

MURAVIOVKA PARK ACTIVITIES IN 2024

By Sergei and Elena Smirenski

Year 2024 marks 30 years of the Park's activities that began when the New Jersey teachers led the First International Summer Environmental Camp in 1994.



This first camp was followed by 24 annual camps mostly led by educators from Wisconsin. In 1994-2020, our camps hosted over 3,000 teachers and students from Russia and over 200 teachers and students from USA, China, South Korea, and European countries. Soon the local

people began calling the Park “the island of hope” and eventually accepted it as their own; many of them became aware of the threats to cranes and wetlands and turned into wildlife protectors. Besides, similar annual projects (camps and schools) have been initiated in China and South Korea. We had to cancel the camp session in 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions and could not hold international sessions in 2022-2024 for the obvious reason.

We believe, however, that in this extremely challenging time there is still a hope that normal working relationships among Russia and other countries will be restored in the not so remote future, and the Park staff once again will be able to communicate and visit directly with their colleague and partners around the world and receive support for the Park's activities. We are so grateful to the *Friends of Muraviovka Park in Russia and in USA* for standing by!

We also want to express our heartfelt gratitude to George Archibald, late Jim Harris, Rich Beilfuss, Claire Mirande, and other leaders and Directors of the International Crane Foundation, leaders of Woodland Park Zoo (Seattle), Columbus Zoo, and to key supporters, such as Eliza Klose, Anatoly Belonogov, Sergei Tkachenko, Albina Voropayeva, Natalia Gromova, Tatiana Kholkina, Elena Zubakina, and Antonida Trizhitsak, to name just a few, for many years of unfailing support to this project and to all Park's activities; to Barb Thompson and Sharon Hushek who served as the *Friends of Muraviovka Park* Presidents in 1998-2024 and as the American team leaders in 1997-2020; to all volunteer educators from the US and Russia, who sacrificed their precious summer vacation time to participate in our camps, and to all friends and supporters of the Park. You made a huge mark!

We hope you will take the time to read and enjoy the following description of Muraviovka Park activities in 2024.

Changes in leadership and the Park's legal name



New Muraviovka Park leaders Evgeniy Lisitsyn (left) and Anton Sassin

In August 2023, the Park leadership changed again since in July, when its Director Serge Ryndov submitted his resignation letter. After looking for qualified candidates, Evgeniy Lisitsyn, previously the head of the Amur Branch of WWF in Blagoveshchensk, became the Park's new CEO. He proved himself as an experienced manager and organizer. Soon he hired Anton Sassin, an seasoned local ornithologist, professor at the Amur Agricultural University and our long-term partner, as the Researcher and Curator of Captive Birds.

Despite the difficult political and economic situation, under the qualified and dedicated new local leadership and with growing popularity among and support from local people and businesses, the Park is now experiencing its revival and continues to carry out its diverse activities. Dr. Smirenski effectively continued to support the Park's dedicated staff and activities with expertise and advice from his home office in Wisconsin.

In late 2023, we succeeded in renewing our arable land sublease contracts with a local ag coop (for 3 years) and a private farmer (for 1 year) at double prices compared to the ones in previous agreements, securing sufficient funds for the Park's general operations and payroll. Our supporters in the Amur Region and other parts of Russia have been contributing to fund our special projects.

On Dr. Smirenski's advice, in July 2024, after a consultation with key Park Board members, major supporters and lawyers in the Amur Region, Evgeniy Lisitsyn prepared and submitted to the regional government all necessary documentation to verify the non-commercial character of the Park and to re-register Park under its new legal name – *Park Muraviovsky*. After an inspection from the government visited the Park, the relevant office had classified the Park as a non-profit organization. That was very good news!

