south for warmer climates for the winter. The seven species, however, follow different migratory pathways, using many traditional stopover and wintering sites. Species such as Red-crowned and White-naped Cranes have distinct eastern and western flyways, some wintering in China while others winter in Korea and Japan. Demoiselle Cranes fly over the Himalayas to winter in India, while newly colonizing Sandhill Cranes in Siberia all migrate back to ancestral wintering grounds in Texas. Identifying and protecting these vital networks of critical sites is key to saving individual species across their entire migratory ranges.

Much of the work of the International Crane Foundation (ICF) in East Asia has focused on supporting the protection, management and, in some cases, restoration of these sites, working with local authorities, nature reserve managers and scientists to create ideal conditions for cranes to thrive. Building connectivity among sites requires international cooperation, such as through monitoring of migratory patterns and tracking individual birds. However, there is another piece of the connectivity puzzle that is important to build long-term

sustainability of site connectivity, and that is to build strong local and international constituencies for crane and wetland conservation.

To develop a long-term strategy for crane conservation in the East Asian Flyway, a special workshop was by the Center for East Asian – Australasian Flyway Studies of Beijing Forestry University and the International Crane Foundation jointly organized. The event was held at Beijing Forestry University from 20-22 October 2019, with a principal goal of drafting a ten-year Crane Strategy and Action Plan for the East Asian Flyway, comprising Russia, Mongolia, China, North and South Korea, and Japan and focused on four threatened crane species – Siberian, Red-crowned, White-naped and Hooded Cranes. The meeting brought together over 150 representatives from six countries (see below George Archibald's photo of ICF's Asia Program

Manager Claire Mirande talking to the workshop attendees).

Russian participants represented Dauria, Amur, and Yakutia regions, as well as the Crane Working Group of Eurasia. China participants included representatives from 80 nature reserves important for cranes, as well as national organizations. Conservation education and public awareness activities are an important part of crane conservation strategy.

ICF has a long history of working with local communities and schools to raise awareness of cranes, their journeys and the importance of wetlands for their survival. The work at Muraviovka Park has been instrumental in this, not just through education programs at the Park, but also developing model programs and expanding these throughout the region. Bringing diverse groups to the Park and carrying out education programs at important sites in East Asia complements ICF's traditional scientific and conservation activities. The International Nature School, which was initiated using Muraviovka Park environmental summer camp model, combines local experts with international scientists and teachers from as far away as the US and has been widely applied and very successful.



Things to Learn and Discover

By Ksenia Pudova

Teacher, School of Foreign Languages “Repetitor” (“Tutor”), Khabarovsk, Russia

Recently, cooperation among schools and nature reserves around key sites in China, notably for Siberian and Black-necked Cranes, has established a sound foundation for future cooperation. ICF is developing a project to expand the education network among key countries and sites and improve linkages among them. Muraviovka Park lies at the heart of several crane flyways and provides a natural learning laboratory with deep experience, and so will be central to this project. We hope to build on the recent Muraviovka Park-supported crane camps at Cheorwon, along the DMZ in Korea and the most important wintering site for eastern Red-crowned and White-nape Cranes.

We also want to strengthen the network in China and with other countries that host these cranes at other stages of their migration, such as Siberian Crane breeding areas in Yakutia, Russia and White-naped Crane breeding areas in Mongolia. We have other projects at these sites, so building in education activities should not be too difficult. Ideally, we will bring educators, nature reserve managers and scientists together to build stronger linkages around and among sites and promote “sustainable connectivity”.

Young people are the future of conservation in East Asia and traditional teaching methods are rarely aimed at fostering an appreciation of nature. But we have a wonderful network of educators who do love and appreciate nature in

all of its forms, and particularly cranes and the wild wetlands they depend on. Knowing that other countries and culture appreciate cranes as much as local people do can be an awakening for many. The stronger this network of people and places becomes, the stronger will be the voice for crane and wetland conservation.

Have you ever woken up ridiculously early to watch someone waking up? I have. And even though this could sound silly to you, to me it was a marvelous, unforgettable morning.

Hundreds of birds flying above the crystal-clear lake. To be honest, that morning was frosty. Neither I nor the Russian children, participants of the Second Winter Crane Camp at Cheorwon, were ready for such a cold morning.



