



ZHURAVL

Friends of Muraviovka Park
An Affiliate of the International Crane Foundation

February 2006



Russian, Chinese, and Americans teach each other the lyrics to "May There Always Be Sunshine" during one of the Park's 2005 summer camps.

Teachers, students needed for '06 workshops at Muraviovka Park

by Barb Thompson

In the heart of the Amur Region of far eastern Russia lies a very special place, where Red-crowned and White-naped Cranes come to nest in large numbers. It is in this place that innovative sustainable farming techniques are being demonstrated to local people and environmental education summer camps along with teacher workshops are being conducted. Where cultural barriers are broken down and people of different countries and backgrounds work together.

This very special place is Muraviovka Park For Sustainable Land Use...and it needs your help!

We are looking for people who are willing to share their teaching techniques and enthusiasm with

Tentative Dates for 2006 Trips

Youth Symposium:

Depart U.S.: June 11

Return U.S.: July 6/7

ILSS Camp:

Depart U.S.: June 25

Return U.S.: July 19/20

those who are anxious to learn. People who want to learn more about other cultures and lifestyles. People who enjoy working with children and adults and who would be willing to spend three to four weeks of their summer traveling, living, and working with Russian students and teachers.

Muraviovka Park is a 15,000-acre wetland/upland complex,

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Wisconsin an 'Open World' for Russian educators

Demonstrating that international cooperation can ensure a future for both birds and people, five Russian guests had the opportunity last fall to tour a variety of conservation programs in Wisconsin, building professional connections and friendships along the way.

From October 29 through November 6, a group of educators and journalists from the Russian Far East visited the Badger State under the Open World Program, administered by the Initiative for Social Action and Renewal in Eurasia (ISAR). The guests were sponsored by the Friends of Muraviovka Park (FOMP) and the International Crane Foundation (ICF), with Barb Thompson and Elena Smirenski serving as trip coordinators.

Four of the Russian participants have been active at Muraviovka Park programs for a number of years: Oleg Kaminski (environmental educator, Primorski Region), Tatyana Kholkina (journalist, Amur Region newspaper, *Blagoveshchensk*), Marina Nerobelova (biology teacher, Lozovoye Village, Amur Region), and Marina Savosko (school principal, Kuropatino Village, Amur Region). Oksana Torina (language school principal, Khabarovsk) participated as Open World's Russian group facilitator.

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established in 1995 as the first privately-owned nature preserve in Russia since 1917.

Dr. Sergei Smirenski, whose vision and dedication continue to shape the Park, understands that education is the key to achieving any success. So, each summer features youth camps focused on environmental education. Students and teachers from Russia, China, South Korea, and the U.S. have all participated in these camps. Muraviovka Park has become a place where environmental preservation and agricultural practices are shown to coexist for the benefit of all-- both people and wildlife.

An ambitious schedule for the summer of 2006 is being organized! We plan to host the second International Youth Symposium (IYS). During this nine-day symposium, students from Russia and the U.S. will work and learn together, as they search for ways to solve current environmental problems. Participating teachers are encouraged to bring students with them to take part in this symposium. American students who participated in the first IYS have said that the experience helped

them become better college students and allowed them to receive some very nice scholarships. Surveys show that today's employers are looking for personnel with a knowledge and understanding of the world as a whole.

The fifth annual International Languages Summer School (ILSS) will follow the Youth Symposium and also has an environmental theme. Russian students are chosen based on their ability to speak and understand the English language.

A two-day teacher workshop is connected with each of the camps.

'An awesome experience'

2006 will be my ninth trip to Muraviovka Park, and I have been team leader seven of the last eight years. I can't begin to explain what an awesome experience this will be. You will have an opportunity to meet and work with some of the most wonderful people!

Camp staff are eager to make your stay as pleasant as possible. They are very dedicated, fun-loving people and a joy to get to know. The children are so much fun to work with - they will ask you tons of questions about life in America! And the teachers are very interested in how we teach in America and what kinds of problems we encounter in our classrooms.

You will also be working on one of the best projects I have ever been involved with - one that truly understands that wildlife and people have to (and can!) co-exist for the benefit of both. Most Americans who go, plan to return someday.

I've barely scratched the surface of all that this project entails, but I hope I have given enough information to at least pique your interest. If you have any questions at all please feel free to contact me at bthompson@wsalem.k12.wi.us or (608) 786-2382.

I hope to hear from you soon!

-Barb



Linda Carlson, a high school science teacher from Mukwanago, Wisconsin, shares her photo album with eager Russian students during a 2005 summer camp at Muraviovka Park.