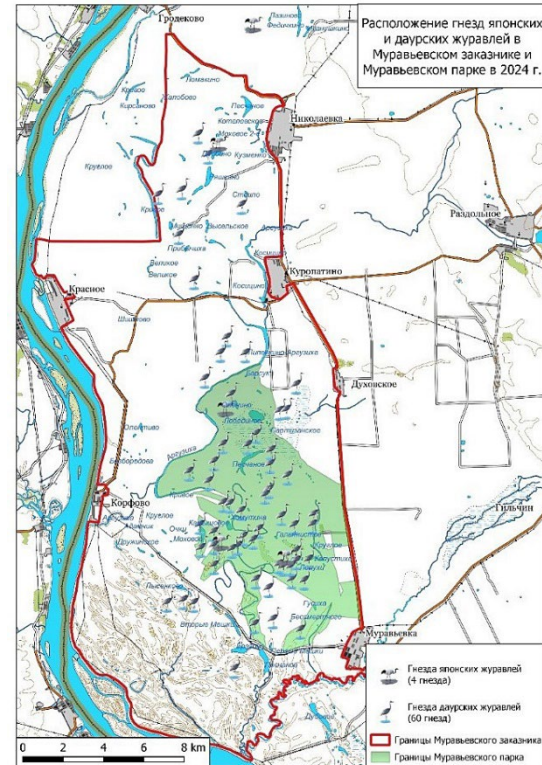
The new legal name, however, is being used mostly in official documents and for legal purposes, since people in Russia and all over the world have known our project as *Muraviovka Park* for three decades and got used to the original name.

Field research

There were no wildfires in the Park and area in 2024, so our Red-crowned and White-naped Cranes and Oriental Storks had no interruptions in raising their young.

- Since 2019, our partner Anton Sassin (on staff now as the Researcher and Curator of Birds) has been conducting annual drone surveys of cranes and storks in the entire Amur Region and placing tracking devices on certain wild and captive-bred cranes. In 2019-2024, Anton placed 14 GPS trackers on Red-crowned Cranes that were raised and released into the wild by Muraviovka Park and Khingansky Nature Reserve.
- In 2024, according to the data of aerial (drone) surveys conducted during 15-19 May, there were four nests of Red-crowned and 60 nests (highest nest density in the entire breeding range) of White-naped Cranes (see map on the right), and at least 35 nests of the Oriental Stork in the Park and near its borders.

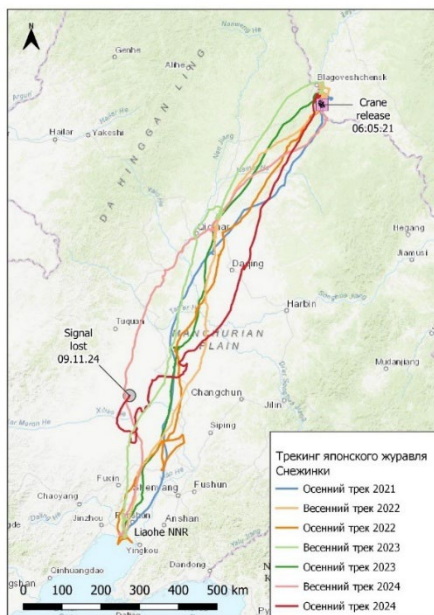
- Snowflake (female Red-crowned Crane hatched and raised by parents in the Park's pen and released into the wild in 2021 with a GPS tracking device) had nested again; she laid two eggs in mid-April and since early May, together with her wild partner, was raising two chicks (unfortunately, one chick did not survive). At 10 AM on 5 November, Snowflake and her family began migration south (see https://t.me/muraviovka_Park/1406). By 4:20 PM that day, they covered 410 km (255 miles) and reached a suburb of Daqing. This is Snowflake's fourth migration and the second migration with a chick. Each year they follow the same route – Muraviovka to Liaohé National Nature Reserve (see map). The last signal from her tracker was received on 9 November, but on that date the tracking device stopped working. Snowflake's GPS tracker had enjoyed the longest life – four years!