Our Korean hosts were laughing at us because they believed that Russians do not mind low temperatures at all!

Bird watching in Muraviovka Park demands lots of patience, since the birds hide in grass and bushes trying to protect their nests from predators. In



Cheorwon, however, we had a unique chance to see numerous cranes, geese, and even vultures in their natural habitat.

Well, excellent bird watching was not the only highlight of our winter trip. Our teen students had a chance to learn more about wildlife in Korea, local culture and traditions, and life of teenagers in South Korea. They also had a wonderful opportunity to practice their spoken English, since two American teachers, leaders of summer environmental schools at Muraviovka Park, were also there. Thanks to Susan Grace and Sharon Hushek, Russian and Korean students had upgraded their conversational English skills. And of course, we were having lots of fun at the camp.

Local cooks amazed us with delicious Korean dishes (I personally want to thank them for making food not too spicy!). Of course, this wonderful week could not have happened without Mr. and Mrs. Park, who organized the program for us. I am extremely grateful to them and wish the next Crane Camp to be as amazing and joyous as the one in February 2020.

A New Page of Life

By Margarita Potekhina, Education, Visitor & Volunteer Program Coordinator, Muraviovka Park, Amur Region, Russia

Year 2020 was not my first year at Muraviovka Park, but this year there was one significant difference. This time the Park has become an inseparable part of my life – a place of my full-time employment and a beautiful place of residence. Until now, while working at the School of Foreign Languages “Repetitor” in Khabarovsk, I brought my students to the Park to participate in language and environmental camp sessions in summer and for crane festival in September. In June 2020, I left Khabarovsk for the Amur Region and became a member of the Muraviovka Park team, as a Coordinator of Education, Tourism and Volunteer Programs. A new page of my life has begun.

The pandemic made its own adjustments to the Park’s activities. In the summer of 2020, for the first time in 26 years, the summer camp was unable to host children. This unplanned pause in our activities, however, allowed us to do a lot of landscaping, organizing supplies and materials, and updating the database of the Educational Center. It was a new experience for me not only to get deeply involved in all of the Park’s activities, but also to restructure and make new plans, as well as meet and recruit new supporters for the Park.

During the summer and autumn, volunteers from the Amur and Khabarovsk Regions came to the Park to do as much work as they could. They made and planted beautiful flowerbeds, helped take care of captive birds, cleaned the observation deck from weeds and dirt, helped organize the Educational Center, and cleaned the campgrounds and the entire Headquarters site (Fig. 1).

documents, meetings and regular communication with Friends of Muraviovka Park in Russia and USA, and giving tours to tourists and visitors, who were not numerous this year. On the photo below (Fig. 2), on the left is Alexander Kostenko, the Head of Tambovka District Administration, who brought to the Park several members of the 1980 USSR Summer Olympic Team.)



Fig. 1. Volunteers from Tambovka

It was impossible to overestimate their help! The enthusiasm of our volunteers was fascinating.

The staff of the Park lived their usual life, which was new to me. They were taking care of captive birds, upgrading the nature trail, conducting observations on inhabitants of wetlands, fields, and groves. For me, it was computer work on various

Gradually, I entered this new world and, I hope, I was able to do some useful things for the development of a wonderful place called Muraviovka Park and will be able to do more in the future.



Fig. 2. The Park visitors

A Fascinating Place

By Mikhail Prodan

Freshman, Far-eastern State University, Vladivostok, Russia



Muraviovka Park...

Perhaps the closest and dearest natural place for me. Despite the current global misfortune, I was lucky to visit Muraviovka in the second half of summer 2020. I came as a volunteer, but it was important for me to satisfy my personal needs – to relieve stress caused by preparation for high school finals, their numerous delays, feeling of uncertainty, and pressure of responsibility. And although a one-week visit is way too short for such a fascinating

place, it was enough to fulfill my needs and receive an influx of unforgettable impressions. And there were a million of impressions! It is difficult to sort them out, so I am going to write everything that comes to mind.