In addition to the countryside and villages around the Park, participants have a chance to see other parts of Russia, including three to four days taking in the sights of Moscow

We are looking for two teams of Americans to teach at these camps: one team for a teacher workshop and the ILSS and one team for a teacher workshop and the IYS. Ideally, we would like at least ten Americans in each team.

University credit is available through UW-Stevens Point for teacher participants of either camp.

We hope to have the teams assembled soon, and plan to meet one day a month to prepare for the camps and make all travel arrangements. Participants will be signed up on a first come-first served basis, so contact Barb Thompson as soon as possible if you are interested in this trip. Also, please get in touch with Barb if you are not able to visit Muraviovka this summer, but would like information on future trips.

FOMP sprouts Amur branch

by *Natalia Gromova*

Initially, the Amur chapter of Friends of Muraviovka Park (“Amur-FOMP”) was an organization of local teachers and students. In spring 2005, members of this group helped to have everything arranged for the summer education season. They cleaned the Nature Center and installed artwork there, and organized the children’s cabins. They raised money for making flower beds at the Park’s headquarters by running school fairs, where children sold homemade baked goods.

Many people of the Amur Region have started to become interested in what was going on at the Park, due to Amur mass media efforts, which talked about and showed Park activities last summer. These efforts were accomplished thanks to Nicolai and Tatyana Zemlyanski (Amur TV reporters) and Tatiana Kholkina (Amur newspaper journalist).

After it was announced that a meeting of Amur-FOMP would take place in Blagoveshchensk at the Regional Library Hall on September 22, 2005, about 40 people attended. There were college, high school, and elementary school teachers, students, journalists, environmentalists, local authorities, tourist agents, and many others. At this meeting, Tatyana Zemlyanskaya was presented with an International FOMP T-shirt. Another was given to Elena Kanigina, chief manager of Intourist Travel Agency. Elena and her agency worked very closely with Muraviovka Park in 2005. They helped find Chinese interpreters and paid part of their expenses. Intourist Travel Agency also provided transportation and other assistance to help people from Blagoveshchensk come to the Park for its annual Crane Fest.



Natalia Gromova presides over a September meeting of Amur-FOMP at the Regional Library Hall in Blagoveshchensk.

At the September meeting, a new Amur-FOMP Board of Directors was selected. I accepted the position of president and Galina Loukianova accepted the position of treasurer. Nicolai Zemlyanski became deputy-president, Svetlana Andreeva was selected as secretary, and Tatyana Kholkina as the public relations coordinator.

In October, Amur “Friends” came to the Park to help finish painting the house, picking beans, cleaning flower beds, and of course they couldn’t miss an opportunity to have a cup of tea and a friendly talk. That is the other function of the Park--it helps people to relax, communicate, and find good

friends. At the time, Kurt Hundgen, director of conservation at the Livingston Ripley Waterfowl Sanctuary in Connecticut, was staying at the Park and it was exciting for many of us to talk to him and treat him to a cup of fresh non-pasteurized milk.

Amur-FOMP plans to meet at the end of February to plan ways in which they can help the Park’s programs this spring and summer.

Natalia Gromova has been a teacher of chemistry and biology. She is currently the deputy director of Kurapatina School, president of Amur Friends of Muraviovka Park, a member of the International Board of Directors for Muraviovka Park, and working on educational materials for the Park.

Philanthropy crucial to Muraviovka’s success

Without the support of many individuals and organizations, the important activities at Muraviovka Park could not be accomplished. Friends of Muraviovka Park is taking this opportunity to thank all of those who have donated money, expertise, time, and energy.

Financial grants are an integral part of this support, and recognition goes to the International Wild Waterfowl Association, Trust for Mutual Understanding, The Henry Luce Foundation, Wagner Foundation, Wallace Genetic Foundation, Woodland Park Zoo, and Amur Region Administration for continuing to believe in Muraviovka Park for Sustainable Land Use.

Open World from page 1

The program activities included some of the best of what Wisconsin has to offer, including visits to natural areas, research, medical, and educational facilities, as well as participation in political, cultural, and social events. The delegates' only regret was that they could not stay for at least four more days!

Shortly after the group's arrival in Madison, they toured a unique wilderness area in Wisconsin's capital city - the University of Wisconsin Arboretum and Museum, where they learned about Aldo Leopold and the development of his environmental philosophy and land ethic. They also enjoyed the murals of Victor Bakhtin (Russian wildlife artist from Krasnoyarsk, now living in Wisconsin) and walked in the prairie, wetland, savanna, and forest communities, comparing naturally-preserved ecosystems with the ones restored 50, 30, and 5 years ago. They were very impressed with this living laboratory in the middle of a busy city.