Map of Red-crowned and White-naped Cranes nests in Muraviovka Park and area in May 2024). Courtesy of Anton Sassin



One of the last photos of Snowflake and her family taken by Anton Sassin in September 2024



Map of Snowflake's migrations in 2021-2024 (GPS tracking data, courtesy of Anton Sassin). Legend: blue line – fall of 2021; yellow – spring of 2022; orange – fall of 2022; light green – spring of 2023; dark green – fall of 2023; pink – spring of 2024; red line – fall of 2024

- On 2 June 2024, Anton Sassin filmed a flock of 15 Siberian Cranes flying over the area north of the Park.
- Throughout September, cranes have been gathering in the wet meadows and crop fields of the Park (see videoclip at https://t.me/muraviovka_Park/1316). Hundreds of White-naped and Hooded Cranes could be seen in crop fields in Tambovsky, Konstantinovskiy, and Ivanovskiy Districts of the Amur Province, with dozens of these birds daily foraging right in front of the Park's HQ complex. The cranes began their journey south in early November. We are still waiting to receive results of the 2024 crane counts and breeding success from Anton Sassin.
- In May-August, Sergei has been working on updating, revising, and editing the latest draft of the book *Lakes of Muraviovka Park*. The ~200-page draft has six chapters, and we expect it to be printed in Russia in 2025. The funds for printing have been secured in Russia. In late August, Sergei sent his revision with his comments and questions to his coauthors and is waiting for their response. Currently, he has been working with colleagues in Blagoveshchensk, authors of a chapter on plants, revising the updated version of this chapter.

Supporting the endangered mainland population of the Red-crowned Crane

We believe that without our work at Muraviovka Park, due to the growing human pressure (wildfires, poaching, land reclamation, lack of environmental awareness and education), the Red-crowned Crane would have disappeared from this area, while the White-naped Crane and the Oriental Stork would not have shown a population increase. Here's what has been happening in our pens in 2024.

- Currently, there are nine cranes (six Red-crowned, two Hooded, and one White-naped) and two Swan Geese living in the Park's pens. These birds serve as great attractions and educational tools to our visitors.

- The young captive pair of Red-crowned Cranes (Snowflake's brother Snowman and a female Niko donated by Yakutsk Zoo) have been demonstrating courtship behavior this spring. We hope they will build a nest and lay eggs next spring.

- Tatiana Kashentseva, our long-time partner and the Manager of the Oka Biosphere Reserve Crane Breeding Station (located ~200 miles SE of Moscow), helped the Park to locate a suitable Red-crowned Crane female for captive breeding. On 29 June, we received a new bird from a Moscow Zoo branch in Velikiy Ustyug (located NE of Moscow in Vologda Region of Russia). Sukhona (named after a river, on which shores the city of Velikiy Ustyug is located), is 11 years old, and in the Zoo, she shared a pen with her sister, but none



Sukhona, Red-crowned female shipped from the Moscow Zoo branch in northern Russia, in Muraviovka Park pen. Photo by Anton Sassin

of them had ever laid infertile eggs (as often happens in such cases). The costly shipping was paid with a grant from the Russian Bird Conservation Union that the Park has won in May 2024, and the entire project was organized and coordinated by colleagues from the Moscow Zoo. We are now fundraising among the Amur Region residents for the costs of shipping a groom for Sukhona – a Red-crowned male from Orto-Doydu Zoo in Yakutsk. We hope they will make a productive pair, but in any case, these birds will be used for the education of our visitors.