I will begin describing the landscape. I use a singular form of this word for a reason, though certainly there are plenty of beautiful

landscapes. I am talking about the one which is seen from the Education Center building's stairs – a floodplain view. It is notable for the ability to transform its appearance masterfully with changing lighting, and the light, in turn, changes throughout the day with a variety of cloud patterns. Every day the landscape colors change repeatedly: from pale orange to saturated blue, to deep purple, pink, beige, and fiery scarlet. It is practically impossible to put each color detail into words, and very hard to filter the full hue

spectrum in one's mind. All in all, you can watch the floodplain for the entire day and you won't be bored.

It is in Muraviovka that you might imbue all the sky magic. At dawn, blue-grey flaky clouds add some coloring to the rising luminary; at dusk, the cloud array fantastically scatters and highlights wide sunbeams; and at night the lack of city lighting allows it to reveal the full majesty of the stars. The sky presents a plethora of images that look out of this world.

Every time I come to Muraviovka, I discover new horizons in the world of flora and fauna. In August, birds are not so visible as in autumn, but I saw some owls. As soon as the park dives into the twilight, these funny but graceful creatures suddenly occupy trees, roads, poles and signs—spinning their heads, hoping to detect delicacies for the next meal. For the first time I could observe real water lilies and mysterious reed thickets on the lake. And taking care of captive Red-crowned Cranes, I also experienced the full power of a crane beak and learned to be on the alert with Kanazava, the young female crane!

There is a simple correlation: Muraviovka is a good place, consequently, it drags in good people who become even better after visiting it. Meeting people connected with the park

forms relationships, which may not involve frequent communication, but always turn out to be strong and lasting. Staff and volunteers are open to conversation, enterprising, persistent (sometimes even stubborn), and full of optimism and enthusiasm. Of course, such communication is both pleasant and useful.

What conclusions, based on my impressions, can I make? I love Muraviovka. Pacification, memories, interactions, skills, self-development – this is a package I carry back home every time I visit the park. Am I going to return? A silly question. I wish that every purposeful person would visit the park one day and receive a gift of blessing and experience that will help them overcome life's difficulties.

The Simple Truth

*By Kristina Timofeeva
10th Grade Student,
Language School
"Repetitor," Khabarovsk,
Russia*

Muraviovka Park is a place to which any visitor will definitely want to return. After all, we leave a part of ourselves, a piece of our soul in the Park.

"What is so remarkable in this land?" you can wonder. "How does it differ from lots of other places on our planet?" It is impossible to explain. You need to feel it. You need to feel it with every cell in your body!

Summer morning. The annoying bugs have already woken up and are running busy with their buggy business. The birds have also woken up, as all the inhabitants of the surrounding wetlands know due to their trills ringing everywhere. You are sitting on a wooden bench with a fragrant coffee and a favorite book. The sun's rays are caressing your face and hands. You raise your head and see an extremely beautiful view just in front of you. The wind drives the rolling meadow waves all over the floodplain, which looks like a green ocean. At this moment, you are in complete harmony with nature; you are a part of the world. You are under its power, but this power is not oppressive. On the contrary, Mother Nature gives you strength, which fills your chest with feelings of extreme admiration and delight and allows you to feel confident about the future. In evenings,

one can enjoy singing with friends at the campfire (see photo below).

In the Park, you find consolation for your soul and mind, far from the noisy and dusty city life.

That is the reason why everyone should visit Muraviovka Park. Having felt the influence of this fabulous place, you will never be able to forget it. There you realize better what the Motherland is and what you really should value. For the time being, you get close to the greatest poets of the Russian culture: Sergei Yesenin, Valeriy Tyutchev, Boris Pasternak... You get to understand why the beauty of our nature touched their souls so deeply.

I would like to see special places on Earth like Muraviovka Park being unforgotten and cared for. Each of us is responsible for the place where they live. When we

visit such places, we remind ourselves of this simple truth, which is so easily forgotten in a busy city.



Kristina Timofeeva (left) and Maria Nazarova

Volunteering for Muraviovka Park

By Evgeniy Agulin

Muraviovka Park Volunteer, Freshman, Service & Trade College, Blagoveshchensk, Amur Region, Russia



On the photo above, from left to right: student volunteer Anna Korotkikh, Margarita Potekhina-Agulina, Evgeniy Agulin, and student volunteer Vyacheslav Wang.

