



ZHURAYL

A Newsletter of Friends of Muraviovka Park – February 2017

Activities and Results of Muraviovka Park in 2016

By Sergei and Elena Smirenski

It was another busy year, full of hopes, challenges, and joy. And it was a very good year at Muraviovka Park overall, in spite of unexpected senior staff shortages, which created heavy pressure on the remaining staff. For a while we put on hold some regular activities, and fortunately it helped bring the situation at the park back to normal. Our joint research team established baseline to monitor lakes at the park. For the first time fire breaks were developed by firefighters from the Ministry of Forestry and Fire Safety under supervision of Ministry of Emergency that helped to protect wetlands from fires.

Research

The goal of our water and bird studies is to create an ongoing monitoring program of birds and environmental conditions of our lakes and wetlands. Information gathered through this program allows us to fine-tune Muraviovka Park's wetland management—such as fire prevention and suppression

activities—and identify actions needed to minimize the impact of external pollution sources.

Water studies. In 2016, thanks to support from Stiftung Feuchtgebiete and Frankfurt Zoo Society, Moscow State and Far-eastern Agriculture Universities, Biology-Soil Institute Far-eastern branch Russian Academy of Science, Vladivostok and Institute for Advanced Teachers' Education of the Amur Region, we were able to conduct a first (in the history of MP) interdisciplinary research of lakes using the exact same stations collaboratively and simultaneously by experts in different fields. All water samples were processed to identify the same set of parameters (temperature, oxygen content, coloration, transparency, and pH). For the first time in the Amur Region, we obtained data on

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impact of pollutants on animals that feed on aquatic plants.

Boris Belyaev, hydrology student from Moscow State University developed descriptions of hydrological traits of 11 lakes, including elevation above sea level, length, width, area, depths (Fig. 1), bottom relief, water temperature, oxygen and light regimes, water mineralization, patterns of vertical stratification along the gradient of parameters listed above, as well as pH and oxidation/reduction potential.

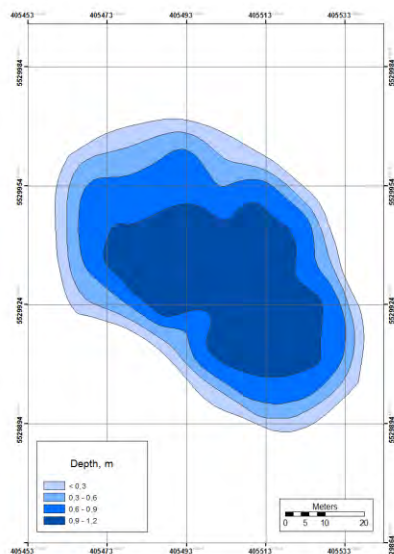


Fig 1. Map of depths of one of the 11 studied lakes (by Boris Belyaev)

Hydrochemists Prof. Antonina Pakusina and Dr. Tatyana Platonova collected water samples from 18 lakes. The predominant biogenic component in water is nitrogen in the form of ammonia.

Lakes Kamyshovoye and Golianistoye are located close to cropfields and can be classified as polluted, while water in lakes Peschanoye and Goossinoye is pure. Orthophosphates come into the lakes with surface runoffs.

We found that water in all studied park's lakes is of relatively good quality and can be classified as pure or slightly polluted. Influx of considerable volumes of solvents and mechanical particles can be explained mostly by the impact of annual grassfires that destroy wetland vegetation across huge areas. This vegetation catches the bulk of the surface runoffs. This is why our fire prevention program is so very important for water quality. In Lake Kamyshovoye, which in the past was one of the most popular sites of waterfowl hunting, we found higher concentration of lead (perhaps due to abundance of lead shot in its bottom sediments).

Preliminary data had confirmed the crucial role of the park's wetlands as natural water filters and as critically important habitats for endangered species (see E. Krasnova, p. 9). Joint work gave participants unique opportunities to share knowledge, experience, and methods of field studies (Fig. 2).



Fig. 2. Joint work on the shores of Lake Krivoye. From left to right: Elena Krasnova, Tatiana Platonova, Antonina Pakusina (and yes - Tatiana and Antonina are identical twins!) Photo S. Smirenski

Plants. Over 600 species of plants have been documented in MP during the last 15 years. In 2016 during the two weeks of field surveys of lakes and adjacent wetlands, our long-term partner Galina Darman, a plant biologist with the Amur Botanical Gardens in Blagoveshchensk, studied 18 lakes and found over 30 species new for the park, including one species new for the Amur Region. She also developed a list of plant species for each surveyed lake (Fig. 3). And after years of unsuccessful attempts we lived to see the first plantation of more than hundred Lotus (*Nelumbo nucifera*) and the very first flower (Fig. 4)!