Grisha, young male Hooded Crane. Photo by Anton Sassin

- This fall, we have been hosting three new cranes (see https://t.me/muraviovka_Park/1383) – one young White-naped Crane with a broken wing, and two young and injured Hooded Cranes (one with multiple wing bones fractures and another with an abscess in one foot). On 29 October, a new feathered charge arrived from Fevralsk Town in Selezhdzha District – a young Hooded Crane with a wing injury who was left behind in the woods by parents. Compassionate Fevralsk residents picked up the bird, fed it for few days, and handed it over to the Park, where the crane was placed in a pen with a winterized indoor shack. This bird turned out to be a male and was named Grisha. In December,

another Hooded Crane (a female Zhura who was injured during the fall migration of 2021 and for two years kept in Blagoveshchensk *EcoCenter*) was placed in Grisha’s pen. Hooded Cranes, unlike Red-crowned Cranes, normally do not breed in captivity, so there are no cranes of this species in Russian Zoos and captive breeding centers. The two birds are getting along well, and our new Curator of Birds is currently exploring methods of this species captive breeding.

- All three birds were checked for parasites and infections and treated for helminths and chewing lice (Phloptoridae). The White-naped Crane already completed its quarantine and was placed in the pen with our three Red-crowned Cranes (Bella, Grisha and Zhura), with whom it successfully socialized and became a rightful member of this group (see the attached video and two links – https://t.me/muraviovka_Park/1380 and https://t.me/muraviovka_Park/1371). Two Hooded Cranes are still being kept in the quarantine pen and undergoing treatment for parasites. We sent feather samples from these three birds to the Institute of General Genetics in Moscow for gender identification. As soon as their sex becomes known these cranes will be given names.

There is a webcam in their pen so people can watch these birds in real time at <https://public.ivideon.com/camera/100-PMEUfNE0mWG8ldNpgNstO/0/?lang=ru>.

- On 28 September, we released into the wild an Oriental Stork who lived in our pen for six weeks (see https://t.me/muraviovka_Park/1326). Prior to the release, our staff placed a GPS transmitter on this bird, who was found by local people in near-to-death condition and brought to the Park. Its weight on the first day at the Park was just 3.3 lbs., but on the day of the release – 6.6 lbs.! Upon release, the stork had immediately demonstrated good flying skills and readiness to live in the wild by itself.

- Since we have now to feed more birds, our visitors and supporters keep bringing more food for them – vegetables, apples, cottage cheese, boiled eggs, dried *Gammarus* (amphipod crustation), and mineral supplements, so our captive birds are well fed (see https://t.me/muraviovka_Park/1393).

- Earlier this year, we completed construction of our fifth pen and populated it, but the growing flock required to build the sixth pen. In fact, these additions were in the Park’s plans for several years but have been put on hold due to the lack of funds.



In early October, the Park posted an appeal to its friends and supporters to donate money and materials for construction of the new pen (see attached photos and a video). Immediately we received responses from several local companies: *TechServices-Blagoveshchensk*, *AMUR Ltd.*, and *PDN Ltd.*, which donated and delivered lots of construction materials, including concrete and netting for the pen fence. Our staff poured the concrete foundation and installed the steel poles but we needed to hire welders to finish the framework, so on 23 October we posted another appeal for 60,000 rubles (~\$600 US; see

https://t.me/muraviovka_Park/1398). In just two days over 50 people sent ~80,000 rubles (\$800; see https://t.me/muraviovka_Park/1404) and the funds keep coming, which is very good because we still need more construction materials to complete the new pen.



On 2 November, Muraviovka Park woke up covered by snow. The cranes have been getting used to the new environment. We already prepared warm indoor pens for them, but with the air temperatures just a bit above or below the freezing point, the cranes can still stay outdoors day and night.

Environmental education and public awareness

In 2024, visitor flow to the Park has been steady since early April and significantly increased in summer months, thanks to regular broadcasts from the Park by local and federal TV channels, as well as daily updates and advertisements about events and tours with images and video clips posted on the Park’s Telegram and WhatsApp channels. See a clip from a recently released video film about beautiful places of the Amur Region at https://t.me/muraviovka_park/1413 .

Due to financial constraints, our staff was not able to host regular environmental camp sessions or international visitors in 2024. However, interest in and support to the Park among local people

and mass media has been higher than ever, and the Park staff introduced new forms of environmental education and public awareness activities as listed below.