I worked at Muraviovka Park a lot in summer of 2020, but that was not my first experience as a Park volunteer. I came to the Park more than once as a student of the summer environmental schools, and when I got older, I became a volunteer helper.

What can I tell you about the work of a volunteer in Muraviovka Park? In the park,

you will always have more than enough work—you won't be bored, but you shouldn't expect easy work either. My volunteer friends and I worked hard every day. Our main tasks involved carrying heavy loads (for example, tables, rolls of iron netting/mesh, beds, etc.), digging holes or ditches for draining, painting, and cleaning the Park site. In addition to physical labor, you may be offered some intellectual work. For example, it can be translation of articles for a magazine or a website. Volunteers can also help by taking care of captive cranes and geese in aviaries—but not

everyone is allowed to do this. The birds can be looked after by people who have been familiar with these birds for several years and know what kind of danger the cranes pose if you turn your back to them, and what kind of danger a careless or ignorant approach to them poses to the birds.

Summing up, I can say that the life of a Park volunteer, despite the endless tasks to do, is quite interesting and diverse. There are lots of moments, during work and in free time, that you can laugh at with your friends. In the evenings after work and when it is already dark outside, everyone can gather in the kitchen or elsewhere and spend time talking or playing board games. Those who do not want to play, can spend their time the way they like best. For example, they can listen to the voices of birds or spend time watching stars in the sky. Nobody will interfere. Volunteering is challenging, but fun. While working, you gain a lot of experience that you will certainly need in the future.

Bits from Kids



Angelina Tkachenko, 9th Grade Student, Tambovka High School, Amur Region, Russia:

I spent several days (3-6 February 2020) at Winter Crane Camp at Cheorwon, South Korea, and it was an unforgettable experience for me. I improved my English skills and met many wonderful people. It was a great opportunity to make new friends. Classes on ecology were exciting. Talented American and Russian teachers taught us about nature, habitats,

We had a chance to watch these beautiful birds in the wild. It was truly amazing! The hosts did everything to keep us comfortable and fully engaged. I'm grateful to Muraviovka Park and the Cheorwon County Administration for arranging this wonderful camp!

Mar'yana Solodukhina, 9th Grade Student, Language School "Repetitor," Khabarovsk, Russia:

Year 2020 has been a difficult one for the whole world, but it was brightened up by some

happy moments. At the end of the summer, my classmate Ksenia and I went to Muraviovka Park to visit our favorite teacher, Margarita, who just started working for the Park. A nice group of friends gathered there. (On the photo above, Mary'ana is on the left with her friends Ksenia Drosdova and Andrei Agulin.) We picked up pears for the captive crane family, which they love to eat. We also helped tidy up the storage rooms of the Education Center and found lots of interesting things there: plant:

samples, textbooks, souvenirs. We played board games, had fun, and hiked in the Park. Living in the camp gave us great benefits. In addition to helping our friends, we picked up mushrooms, learned to cook soups and bake an apple pie.

How beautiful and cozy it is in the park! A huge sea of grass! Little chipmunks run around in bushes and trees. They leave lots of fruit pulp, picking out the pits from plums. Every now and then, birds, butterflies and dragonflies fly in the August sky. And the air in the Park is clean and delicious! In the evenings, we watched and admired bright stars above our heads. We returned home with beautiful photos and amazing memories.

Anna Korotkikh, 11th grade student, Language School "Repetitor," Khabarovsk, Russia:

What is Muraviovka Park for me? It is a place which gives me brand new experiences every year no matter how many times I have already visited. This summer I worked as a volunteer and spent four weeks there with my friends (see photo on p. 20).

It was a unique experience of independent life for me. I had to cook and clean up and plan my day to make sure that everything on my to-do list got done. It sounds funny for an adult, but I was surprised to realize how difficult it was to decide what to have for everyday meals, what to put on, and so on. When you live with your parents, you do not even have to think about such "trifles"!

