

REMEMBERING JIM HARRIS – CHAMPION FOR THE CONSERVATION OF CRANES AND WETLANDS



James Thomas Harris

1950-2018

With grateful appreciation of Jim's 34 years of tireless service
to the cranes of the world
and his colleagues at the International Crane Foundation and abroad.

Jim's passionate commitment to safeguarding cranes and the places they live,
his overwhelming enthusiasm and eloquent words that inspired people,
his courage and perseverance in most difficult circumstances,
and his genuine interest in and care for those around him,
were admired and will always be remembered
by all who were fortunate to know him.

“The haunting calls of the world’s cranes are sadder today because they have lost a devoted friend, and the conservation community has lost a true hero.”

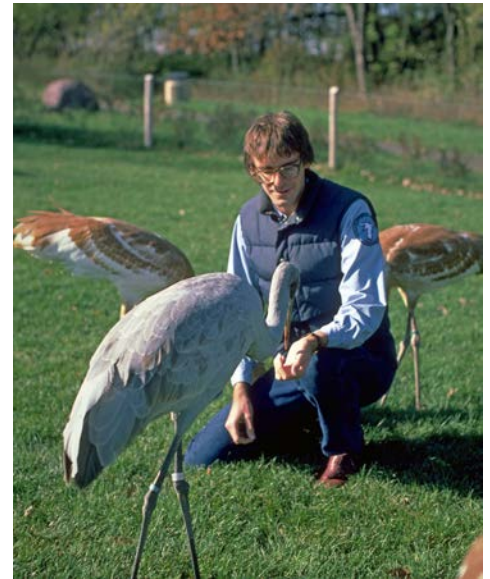
Kenneth Strom, National Audubon Society

On September 19th, 2018 the Crane Specialist Group lost a dear friend and champion for the conservation of cranes and wetlands. Jim passed away peacefully surrounded by his family at his home in Baraboo, Wisconsin, USA after a valiant fight against liver and pancreatic cancer.

In 1984 Jim joined the International Crane Foundation (ICF) in Baraboo, Wisconsin as the Education Director. By the late 1980s, Jim served as Deputy Director expanding ICF’s activities in Asia. In 2000, Dr. George Archibald stepped aside as ICF’s President, and Jim succeeded him. Under Jim’s leadership, ICF was directly involved in 45 projects in 22 countries around the world. In 2006, Jim decided to transition back to serve as director of ICF’s East Asia program, while continuing as Vice-President. From 2006, he also oversaw ICF’s Africa program, a post he held until just before his retirement in early 2018.

Jim was a journalist by training and an eloquent and prolific writer. He wrote lovely pieces detailing his experiences with people and cranes in Asia, featuring evocative descriptions of landscapes and their inhabitants.

As Co-chair (1988-2008) with George Archibald, Chair (2008-2017) and Co-chair (2018) with Kerry Morrison, of the IUCN Crane Specialist Group, Jim’s vision for cranes and their landscapes has always been global in scale. He has adeptly integrated the expertise and passion of 350 members in over 50 countries. He led workshops, produced publications changing the course of how we address complex crane challenges such as agricultural land use and climate change, and brought diverse people together to find solutions to provide water for wetlands and cranes, whilst balancing human needs. His contributions are culminating later this year with the publication of the much-anticipated Crane Conservation Strategy that engaged over 150 crane specialists in a review of the status and trends for all 15 crane species. A comprehensive assessment of 19 direct threats identifies research needs and priority actions for the next five years, with measurable actions linked to diverse partners.



Jim’s dedication, along with his wife Su Liying, to the cranes and wetlands of China, Russia, and beyond is well-known and greatly appreciated. He pioneered conservation work with a micro-lending program for farmers in return for crane habitat conservation in China, introduced improved water management techniques as part of reserve management plans in NE China, promoted sound science as a basis for improved management, organized highly popular and effective international nature schools and camps, and established monitoring networks.

Jim’s infectious reverberating laugh, gentle smile and good sense of humor radiated an energy, positivity and sense of hope to everyone around him. Jim’s insights, critical thinking and recommendations were always constructive and valuable. His wise counsel was often sought by partners throughout the



crane world, in part because Jim was always so supportive and giving of his time. As an incredible mentor, guide and confidant, Jim leaves behind many people, all over the world, who have benefited, flourished, and been inspired by his example.

Thank you, Jim, for decades of dedication and the legacy you have left for us all to continue forward for the conservation of the world's cranes. Thank you for your unfailing friendship to so many around the world.

Jim will be also remembered fondly for his passion for taking photos of the people, cranes and landscapes in the places he visited around the world. This photo, taken at Muraviovka Park in Far-eastern Russia, captures his love for landscapes and the perfect shot.