- In mid-July, young storks began leaving their nests, and the Park posted a note for the public asking not to pick up these youngsters trying to “save” them, with detailed explanations and a photo that demonstrated differences between adult and immature storks (attached).
- A TV program about MP was broadcast on local TV channel “Amur Region News” (see at https://dzen.ru/video/watch/6695185b4bbd297f7d854dab?share_to=link), with an emphasis on the captive crane breeding project and the new female Red-crowned Crane shipped from the Moscow Zoo branch in the north of European Russia.
- The Park staff have been conducting regular weekend excursions for school groups and local families, which are available almost every weekend through mid-October. We offer weekend packages, which became very popular and in 2024 were purchased by over 50 groups of visitors.

We also offer weekend overnight tours for family special



events (birthdays, anniversaries, and such) that include excursions, environmental games/activities and classes for children and adults. Kids especially liked classes on insects that are active during the night. Adult visitors liked fishing and feeding their catch to captive cranes. Many were happy to help with weeding the flowerbeds and planting flowers.

- In early March, we announced a contest for the best bird nest boxes (the winners were awarded certificates and prizes – souvenirs from the Park’s gift shop during the *Day of the Stork* festival in April).

- Since early April, the Park staff has been conducting weekend excursions for school groups and local families, available almost every weekend through mid-October.



- On 20 April 2024, the Park staff conducted a public festival *Day of the Stork* in Blagoveshchensk (capital of the Amur Region) city Park attended by ~300 people.
- In late June 2024, a photo exhibit with ~80 beautiful photos of Muraviovka Park and its wildlife was installed in the Blagoveshchensk City Park located in the city center (see photo below). The photos were taken by Maxim Logunov, a local professional photographer, who used to work for the National Geographic branch in Russia until its closure, and the Park's dedicated fan and volunteer. The exhibit includes a poster that invites people to visit Muraviovka Park and describes its mission, activities, and



Spring 2024 Crane Fest



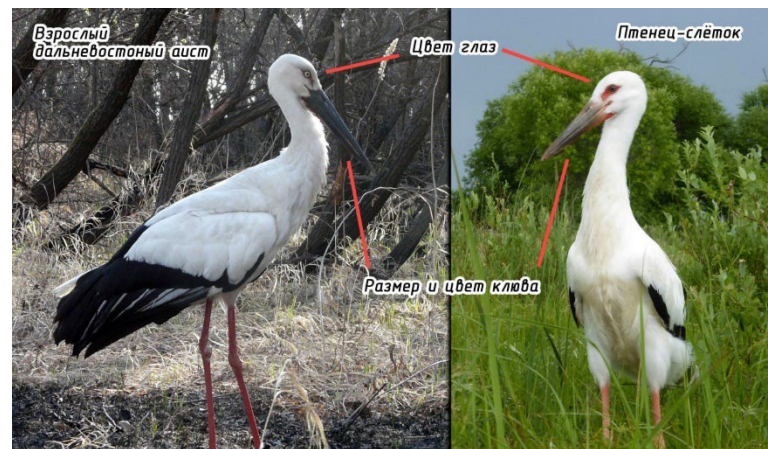
and wildlife.

The exhibit has been visited by many people, and some have been surprised that such a variety of birds, especially cranes, can be seen so close to the city! Our staff noticed an increased flow of visitors to the Park since the opening of the exhibit, and there is a hope this will also bring greater financial and in-kind support from local people and businesses.

- In mid-July, young storks began leaving their nests, and the Park posted a note for the public asking not to pick up these youngsters

trying to “save” them, with detailed explanations and a photo that demonstrated differences between adult and immature storks (see photo on the right).

- In mid-September, the Park's Telegram and WhatsApp channels posted an invitation to visit the Park and announced a video contest for the best film about the Park, with a main prize of 3,000,000 rubles (~\$30,000) offered by local donors. As an example, the announcement included a video film about the Park produced by Natalia Balandina, the Commercial Director of the TAYGA X-TOUR company for the All-Russia contest *Far East – the Land of Adventures*.