However, the most striking experience of the trip this time was a boat ride at dawn. So many photos of Lake Kapustikha were taken; so many times, I watched the sunset there; but the view of it still excites me. We went to the lake the day before our departure and knew that the senior school year, problems, and responsibilities waited for us at home. But there on the lake it was quiet and peaceful. The beauty of the place was fascinating. And there was a strange feeling—not that it would no longer happen, but on the contrary, that this very moment should be remembered and cherished. Now I know that it is for the sake of such moments we need to overcome obstacles we face. I know I will return there!

Vyacheslav Wang, 11th Grade student, Language School "Repetitor," Khabarovsk, Russia:

Each trip to Muraviovka Park opens its new aspect for me. The first time, I came as a participant of the language and environmental camp. This time, I visited this place as a volunteer—and it was a totally different experience.

Volunteering work is extremely rewarding because of personal growth. The feeling that you are a part of something greater, something valuable and important, such as the restoration of the Red-crowned Crane population, is indescribable. And what about the incredible beauty and diversity of the Park's nature? You see spectacular sunsets, sunlit fields, sunrises which are worth of getting up at dawn, and myriad bright stars that are so hard to see through the smog and lights of a big city. I loved the time I spent in Muraviovka Park and I sincerely hope that I can return there, because having visited Muraviovka once, you realize it will remain in your heart forever.

Bight Memories

By Sergei and Elena Smirenski, Muraviovka Park



George Danner (1942-2021)

We met George and his wife Nancy in December of 1991, being introduced by mutual friends. We immediately liked this barrel-chested down-to-earth man: our peer, a good listener with a great smile, strong handshake, and suntanned face and forearms.

As soon as we shared George some basic information about our efforts to protect cranes and wetlands and to help local communities in the Amur River Basin, he expressed keen interest in our idea to integrate wildlife, economy, and people for their mutual benefits. In early January 1992, we met again, and George helped us draw up a draft of the first proposal that became the starting point for Muraviovka Park sustainable farming project.

In spring 1992, two years before the land lease for the Park was signed, George came to the Amur Region to see

with his own eyes (on the photo below, George is meeting with a Russian farmer).



the land he had talked about. He returned to the Park one more time in 1993. He was thrilled with the excellent agricultural climate and soils. And of course, he loved the beautiful rolling meadows and cranes. In those years, when everything in far-eastern Russia was falling apart, most crop fields were abandoned and cattle were dying from starvation, George developed a workplan, found equipment and additional sources of funds in the US to ship and install a small cheese plant that could save three collapsed dairy farms in neighboring villages. Since that time, George became one of the key leaders of the Muraviovka Park Sustainable Land Use Project and joined the Park's Board of Trustees.

George's thoughts and advice were important not only for agriculture, but for all projects at the Park. They were not just words—he always followed with actions. Together with Don Padley, a farmer from Baraboo, WI (our friend whom we met in summer of 1889 and who also became a volunteer farming consultant for the Park), George conducted a land survey, found corn seeds and necessary equipment, prepared all paperwork, and then loaded and shipped a sea container with a corn planter and picker to the Amur Region.

Everything in this case, as in all other cases, George did on his own time and with his own funds. Being cordial and hospitable hosts, George and Nancy often hosted and entertained exchange visitors who we brought to Wisconsin from the Amur Region for training.

Over the years, George took part in *Farmer to Farmer Exchange* and other programs trying to improve agriculture in different parts of the world. He was a very knowledgeable and wise man who never missed an opportunity to learn history, tradition, and culture of countries where he worked.

George was also a great friend—patient, polite, and open to hearing out opposite points of view. George was always concerned about the quality of agricultural production. It took hours to explain to agriculture practitioners from the Amur Region that the reason for organic farming is not just a profit, but a moral responsibility for consumers’ health. George was very much concerned about consequences of conventional farming for wildlife and people, as well as about farmers’ freedom of choice as opposed to being obligated to purchase GMO seed varieties from certain producers. Organic products were only a part of his vision of proper farming. As one of the leading agriculture experts in Wisconsin, George for many years served with excellence as a certified inspector of Midwest farms, which owners decided to switch to environmentally friendly practices.