On Sunday, Visitor Program Coordinator Korie Klink led a tour of ICF's facilities. The group observed all 15 species of cranes, as well as restored prairie, savanna, and wetland communities, and learned about ICF's programs in Wisconsin, North America, and around the world. A luncheon reception in ICF's library allowed the group to meet ICF staff and local members of FOMP. Then they participated in an open round-table session of the FOMP Board of Directors. ICF Outreach Coordinator Joan Garland gave a keynote presentation about the diverse partnership working toward Whooping Crane recovery.

Later in the week, the delegates participated in field day classes at the River Crossing Charter School, near Portage, and learned about its innovative approach to environmental education. Sixth and seventh grade students often work and learn at the same time, constructing and maintaining the trails while recording observations as naturalists and explorers. Teachers



Open World visitors (from left) Tatyana Kholkina, Oksana Torina, Marina Nerobelova, Marina Savosko, and Oleg Kaminski celebrate their visit to the International Crane Foundation with an artistic cake depicting Wisconsin and its wildlife.

are assisted by enthusiastic volunteers and parents. This experience demonstrated how a community can vote for creation of an alternative school and then help it not just educate students, but also teach them work ethics, communication skills, and positive leadership. The highlight of this visit was spotting five Whooping Cranes flying over the entire group-- a living demonstration of the success of the recovery program!

Outings to the West Salem Outdoor Education Center and Hixon Forest Nature Center demonstrated other low-cost, highly-efficient ways to expose students to wilderness areas with hands-on outdoor classes. These tours were supplemented by visits to the Madison and Baraboo campuses of the University of Wisconsin, and the Baraboo public schools. The guests also learned about cooperation between government, public, and school programs with a trip to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in La Crosse.

A trek to the humble Leopold 'Shack' near the Wisconsin River contrasted with a tour of the magnificent state Capitol, where Rep. Marlin Schneider provided an introduction to Wisconsin government and politics. The highlight of this visit was being invited into the caucus room where senators were debating a bill that

would require Wisconsin residents to show photo identification at the polls. The lawmakers were very amused to learn that Russian voters must present *internal* passports to be allowed to cast their ballots!

A very important aspect of this experience for the Russian delegation was exposure to American culture, including stays with American host families Karen Mesmer & Dave Pfaff, Geraldine, Wayne, & Paul Wolter, Carol Mattei, Barbara & Jeff Thompson, and Francine & Bruce Jones. This genuine hospitality and friendship extended to the wider community, where the guests were able to sample area churches, music, state parks, conversation, and even a performance of "Oliver!" at the historic Al. Ringling Theatre. They were especially impressed by an early-morning meeting of the Baraboo Optimist Club and the determination of Americans to make a positive difference in their community, especially for children.

The outstanding success of this experience, for everyone involved, could only have been accomplished because of the people who gave of their time and energies. Thank you to the organizers, host families, tour guides, those who patiently explained their specific roles, and to everyone who extended their friendship and good will.

As seen from a distance...

December 28, 2005

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to everyone.

There is a test, which I sometimes do with those of my students who say that everything in their life is bad. I ask them to count all black objects in a room. After a child counts them all, I blindfold him or her and ask, "Now tell me, how many objects of yellow, or red, or blue color are in the room?" Usually it is hard to remember. Then we discuss this test together--that in our life the same thing is happening: if one sets his mind to see only black, one will miss the beauty of our world, how many bright colors there are, as well as bright feelings.

I am very happy that I visited your country, found new friends and met with old friends. It doesn't matter that we are all of different ages--we are united by an optimistic attitude, love of children, and a desire to do something good for people.

Time has passed since I visited you and some things have been forgotten. But, something invisible and very important remains in me, something that keeps shining, warming up my soul. Thank you for your outstanding hospitality. To me, America is no longer just buildings and monuments. It is the people that I have met. I am grateful to my fate which brought me into your homes, filled with light and love. Homes with large numbers of family photos, with birds active at outdoor feeders, with beds carefully preserved from earlier times, with mantels covered in personal trinkets, and even with lazy cats that sometimes slept with me. It is amazing that, after crossing huge distances and a multitude of time zones, we can meet people who live, feel, think, and act according to the same principles that are dear to us. In essence, we are not so different and this is wonderful! At first I was like a sponge, absorbing impressions, and now I am giving them out to my students and friends.

It is well said: "big things are seen from a distance." I do not have enough words to communicate all my feelings, so I am purposely pouring my thoughts on paper, without editing. It is a little clumsy, but it is sincere. What have I remembered about America? - the Arboretum in Madison, Wisconsin, the host families, church services, and amazing children at a Portage, Wisconsin charter school (especially their outdoor class, where they greeted the sight of five endangered Whooping Cranes soaring over their heads, with sincere excitement).