- A TV program about MP was broadcast on local TV channel “Amur Region News” (see at https://dzen.ru/video/watch/6695185b4bbd297f7d854dab?share_to=link), with an emphasis on the captive crane breeding and release program.

- On 19 September, the Park hosted a group of 15 blind and visually impaired people from Blagoveshchensk city and area (see photo below). Despite the rainy weather, the group loved the tour and expressed their heartfelt thanks to the Park staff.



Anton Sassin leads the tour for the blind and visually impaired people. 19 September 2024, Muraviovka Park

- On 23 September, a big article about Muraviovka Park with numerous images was posted on the *Amurskaya Pravda* (*Amur Truth*), the major provincial newspaper's website (see <https://ampravda.ru/2024/09/23/pochemu-muravevskijj-Park-mog-ischeznut-s-karty-priamurja-cto-spas-zhuravlinyjj-zapovednik>).
- On 28 September, the Annual Autumn Crane Fest "Farewell, Cranes!" was attended by ~350 visitors, who enjoyed a tour of the crane pens, scenic views from the Observation Point, and a concert by local music, dance, and choir groups.
- In late September, a crew from Muz-TV channel filmed an episode of their weekly show *Here we are!* at Muraviovka Park (see <https://muz-tv.ru/look/priehali-dalniy-vostok/videos/blagoveshensk-hd-id-1/>).
- On 1 October, we hosted a field trip of 200 participants of a Regional Conference *Eaglets of Russia* convened in Blagoveshchensk (see https://t.me/muraviovka_Park/1410). The day started with educational activities and ended with the closing ceremony of the conference. Among the participants, who came from 11 provinces of the Russian Far East, were school principals, deputy principals, teachers, and school counselors. The conference organizer was our long-time partner, the Blagoveshchensk Pedagogical (Teacher's) University (BPU). Our staff set up several stations around the Park to educate the group about the Park history, activities, and wildlife. At one station visitors could look at aquatic life under a microscope, and we also offered several environmental games.

- On 6 October, a group of 20 students from the BPU Biology & Geography Department came to the Park for an educational tour, after which they helped our staff with a couple of menial tasks (see https://t.me/muraviovka_Park/1358). During the tour along the Eco Trail and around the Park, the student volunteers learned about the Park history, its lands and wildlife, and projects, including our captive birds and the program to support the shrinking wild population of the Red-crowned Cranes by releases of the captive-bred birds raised by their parents. The majority of these students had seen the endangered and threatened cranes in pens and in the wild for the first time in their lives. After the tour, the students participated in a clean-up of the pens and the arboretum. The visit ended with a tea party with delicious home baked treats.
- On 12-13 October, BPU convened the first regional workshop *The Pristine East*, dedicated to environmental problems and methods of environmental awareness and education (see https://t.me/muraviovka_Park/1374). The workshop gathered over 20 participants – staff of nature reserves, educators from wildlife conservation organizations, college professors, and schoolteachers. The first day consisted of presentations and discussions and was hosted by the university; the Park hosted the second, field day, which was filled with excursions and master classes focused on hands-on and outdoors ways of environmental education. All participants praised the importance of such a meeting and expressed hopes that it will become an annual event.

Wildfire management and suppression

In early spring of 2023 and 2024, the Park staff and volunteers created fire breaks around the Park's facilities. There were no serious wildfires in 2023 and 2024, and none of minor ones reached the Park's Headquarters or damaged the nesting sites of cranes and storks within the Park borders.