Tatiana Zheleznyak (1947-2020)

From SSergei's first meeting with Tanya, when she showed up at the fifth grade in his secondary school in Moscow suburbs,, he knew she was very special. She wrote poetry,



looked like a poet, behaved like a poet, and even published poems when she was still a student. After graduating from high school in 1965, we lost contact with each other for almost forty years. Tanya edited memoirs of our dear friends Boris and Varsenica Vronski, well-known explorers of Kolyma River basin. We began frequent phone conversation about our work and shared with her some materials about the Park, including issues of ZHURAVL. Tanya immediately fell in love with the Park and began giving substantial annual contributions to our project. We did not know then that after her death her son found himself in dire financial situation (his father and Tanya’s husband passed away several years before his wife). Her income had barely covered her and her son’s medical bills – but she never missed her annual contribution to the Park!

Nastya Tkachenko (1950-2020)

Nastya's husband of many years Mr. Sergey Tkachenko has been one of the major supporters of the Park since its early days. At the time of the Park’s creation, he was an extremely busy Tambovka District Administrator, and later equally busy as a Director of a giant farm. The only time we could meet with Sergey was lunchtime at his home. His advice was always very useful and accompanied by delicious

homemade meals prepared by his wife. Nastya also was a busy businessperson but always a friendly hostess and Sergey’s stronghold. She was a very energetic woman, and after retirement could not accept the role of a couch potato. She began dancing, established a club *Dance with Us* (on the photo below, Nastya is the sixth from the right in the front row, in sunglasses), and inspired tens



of Amurians to join her club! As the team captain, she led her team to victory in many dancing festivals. Nastya, together with her team, regularly performed at the Park, but she also helped us with tree planting, weeding, and cleaning the headquarters. Her example woke up many elderly people in the district from a passive life to new forms of activities, new interests, and richer life.



Margery Nicolson (1931-2020)


Margery was involved in retroviruses research and teaching biochemistry to medical students. She and her husband Lain were committed environmentalists, supporting many environmental causes and organizations, including International Crane Foundation. For years she acted as a guide and general volunteer for the thousands of visitors who come to see and learn about amazing crane gatherings at Audubon’s Rowe Sanctuary in Nebraska on the Platte River. After her 5-day visit to Muraviovka Park with George Archibald in June 2012, Margery began supporting our teacher exchange and environmental education programs, as well as the Park’s general operations.



Eric Kowalczyk (1951-2020)


Eric worked at Woodland Park Zoo (WPZ) in Seattle. WPZ has been supporting the Park with annual grants since 1999 – the year when we first met him during our visit to the Zoo. He liked to talk with visitors about his favorites, and it was so

inspiring to learn about conversion of poachers into Hornbill guardians, about children who raised support to this bird, and their families making badges and other souvenirs to sell at WPZ gift shop. Some stories were successful, some not, but he never accepted failures as inevitable and always generated ideas on what and how his team had to go forward. These were not just his dreams—he always implemented them, step by step. Eric emanated a positive attitude toward life, nature, and people, and after meeting with him one felt recharged by his good energy. He was not just a good speaker but also a great listener, eager to learn more and help others, and a great communicator, who actually initiated the long-term cooperation between WPZ and Muraviovka Park.



When the bursts of autumn flames
 Tear up the heavens blue,
 You just freeze and keep silent,
 And toss all your problems away.
 Allow yourself to spend a moment, a minute, an
 hour In this ringing silence...
 Stay still and quiet... Do you hear?
 A bird’s voice is resounding...

7 October 2020



A poem by Margarita Potekhina (Agulina)

From Elena's Kitchen

BUCKWHEAT WITH BEEF AND MUSHROOMS

Buckwheat is one of the staple foods in Russia but, in the US this delicious, low-calorie, and exceptionally healthy grain it is still being discovered. I hope you will like this recipe!

Ingredients

- 2 lbs. chunk of beef
- 1 lb. mushrooms, sliced
- 1 large yellow onion, sliced
- 2 carrots, sliced
- 2 cups buckwheat
- 1 tbsp. *Better Than Bouillon* seasoning paste (or any other seasoning of your choice)
- Salt and pepper to taste
- Oil for frying
- 3 cups hot water

Cooking Directions

You will need a metal pot or deep pan that can be put in the oven.