From the bottom of my heart, I wish you only good things: good health and success, let peace and love live in your homes. Happiness cannot be perpetual, there are only separate rare moments. Therefore I wish that such moments happen more often in your lives.

With sincere respect,
Oleg Kaminski

Oleg, shown here during an ornithology class, is an environmental educator from Primoski Region, Far Eastern Russia. He was one of five participants in the Open World Program that visited Wisconsin from October 29 to November 6, 2005.

The above excerpts are from his thank-you letter to the families who hosted Oleg, Oksana, Tatyana, Marina, and Marina.



Year brings challenges, cooperation

By *Sergei Smirenski*

Despite obstacles posed by weather and finances, progress in 2005 allowed the Park to develop a more solid foundation to carry out its mission and primary goals, including enhancements of infrastructure, staffing, programs, and international cooperation.

Agriculture Program

The year 2005 was an extremely bad one for the farm at Muraviovka Park. The harvest was poor due to drought, and since the Park is a nonprofit organization, it was not eligible for government assistance, like commercial farms. This was the third year of weather-related crop losses and has led to a crisis in the agricultural program. At the Muraviovka Park Board meeting in August, it was decided to establish an independent agricultural joint stock company, called Rostok. I traveled to the Park to carry out this decision, but unfortunately, the situation has proven more complicated than we had hoped.

Sergei Shalagin, agronomist and farm manager, has resigned his position at the Park. His team of farm workers have also resigned. Sergei's equipment is no longer available for the Park's activities and alternatives will need to be developed to address the issues of farm staff and equipment. The good news is that crop land had been prepared in the fall of 2005 for spring planting in 2006. The infrastructure of grain storage buildings, wood shop with solar kiln, maintenance garage, and the new electrical power line are in place and operational.

According to a new Russian law promulgated in 2004, all land in the country must be re-registered in order to develop a complete land survey and all deeds must be re-recorded. Park staff is actively working at being compliant. N.A. Bezborodov, who is in charge of land re-registration for Tambovka

District, promised to provide complete lease documents for the Park, including additional acreage which we are interested in leasing for a prairie and wetland restoration project. Bezborodov also reminded me that any land leased for agricultural purposes must be kept under cultivation.

Staffing Changes

Marina Kolodina was officially registered with the authorities as assistant director of the Park with full signatory powers. She also obtained her driver's license, which has resulted in much greater flexibility for conducting Park business. Svetlana Andreeva joined the staff as bookkeeper, caretaker, and computer program specialist, and Nina Lukyanova was hired as chief bookkeeper. Marina and Svetlana are living at the Park this winter and caring for the birds in the Park's new captive breeding program, in addition to their other responsibilities. A full-time Park guard has been hired for security.

Government Support

In 2005, the District Administration paid the Park all that

it had promised for 2004, but it was unable to provide any financial support for 2005, due to large budget deficits. As a result, the students who took part in the summer program had to pay full fare, and the Park had to cover the costs of completing the demonstration bird facility and the renovations to Park buildings. Nonetheless, the three officials with whom I met (the deputy governor of the Amur Region, the assistant director of the Amur Regional Department on Education, and the head of the Committee on Nature Protection and Agriculture) expressed their appreciation for the work of the Park. They promised to continue support for the Park's environmental education and conservation programs.

Effects of the Wildfire

The combination of prolonged severe drought, lack of snow cover, and very strong winds led to an unusually damaging wildfire season in the fall of 2005. Flames easily jumped across 20-meter roads that have served as firebreaks in the past. They destroyed dry grasses in the wetland area, burned a large



Jim Mallman and Robert Hernbrode of Watchable Wildlife, Inc. discuss the design of an observation platform during the tourism seminar in May

portion of the woodlands, and for the first time in 20 years, reached outside the wetlands and scorched the upland terrace area. As a result, many trees were killed, including a large number of those in the Park's nursery, where we have been planting trees over the last ten years. The fire completely destroyed one of the summer camp cabins and 20 large rolls of hay.

Teams of firefighters from Tambovka and residents of Kuropatino and Muraviovka villages played a major role in fighting these fires. A few islands of dried grasses in the wetlands survived, which gives us hope that some cranes may be able to build nests at the Park this summer.

Wild Bird Status

Last year, four pairs of Red-crowned Cranes, nine pairs of White-naped Cranes, and twelve pairs of Oriental White Storks bred inside and near the border of the Park. Unfortunately, at least three stork nests and their eggs were destroyed by poachers, and one mature stork died after colliding with a power line.