Reforestation

In 2023, our partners from the Amur Branch of the Far-eastern Botanical Gardens, with financial support from the Amur Trans Oil Company, donated and planted several hundred seedlings of Siberian Ginseng (*Eleutherococcus senticosus*), Japanese Water Iris (*Iris ensata*), Chinese Magnolia Vine (*Schisandra chinensis*), Amur Linden (*Tilia amurensis*), Manchurian Ash (*Fraxinus mandshurica*), Manchurian Walnut (*Juglans mandshurica*). In 2023 and 2024, they also, with the help from volunteers, weeded the tree nursery that they began developing in 2019.

Enhancing facilities

- Upgraded and extended the nature trail.
- Upgraded the winter captive breeding facility for Red-crowned Cranes (to continue captive breeding and releases into the wild of one-year-old Red-crowned Cranes). On March 5,

five local volunteers worked at the Park to create more natural conditions in Snowman and Niko's pen to encourage the young cranes to breed. They made screens from reeds and bush grass and collected and brought plant materials necessary to build a nest in the enclosure.

- On the weekend of July 15-16, during breaks between public excursions and birdwatching tours, our staff and volunteers worked to upgrade the visitors' area (enhanced ecological trails, prepared new information stands and banners).
- The new indoor pens were finished in spring 2024, so our birds will now be spending winter evenings and nights inside their cozy winterized homes.
- In late September-October, our staff accomplished several important renovations at the Park Headquarters – new fence around the captive bird pens, new road signs, new information boards (see https://t.me/muraviovka_Park/1343).

Support from local communities

In 2024, we continue to see growing connectedness and pride from the local community yielding improved conditions of the Park for wildlife and people.

Throughout the year, the Park's Telegram and WhatsApp channels have been very active and popular among the Amur Region residents, posting daily updates with beautiful photos and videos and announcing upcoming events – regular tours of the Park, weekend tours, volunteer opportunities, offers to share rides to the Park, and donations requests. Local volunteers, mostly from Blagoveshchensk and Tambovka, participated in fire prevention activities, planted trees and bushes, cleaned the site and facilities and made necessary repairs before and after the visitors' season, mowed grass, brought food for migratory and captive birds, planted, watered and weeded flowerbeds. At least 8,000 Amurians visited the Park in 2024, and 102 volunteers donated ~800 hours of work helping with captive bird care, cleaning, weeding, and repairs at the Park's facilities. Here is a detailed description of local people's involvement in our work.

- In late May – June, one of our volunteers, a talented artist, refreshed the crane mural on the wall of the Education Center.
- On 5-7 July, a group of 30 volunteers (all members of a Northern hikers' club *ScandiAmurians*) worked at the Park for three days on a variety of tasks (helping with captive bird care, cleaning the site, weeding, making minor repairs).
- Our crane captive breeding facilities play an important role in educating local communities about programs of protection and restoration of endangered and threatened species. In 2023 and 2024, the Park received local support to install webcams in our pens, which allowed many residents of the Amur Regions and other parts of Russia to watch the life of our captive cranes on livestream.



New road sign

- For years the regional government would not allow us to erect a road sign on the highway directing visitors to the Park. In the fall of 2023, it finally happened, indicating increased importance of the Park in the eyes of local administration.

- In December 2023 – January 2024, ~150 Amurians (from school students and retired people to the staff of regional offices in charge of hunting and protected wildlife areas) donated over 150,000 rubles (~\$1,700) towards the

food for birds and huge amounts of fish, grain, vegetables, and apples. On 24 January 2024, staff of the Park visited the Station for Reintroduction of Rare Birds at Khingansky Nature Reserve to share with our partners part of the donated food (180 lbs. of grain, 100 lbs. of apples, and 50 lbs. of carrots).



ScandiAmurians volunteers



- On 19 September 2024, the Park announced a two-day action *Share Your Harvest with Cranes*, which resulted in huge amounts of vegetables, apples, and fish donated by the Amurians (see attached photos) – enough to last until the spring.

- On all September and October weekends, groups of volunteers visited the Park, cleaning and preparing the HQ complex for winter, tending to the arboretum, and preparing the donated vegetables and other food items for storage.



