



Welcome

Welcome to the eleventh 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.

New chicks!

It's that time of year again. Amy and Harry, our dedicated foster-parents, are once again rearing a lively bunch of crane chicks at WWT Slimbridge.

Twenty-four eggs were brought from Germany by the project team, and all hatched. As usual, the chicks are being reared separately at first, since they may take sibling rivalry to extremes! That means a lot of work for Amy, Harry and their helpers, as each chick needs to be taken for frequent walks.



Crane chick at 8 days

© Damon Bridge

But however high maintenance, baby cranes are surely amongst the cutest chicks in the bird world!

Starter homes

Well, we hoped it might happen! The oldest cranes, now three, made their first breeding attempts. One pair built a nest in Somerset, but lost interest. Then Chris(tine) and Monty, who often visit WWT Slimbridge, decided to build a nest there – in full view of a public hide! When Chris laid an egg and started incubating, there was great excitement.



© James Lees

Chris and Monty on their nest

Sadly, it seems a chick hatched but did not survive. But we're not gloomy! It's normal for first efforts to fail, and our cranes, although reared by humans, clearly do know how to form pairs, build nests and incubate eggs – and that's great news for future prospects.

Crane World Fact-file: No 4

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.

Whooping Crane. *Grus americana*

The rarest of the cranes, this species was on the brink of extinction in the 1940s with only 21 birds in the wild. Today the population (wild & captive) is about 600, thanks to the efforts of the Crane Foundation which developed the puppet rearing techniques also used by the Great Crane Project.



Two populations summer in Canada & Wisconsin and winter in southern USA, while smaller non-migratory populations stay in Florida & Louisiana.

More crane information at www.savingcranes.org

Tricky times

Nesting is not the only summer drama. Many cranes moult at three years old, which can be risky as they drop all their flight feathers at once and are flightless for up to six weeks. However, our cranes are very experienced at finding safe roosting sites, so we are hoping they will show the same good instincts in choosing sensible places to moult.

The project team has been joined for the summer by Becca Gliddon, keeping an eye on any cranes which may be either nesting or moulting (or both).



Summer on West Sedgemoor

© RSPB

Wonderful Wetlands!

Why not join us on Saturday 29 June for a day of wildlife and willow craft at the Willows and Wetlands Centre in Stoke St Gregory. Attractions include a craft fair, RSPB trailer rides onto West Sedgemoor, free activities for kids, and crane films and information. More details on our website.



We can't resist another cute-chick pic!

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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.