Swan Geese (*Anser cygnoides*), with a rapidly declining population of fewer than 50,000, breed in the border areas between Russia, Mongolia, and China. Uncontrolled hunting and the loss of wetland habitat continue to threaten this species, and have prompted Muraviovka Park to initiate an aggressive education program in the hopes of returning these birds to the area.

A children's contest entitled "Geese-Swans," organized in cooperation with the Amur Region Administration and Committee on Education, will spearhead our new efforts to develop public awareness of waterfowl protection. In addition, the Livingston Ripley Waterfowl Sanctuary (Litchfield, CT) has offered to support genetic studies of Swan Geese captured in Mongolia and the Amur River basin, now living at the Moscow Zoo. As additional funding becomes available, we hope to expand these research and education programs, and develop the ability for reintroductions.

Meanwhile, the mainland population of Red-crowned Cranes hovers at 1,200 to 1,400, with grass fires a continuing cause of chick mortality. An August meeting with Vladimir Andronov (assistant director of the Far Eastern office of the Russian Environmental Agency) and Rimma Andronova (director of the

Center for the Reintroduction of Rare and Endangered Species at the Khinganski Zapovednik), resulted in a conservation plan the cranes and the Park's population of white storks, which also suffer when nesting trees are damaged by fires.

Pending available funding, the Park intends to rescue abandoned chicks and eggs and hold them in an incubator or brooder until they can be transferred to the Khinganski reserve. At maturity, the cranes and storks would be released into the wild, in an effort to improve breeding success and sustain the genetic diversity of wild populations.

Tourism

With financial support from the Amur government, Woodland Park Zoo (Seattle, WA), International Wild Waterfowl Association, and FOMP, the Park completed the interior construction of demonstration pens. Shortly thereafter, Moscow Zoo donated a pair of Swan Geese, along with a female Red-crowned Crane and two young female Mandarin ducks. Later, a male Red-crowned was brought from the Khinganski Reserve.

The arrival of these captive birds generated considerable attention from regional and national television stations. Consequently,



Rabbit contemplates a trip skyward in Tanyana Ozerskaya's illustration from "Rabbit on the Moon," one of the stories included in new book Zhuravushka.

growing numbers of people are coming to the Park to see them. In September alone, they attracted over 500 visitors, providing an opportunity to teach the public about the critical status of these species, both through guided tours and with posters in both Russian and English mounted on the fences of the pens.

The growing popularity of Muraviovka Park for tourism prompted a May seminar which attracted specialists from universities, tour companies, indigenous people, and those from as far away as St. Petersburg and Yakutia. Jim Mallman and Robert Hernbrode of Watchable Wildlife, Inc. presented valuable information on the relationship between nature tourism, neighboring communities, economics, education, and wildlife protection.

Over the course of just three days, the general attitude of the group shifted from skepticism to enthusiasm, with one day devoted to the planning of trails, blinds, and visitor amenities. A trail route selected by seminar participants has already been leveled, with a boardwalk and observation platform planned for 2006.

During the seminar, some participants stayed in the village of

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Muraviovka as part of the Park's homestay program. This allowed us to host more people, gave a new source of revenue to villagers, and allowed visitors a better opportunity to meet and interact with local people.

Education

Aldo Leopold's environmental philosophy has always played a key role in the Park's mission and practices. This year our programs paid special tribute to the author of *A Sand County Almanac*. Participation by Leopold biographer Curt Meine and other instructors familiar with Leopold allowed all schools and seminars to focus on the "Land Ethic," and readings from the *Almanac* in English and Russian inspired outdoor activities by the students.

As always, summer programs gave educators from across far-eastern Russia a chance to share outdoor teaching methods,



Maria Skripnikova and assistants collect soil samples at the Park in 2005.

research, and nature conservation. The Russian-Chinese-American camp was devoted to the depiction of nature through art, with the intent of involving a totally new group in environmental issues--gifted art students and their teachers. Many participated in the children's art contest, "Save the Wildlife for Yourself and Others," which was supported by a grant from the Woodland Park Zoo. A second Russian-Chinese-American workshop was conducted in Inner Mongolia with support from the Trust for Mutual Understanding and the Henry Luce Foundation.

Children's Book Publication

Thanks to wonderful illustrations donated by Tanyana Ozerskaya, photos of the Eurasian Crane by I. V. Bartashov, and hard editorial work by Elena Zubakina and Nikita Vronski, the Park was able to complete its preparation of a second children's book on cranes and wetlands. This collection of stories, titled *Zhuravushka*, has been submitted to a publisher.