Our helpers

International cooperation

- In November 2023, thanks to George Archibald’s proposal to establish collaboration among the centers of crane reintroduction in far-eastern Russia and China, the Park is now in contact with staff of the Liao He Kou Nature Reserve and received images of Snowflake family in wintering ground.



Snowflake family flying over winter site in China. Photo - courtesy of Liao He Kou Nature Reserve staff

- In early 2024, our Chinese partners expressed their wish to resume cooperation with Muraviovka Park under the ICF’s East-Asian Crane Flyway Education Project.

- In late October 2024, Qian Yu (ICF’s East Asia Director based in Beijing) reached out to the Park and had a good conversation with Evgeniy

Lisitsyn, MP Director, Anton Sassin, Researcher & Curator of Birds, and two MP educators; they began looking for best / feasible possibilities for joint projects.

- In early November, Anton Sassin, together with Aleksey Antonov, Deputy Director and Mikhail Parilov, Researcher of Khingansky Nature Reserve traveled to China, to participate in the Yellow Sea International Seminar. They were invited by Guo Zhiwei.
- On 2 June, Dr. Kiyooki Ozaki, Deputy Director General of the Yamashina Institute for



Sergei Smirenski banded this young White-naped Crane in the east of the Amur Region in July 1984; 4 months later, Dr. Ozaki sighted it in Izumi,



In mid-1990's, Dr. Smirenski and Dr. Ozaki captured and banded these two young White-naped Cranes in Muraviovka Park



Nesting site of the female White-naped Crane R-07 in Tambovka District. Photo by Anton Sassin

Ornithology in Abiko (Japan), with whom we have been partners in banding cranes for the last 40 years, sent Dr. Smirenski an inquiry about a White-naped Crane (female adult #R-07) banded and supplied with a *KoEco* transmitter at Izumi (Japan).

- For the last six months, Dr. Smirenski and Dr. Sassin have been in frequent communication with Dr. Ozaki to monitor the movements of that White-naped Crane. Dr. Ozaki sent data showing this crane at a breeding site in Muraviovka Park area near Tambovka town, provided geographic coordinates and a map of this bird migration, and asked if we know about this bird, is she breeding, and in what kind of habitat. Sergei contacted Anton about this crane, who wrote back to Sergei and Dr. Ozaki that in 2023, he looked for crane nests, photographed meadows near Tambovka using a drone, and found many nests of White-naped Cranes in that place. Anton also shared his 2023 photos, taken exactly in the location specified by Dr. Ozaki's coordinates, and a screenshot of maps of



Map of the spring 2023 migration of the female White-naped Crane R-07 from Izumi to Tambovka District of the Amur Region. Courtesy of Kiyooki Ozaki

White-naped Crane nests, on which he indicated the location. There was a nest of White-naped Cranes in that location in 2022 and 2023. After receiving Ozaki's enthusiastic reply, Anton checked this place with a drone on 9 June 2024, found this bird, and sent a link to several photos and a video from neighboring meadows with crane nests and this particular pair (wheat, barley, and soybeans are grown in the fields near the nests; the pair raised two chicks). Since then, Dr. Ozaki, Dr. Smirenski, and Anton Sassin have been in regular contact regarding the bird R-07. See the original 2024 photos and videos with excellent images of breeding conditions taken from the Park's drone at <https://cloud.mail.ru/public/EAXs/NYQX1Ay32>.

We are very pleased that in these challenging times the international partnership among crane researchers and conservationists at Muraviovka Park and other places in North-East Asia have been resumed for the sake of these beautiful and vulnerable birds!

Sometimes, it takes local communities much more time to take over the project that we started than we could have thought in the beginning. We must be patient and continue our work with local people even when it looks like they will never own our project. In our case, it took 30 years to happen – with steadfast, generous, and much appreciated support from you, our dear Friends of Muraviovka Park. Thank you for not losing interest in our work and standing by!