



International Cooperation in Bird Studies

¹Muraviovka Park for Sustainable Land Use (Amur Region, Russia), ²Institute of Landscape Ecology, Münster University (Germany), and ³International Crane Foundation (Wisconsin, USA)

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Introduction to the Case Study

This project uses field research, education, and community outreach in the area of to raise public awareness about threats to endangered birds and their habitats, to educate the stakeholders about importance and ecological services of wetlands, and to organize and conduct joint research, education, and conservation activities along the flyways in cooperation with universities, NGO's, and local communities. The project had demonstrated:

- The high value of Muraviovka Park and adjacent areas as critically important breeding and staging area for migratory birds;
- Current and future threats to migratory birds and people from loss and fragmentation of wetlands, flood regulation, wild fires, spring hunting, water pollution, as well as poisoning and capturing birds for food by mist-nets along the flyways;
- Lack of understanding in local communities of the situation and ignorance environmental laws by developers



Sergei Smirenski takes measurement of White-naped Crane nest, Muraviovka area, May 1982

Photo: Elena Smirenski



Durrelle Scott (Virginia Tech University) and Elena Smirenski carry out water studies, Muraviovka Park, June 2011

Photo: Sergei Smirenski

What was done and when and where did you do it?

Sharing results of field studies about:

- richness flora and avifauna of the Park;
- importance of the Park as breeding and staging area for migratory birds;
- current and future threats of wetland reclamation, grass fires, water pollution and other negative forms of human activities;
- conditions of Giltchin River watershed and role of wetlands for birds and people

If relevant, identify your main target group for your activity

The Park's community (general public of all ages along the entire flyway, researchers, school and university teachers, officials, developers, journalists) that make impact on migratory birds all year round, as well as bird lovers and environmentalists.

What was the result of the action?	The program supported by International Crane Foundation and other organizations built a foundation for sustainable land use in the Park and area, and raised people's interest in birds and in "protected working lands." Color banding, satellite tracking, logger tracking played a key role in building support at wintering grounds. Keen and steady interest from remote regions of Russia and abroad, publications, TV and radio interviews, international schools with educators and students from USA, East Asia and Europe, environmental art contests, festivals, exchange tours, tree planting and other actions initiated by the Park resulted in better understanding by local communities the uniqueness of the area. Our watershed studies revealed that forms of development that have negative impact on birds also represent threats to humans. This woke up local communities who began questioning authorities and lobbying for wetland conservation.
What was the key to success?	A firm commitment to long-term research, conservation & education activities using a combination of traditional and 'high tech' approaches as well as cooperation with partners from Russia, USA, Asia, and Europe.
What was your biggest challenge in achieving success?	Limited staff over-burdened with diverse ongoing activities (fund raising, research, wildlife management, education, fire prevention and suppression); lack of field researchers on staff and limited resources to host visiting researchers.
If the result was not completely successful, what went wrong? What have you done/will you do to resolve the problem?	Lack of researchers and educators on Park's staff put the limit to our past, current, and future activities. Our attempts to involve students from local universities in our field studies were not successful so far. Most of graduate students in the Amur Region are looking for opportunities to move to Moscow or other big cities in European Russia and abroad. We are currently searching for funds and candidates for two staff positions: Research Coordinator and Education & Volunteer Coordinator who would develop partnerships with local and foreign universities and research institutions and local schools.
If relevant, identify your key sponsors/partners for your activity	USA: ICF; Woodland Park Zoo; Columbus Zoo; Erica P. John Fund; Russia: Moscow State University; Far-eastern Agriculture University; Amur Botanical Gardens; Institute for Biology & Soils; Russian Academy of Science.
How is the Case Study useful for other Partners?	Long-term studies and partnerships along East Asian-Australasian Flyways are critically important for understanding the causes, trends, and scale of changes in species and habitats, and for planning efficient mitigation measures.
Useful links	http://muraviovkapark.ru ; https://facebook.com/muravpark ; https://www.facebook.com/Friends-of-Muraviovka-Park
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