Soil Research

Over 70 soil samples collected at the Park last fall by Moscow scientist Maria Skripnikova continue to be analyzed in a laboratory. Already, the samples have yielded important insights into the climatic and vegetative history of the Muraviovka region, including episodes of quite arid conditions. Pollen deposited in the soil offers a description of the plant communities found in the area prior to human disturbance, and may be able to guide restoration efforts on some of these lands. Maria has already shared some of her results with colleagues at an

international conference and soil types from the Park will be entered into Russia's new *Red Data Book on Soils*.

Meetings in Taiwan/Korea

At a November conference on water birds in Tainan, Taiwan, I had the chance to learn more about Asian Bird Flu. Information was presented on the way it spreads and the measures being taken to deal with it. I spoke about the status of cranes and other long legged wading birds in the Amur Basin, and some conference participants expressed an interest in visiting the Park and learning more about its programs.

At the suggestion of George Archibald, I met with Professor Jae Chun Choe of Seoul University, as well as Sunyoung Park, Kyung Won Kim, and Jeong Jinyoung--three members of the Korean Federation for Environmental Movement (KFEM). I gave two lectures at the University and visited the estuary of the Khan River and several parts of the Chorvon River Basin, where the Sukhonosi Goose and the Dauriski and Ussuriski cranes spend their winters.

We discussed cooperative efforts in the study of migratory birds, environmental education, and ways to interest the public of both Russia and Korea about rare birds and their habitats. Members of KFEM expressed an interest in participating in the children's art festival "The Crane, Bird of Peace," as well as the summer camp, the crane festival, and the crane preservation program. The school teachers from Seoul who had participated in the summer camp of 2002 joined FOMP and paid--in advance--their dues for three years.

Sadly, in 2005, we lost one of the Park's most dear friends when a heart attack took away Kim Sooil, who initiated a project on restoration of the Oriental White Stork on the Korean peninsula. Coincidentally, the cabin which burned last summer had been dedicated to Dr. Sooil, and the KFEM delegation said they would like to fund its reconstruction.

Dr. Sergei Smirenski is the director of Muraviovka Park.

A survivor and visionary

By George Danner

The bear kept coming closer. The only defense the young naturalist had was his dog, who barked and growled continuously. The bear, however, did not take notice of the dog and moved aggressively toward his intended victim. As the man stepped backward in retreat, the ground suddenly disappeared underfoot and he was falling. Upon awakening, some time later, the bear was gone and his dog was waiting patiently. But everything was not okay. A sharp pain in his side was evidence of broken ribs and his head throbbed from hitting the ground. Completely isolated from help, this man who studied the survival and life of birds in far eastern Russia found an abandoned cabin, performed basic first aid, and proceeded to set up housekeeping, until he was well enough to travel.

Sergei Smirenski ensured his own survival in a situation that could have turned out differently.

As his career developed, Dr. Sergei Smirenski (ornithologist and researcher at Moscow State University) continued to sojourn in the Russian Far East studying different species of birds. He realized that loss of habitat, poaching, and the indifference of

local residents contributed to the decline of indigenous ecosystems. This degradation of the environment could best be studied and reversed by working with local indicator species.

One of Sergei's study areas was a critical habitat for six species of cranes, located near the village of Muraviovka, in the Arguzikha-Giltchin rivers watershed of the Amur Basin. He began to envision the preservation of a large wetland area in concert with education of the local population in environmental and agricultural practices. He theorized that by improving the quality and sustainability of life for people and cranes, all the species in the area would benefit. In 1994, working with Tambovka District officials, the International Crane Foundation, the International Socio-Ecological Union and the Wild Bird Society of Japan, Dr. Smirenski was able to sign a 50-year land lease and begin developing Muraviovka Park for Sustainable Land Use.

A grassroots organization, Muraviovka Park represents a feat of persistence and dedication, with the



Sergei and Elena Smirenski survey the skies over Muraviovka Park.

help and support of many people throughout the world. The Park's programs have evolved into many areas:

- Wildlife research and management: planting of lure crops; developing nest sites for endangered Oriental White Storks; cataloging local soils, flora and fauna; conducting scientific studies of endangered species; rehabilitating threatened populations; and more.

- Wildfire suppression: training local volunteers in prescribed burning; providing fire fighting equipment; and educating the local community on the impact fire has for nesting birds and their habitat.

- Education: facilitating environmental summer camps and international art contests for children; building bridges of understanding between cultures; conducting bird watching tours; demonstrating the use of solar energy for electricity; and more.

- Reforestation of indigenous tree species: creating wind breaks for erosion control; and rehabilitating cut over areas.

- Demonstrating sustainable agriculture practices: growing test plots of appropriate crop varieties; providing a source of seed for other farmers; and more.

- Woodworking: training in carpentry skills and the efficient use of sustainably-harvested logs; and demonstrating the advantages of solar wood-drying kilns.