- Cut meat into one-inch pieces. Preheat an oiled frying pan and brown meat on all sides.
- In another pan, brown mushrooms and transfer them on top of the beef.
- Now use the skillet where you browned mushrooms to cook onions and carrots until golden brown and place them on top of mushrooms and meat. Season with salt and pepper.
- Add buckwheat, *Better Than Bouillon* paste (or another seasoning of your choice), and hot water.
- Bake it at 350°F for about 40 minutes or until all the ingredients are cooked through.

Enjoy!

Note: If you prefer vegetarian food, just skip the beef and double the amount of mushrooms!

Help them Grow with Adopt-a-Nest!



Adopt-A Nest is a great way to help protect nest sites for Red-crowned Cranes, White-naped Cranes, Oriental White Storks and all the other species that raise their young at Muraviotka Park

For a minimum "adoption fee" of \$50, those who adopt a nest (or receive it as a gift) will be acknowledged with a certificate, crane photo and a book about cranes, their habits and habitats. The package comes complete with postcards from the Park and a one-year membership in the Friends of Muraviotka Park. Repeat participants in the Adopt-A-Nest program receive a handsome refrigerator magnet.

Connect with FOMP

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- Note: One seat is currently vacant! If interested, email Sharon Hushek at hushekclan@yahoo.com*



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Online donations are possible on ICF website
<https://www.savingcranes.org/donation/>
 Pick "Other" option and type "FOMP" below

Please return the following information with your check. Friends of Muraviovka Park Membership 2021

We hope you will renew your support of the Muraviovka Park in 2021, and if you already did, may consider an additional special gift. Please make your check payable to **International Crane Foundation or ICF** with FOMP on memo line and send to: ICF, P.O. Box 447, Baraboo, WI 53913.

Membership Renewal
 (Membership 1/1 - 12/31/2021) Name _____

Address _____
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Member contributions are tax deductible as allowed by law.

Membership Levels:

- ___ \$15 Student
- ___ \$25 Individual
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- ___ \$50 School group
- ___ \$50 Adopt a Nest (includes membership)
- ___ \$100 Contributing
- ___ \$___ to Special Project (please specify below)

Thank You!

THANK YOU!

List of organizations we thank for their monetary support in 2020 (in ABC order): Far-eastern Power Distribution Network Co. (Blagoveshchensk, Amur Region, Russia), members of FOMP-USA, International Crane Foundation (Wisconsin, USA), Erica P. John Fund (Milwaukee, WI, USA), Puget Sound Chapter of the American Association of Zookeepers (Seattle, USA), and Woodland Park Zoo (Seattle, USA).

List of organizations we thank for their in-kind support in 2020 (in ABC order): Amur Legislative Assembly (Blagoveshchensk, Russia), Biology and Soils Institute of the Russian Academy of Science (Vladivostok, Russia), Blagoveshchensk Teachers' University (Amur Region), Cheorwon County Administration (South Korea), Amur Office of the Federal Service for Specially Protected Natural Areas of Russia (Blagoveshchensk, Russia), Friends of Muraviovka Park in USA, Russia and South Korea, Governments of the Amur Region and Tambovka District (Russia), Moscow State University (MSU), language school "Repetitor" ("Tutor", Khabarovsk, Russia), Russian Union of Retired People (Tambovka District Chapter, Amur Region, Russia), Socio-ecological Union of the Amur Region (Blagoveshchensk, Russia), Tambovka District Women Association (Amur Region, Russia), citizens of Dal'negorsk District (Primorsky Region, Russia), students and teachers from high schools in Tambovka (Amur Region) and Khabarovsk, and ~100 volunteers from the Amur Region and Khabarovsk.

*Friends of Muraviovka Park invite you
to the Zoom*

Annual Meeting

April 10, 2021

*Please join us to hear from ICF Co-Founder
Dr. George Archibald and*

Dr. Sergei Smirenski!

1:00-3:00 PM

Link to the ZOOM meeting will be emailed to all FOMP members several days prior



Friends of Muraviovka Park
International Crane Foundation
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Dedicated to environmental protection, educational programming, ecological research, and sustainable agricultural development at Muraviovka Park and in the Amur River watershed of the Russian Far East