



### Welcome

Welcome to the twelfth 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.

### Latest release

How quickly they grow up! The last newsletter had pictures of fluffy chicks, but now another twenty young cranes are flying free with the Somerset flock.



Release day,  
September 2013

© John Crispin

This year the youngsters integrated with the older birds faster than ever. Most of the cranes have been feeding together as one amazing flock of over sixty. At present seasonally abundant crane flies are their favourite protein-rich snacks, while a field of purpose-grown barley provides the main course.

As promised, we're launching exciting new opportunities to view the cranes. See the 'crane safaris' article.

### Habitat creation

After at least a year of planning, in the last few months contractors and diggers have been hard at work creating and enhancing wetland habitats where we hope one day cranes could breed. In three separate schemes, pools have been excavated, new ditches dug, and sluices and culvert pipes installed.



Habitat creation on Walton Moor © Damon Bridge

These schemes are all on private farmland, and the landowners are really excited by the future prospect of cranes breeding on their land. The project is planning further works for 2014 and we are now looking for additional farmers and landowners who would like to help cranes. So please do get in touch!

### Crane World Fact-file: No 5

*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.*

#### Grey Crowned Crane. *Balearica regulorum*

A familiar sight in zoos and bird collections, this beautiful species is now endangered by the trade for captivity. Two subspecies occur throughout eastern and southern Africa, but numbers have fallen by up to 80% in the last 45 years, with only 30,000 remaining across their whole range.



They are most abundant in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda, where they are the national bird.

More crane information at [www.savingcranes.org](http://www.savingcranes.org)

### Crane safaris!

If you would like to see the cranes (and who wouldn't!) why not come on safari in the project's crane truck? This is a fantastic opportunity to join our experienced crane monitors as they radio-track cranes across the Somerset Levels and Moors and observe their behaviour, followed by a delicious lunch at the Willows & Wetland Centre.

Crane Safaris will run from November to March. Details are under Seeing Cranes and Events on our website [www.thegreatcraneproject.org.uk](http://www.thegreatcraneproject.org.uk) and bookings are through the Willows & Wetlands Centre on 01823 490249.



Cranes on Aller Moor February 2013 © John Crispin

### Wildlife weekends

For those living further away, the project has been helping a local farm to develop wildlife weekends based in their holiday cottages. A local guide will show groups the wonderful wildlife sights the Somerset Levels have to offer – including cranes of course!

The project hopes that sustainable eco-tourism through local businesses will benefit the local economy, and so encourage communities to value their wildlife and support its conservation.

Details of the wildlife weekends from [info@walkersfarmcottages.co.uk](mailto:info@walkersfarmcottages.co.uk)

### More information



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## 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.