Congratulations Sergei !

Friends of Muraviovka Park is very pleased to announce that in December, 2005, Bruno H. Schubert and the Board of Trustees for the Bruno H. Schubert Foundation in Frankfurt, Germany, unanimously agreed to award Dr. Sergei Smirenski the 2006 prize in Category 2. Winners in this Category are "persons who furnished outstanding individual performances in the area of the preservation of nature and environment." This is a monetary award and "a tribute to Sergei's remarkable achievements, as well as, motivation for his future activities." Previous recipients of this award include Jacques Cousteau and Edward O. Wilson.

The award ceremony will take place on Thursday, June 29, 2006 at 5:00 p.m. in the *Kaisersaal* of the Frankfurt *Romer* (City Hall). An invitation is extended to Dr. Smirenski by the Lord Mayor of Frankfurt, Ms. Petra Roth, for participation in the award ceremony and then a festive dinner to take place in the *Ratskeller* of the *Romer*.



Help feed FOMP with a gift to Adopt-A-Nest!

Even if you can't travel to Russia, participate in a summer camp, or host an exchange student, you can still play a vital role in the success of Muraviovka Park through the **Adopt-a-Nest Program**.

Sponsored by **Friends of Muraviovka Park**, Adopt-A-Nest is a great way to help maintain nesting sites for two species of endangered cranes, the Red-crowned and the White-naped. In addition, this effort to maintain the wetlands in Muraviovka provides nest sites for the Oriental White Stork and a temporary resting place for thousands of migrating birds from other parts of the world.

Those who adopt a nest site (or receive it as a gift) will be acknowledged with a certificate, a photo of a crane, and a book entitled *Cranes, Cranes, Cranes*. This package comes complete with postcards from the Park and a one-year membership in the **Friends of Muraviovka Park**.

It is a great deal for a minimum "adoption fee" of \$50! Why not think of someone on your gift list who would enjoy this unique opportunity? It's also a popular choice for school classes or other groups, and one which benefits the environment, as well.

To request an adoption brochure please contact Elena Smirenski at elena@savingscranes.org or Carolyn Parrott at parroo@gmail.com.

Miasnaia Solianka

(Meat Slyanka)

from the kitchen of Elena Smirenski

Ingredients:

6 cups of beef stock, fresh or canned
 3/4 pound of beef, preferably round steak, cut into cubes
 1/2 pound of boneless shoulder of veal, trimmed of fat and cut into 1/2-inch cubes
 4 tablespoons of butter
 2 cups of thinly sliced onions
 2 medium cucumbers, peeled, halved, seeded and cut into 1/4-inch slices
 2 large tomatoes, peeled, seeded and coarsely chopped
 1 teaspoon of salt
 freshly ground black pepper
 3 beef frankfurters, sliced into 1/2 inch rounds
 12 black, pitted, olives
 1 lemon, thinly sliced
 6 ounces of boiled ham, sliced into 1/ 2-inch rounds

In a heavy, four- to six-quart casserole, combine the beef stock, beef and veal. Bring to a boil over high heat, skimming the top of the foam and scum as they rise to the surface. Then partially cover the casserole, reduce the heat to moderate and simmer for about 1-1/2 hours, or until the meat is tender enough to be easily pierced with a fork.

Meanwhile, melt 4 tablespoon of butter in a heavy 10- to 12-inch skillet over high heat. Add the onions, reduce the heat to moderate, and cook 3 to 5 minutes, or until the onions are soft, but not brown. Drop in the cucumbers and cook, stirring occasionally, for about 10 minutes, or until they are tender, but still slightly firm. Then stir in the chopped tomatoes and cook an additional 10 minutes. Season with salt and few grindings of black pepper, and transfer the contents of the skillet to the casserole.

Add the ham and frankfurters and simmer 5 minutes, or until the meats are heated through.

Drop the olives into a saucepan of boiling water and boil briskly for 2 minutes. Drain and add them to the soup. Taste for seasoning, pour into a large heated tureen, and float the lemon slices on top. Serve at once.

Visit Muraviovka Park ...virtually!

Like Muraviovka Park itself, the Friends of Muraviovka Park website, <http://zhuravl.freeshell.org>, continues to mature and develop. You can keep up-to-date with the latest Park activities, see color images of visitors and wildlife, and even view back issues of *Zhuravl*. The site may also be accessed at <http://muraviovkapark.org>.

To learn about the International Crane Foundation or view FOMP clothing for sale visit www.savingcranes.org or <http://russia.savingcranes.org>

2006 Board of Directors Election

Annual Meeting set for March 26

The Friends of Muraviovka Park annual meeting will take place on Sunday, March 26 at 1:00 p.m. in the library of the International Crane Foundation, located between Baraboo and Lake Delton, Wisconsin, about 2 miles east of Highway 12, on Shady Lane Road.

In addition to conducting its regular business, FOMP will welcome a presentation by **Sara Gavney Moore**, program assistant for ICF's Field Ecology Department. Moore, who joined ICF in 1999, will discuss the international camps and community education programs developed between Russia and China, as well as the impact of these projects on ICF's broader education efforts in China.

The meeting also signals the time to vote for members of the FOMP Board of Directors.

Members may use the ballot at the bottom of this page and either bring it to the annual meeting or return by March 26, 2005 to: Friends of Muraviovka Park, International Crane Foundation, P.O. Box 447, Baraboo, WI 53913.

According to the Bylaws, board members are to be elected every three years. The candidates listed below have agreed to be on the ballot. Additionally, any person wishing to be on the Board can be a write-in candidate. Candidates receiving the most votes will be elected as members of the Board of Directors.

Francine Jones is a retired elementary school teacher. In 2002, she traveled to Muraviovka Park as a member of the volunteer teaching team. It was this group that conducted the first International Languages Summer School. Francine says, "I loved working with middle and high school children. This generation is the future of Russia. The Russian students and teachers were so eager to learn, it made the experience very rewarding." Francine joined the FOMP Board of Directors in July, 2003 and a year later accepted the office of treasurer. She wants to continue her involvement with the Board, because the Friends of Muraviovka Park are such a great support group for Park activities. Francine believes that the summer camps are vital in offering environmental education to the children as well as promoting appreciation for the natural beauty found at the Park.

Kennedy Gilchrist continues to be very active with the Friends of Muraviovka Park Board of Directors. He volunteers to represent the Park at functions in Madison, Wisconsin and at ICF. His insight and observations are extremely important in the decisions and discussions that come before the Board. Kennedy wishes to extend his participation in the programs and educational activities of Muraviovka Park.

Barb Thompson has been involved with the Amur project since 1996, and helped found the Friends of Muraviovka Park, serving as its president since 1998. "The first year I went to Russia I understood what an important project this was," Barb recalls. "I want to continue to be involved with Muraviovka Park and its projects because of the positive impact it has had on the people and wildlife of the Russian Far East."

Friends of Muraviovka Park:

Membership Application and Board of Directors Ballot

Please vote for THREE of the following candidates:

Francine Jones Kennedy Gilchrist Barb Thompson Write in candidate: _____

Membership Renewal (Membership term January 1, 2006 – December 31, 2006):

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Email _____

Membership Levels:

- student (\$10)
- individual (\$15)
- family (\$25)
- school/youth group (\$50)
- organization/firm (\$100)
- contributing member (\$100)
- additional donation*

\$ _____ **total donation**

Donations are tax-deductible to the full extent of the law.

Please make checks payable to the International Crane Foundation and return to:

Friends of Muraviovka Park, International Crane Foundation, P.O. Box 447, Baraboo, WI 53913



**Friends of
Muraviovka Park**
An Affiliate of the
International Crane Foundation
P.O. Box 447
Baraboo, WI 53913

*Dedicated to
environmental protection,
educational programming,
ecological research, and
sustainable agricultural
development at
Muraviovka Park and
in the Amur River
watershed of the
Russian Far East.*

ZHURAVL IS EDITED BY GEORGE DANNER AND
TYPESET BY ROB NELSON.

Remember when...
by Vladimir Serebrennikov

*Remember when July, sprawling across
The gloomy valleys, gifted us with cranes...
And to this day I live with one desire:
To see once more that slim wedge cut the sky.
That shape will rouse me from my idleness,
And chase me over dales to seek new dawn.
So my true friends are those who hold with me
This flame throughout the variegated years.
Remember friends when fate inclines your life
Upon a block of evil and untruth;
Remember friends in summer months; preserve
Your friends, and let your friends preserve you too.
What wonder this! July, while sprawling over
The gloomy valleys gifted us with cranes.
My thanks to you, who live so everyone
Recalls always that wedge that cut the sky.*

Vladimir (Volodya) Serebrennikov wrote this poem at 15 years old, as a 10th-grade student of Oleg Kaminski. He participated in Muraviovka Park's Environmental Education Camp and was one of Oleg Kaminski's Ecology Club members. In addition to writing poetry, Volodya is a weight-lifting athlete. After winning an All-Russia Ecology Olympics and receiving a full scholarship to Moscow State University, Volodya respected his mother's request and is continuing his education closer to home, majoring in law as a sophomore at Far-Eastern University in Vladivostok.

Thanks to Lisa Woodson for the translation from Russian to English.