Fig. 3. Our long-term partner, a plant biologist Galina Darman. Photo S. Smirenski



Fig. 4. The first successful plantation of more than hundred Lotus (*Nelumbo nucifera*).
Photo S. Smirenski

Birds. Vasiliy Dugintsov and Igor Ishchenko from Blagoveshchensk continued year-round surveys of birds and for the first time spotted a family of Tundra Swan at the park (Fig. 5); a visiting team of ornithologists from Europe led by Wieland Heim, working at the park in 2016 for the sixth season in a row, captured and banded over 2,500 birds (see page 12). For the first time in the park, the team captured, banded, and measured four Swinhoe's Rails (*Porzana exquisita*) (See page 17). They documented



Fig. 5. A family of Tundra Swan at MP. Photo Vasiliy Dugintsov

first sightings of the Citrine Wagtail (*Motacilla citreola*), Broad-billed Sandpiper (*Calidris falcinellus*), and the Rufous-bellied Woodpecker (*Dendrocopos hyperythrus*); and they recorded the call of an Asian Paradise Flycatcher (*Terpsiphone paradisi*). In 2016, in collaboration with ornithologists Dr. Nikolai Formozov (Moscow State University) and Lina Kapitonova (Institute of Complex Analysis of Regional Problems in Birobikan, Jewish Autonomous Region of Russia), in late June – early July 2016, they studied relationships between the Thick-billed Warbler and Common Cuckoo at Muraviovka Park.

In December the first book with results of our Giltchin River Watershed studies was published in Vladivostok (Fig. 6).



Fig. 6. The book "Giltchin River Watershed: History. Wetlands. Water Resources" published in 2016 with support from Columbus Zoo (Ohio, USA)

Poisoning

One problem, which is quite common, is that man often looks at and is concerned only about his goals and ignores the environment and other people's interests and hard work. To cut expenses and have better crop production last year, farms in the Amur Region began using herbicides not only during the growing season, but also before the harvest. In August "Amur" Co. spread defoliants from ultralight aircraft above the park's fields and of course damaged one km long stretch of pines acting as a wind break line (Fig. 7). Twenty years of volunteer and staff work to plant, water, weed the trees could be thrown away.



Fig 7. Young pine damaged by defoliants. Photo S. Smirenski

Poaching

There was less shooting during spring and fall migration of waterfowls compared to past years. Unfortunately, some shots happened in the middle of a wetland near a roosting site and caused panic among

cranes. During the last five years, migratory cranes have become more alert: they stop feeding and fly away as soon as passing by vehicles slow down below 60 km/hour. Families that breed in the safety of the park are not that shy. We fear the main reason of this behavior is that in Yakutia and the Amur Region poachers began to shoot cranes. One Hooded Crane was shot in the fall at the border between Tambovka and Konstantinovka Districts. Shooting of Roe Deer around and inside the park is still common, and we did not see any improvement in 2016 (Fig. 8).



Fig. 8. Remnants of Roe Deer shot by poachers are scattered around the park. Photo S. Smirenski

Fire prevention

Fires are the main factor limiting breeding success for a variety of birds. Spring fires make useless critically important staging areas for migratory birds. For years, in spite of all efforts, we lost more than we were able to save. Since early years, the park has lobbied for prescribed burns and

organized two training schools that confirmed this most efficient and safe approach in fire prevention. But in spite of good results, the park rarely received permissions to conduct prescribed burns. In 2016, however, there were cardinal changes in governmental policy. In April, for the first time in the park's history, the Ministry of Forestry and Fire Safety and Ministry of Emergency, at their expense, sent a team of 30 professional firefighters who conducted a 60 to 100-meter-wide controlled burn along 9 km of the park's southern border. In fall 2016, a team of 30 firefighters worked for three days and created a firebreak 30 km long and 70 meters wide (Fig. 9 & 10).



Fig. 9. Muraviovka Park staff and firefighters discuss plans and techniques for prescribed burns



Fig. 10. Creating a firebreak. Photos V. Dugintsov

As a result, the southern part of the park was not touched by fire in spring and no fire could spread inside MP in the fall. **For us, the cranes, and many other inhabitants of the park this is the main event of the year.** We are very grateful to all governmental agencies and participants of the action, who made such an important investment in developing a safe environment for endangered birds. We hope this practice will become annual event.

Lure crop and feeders

Through winter 2015/2016 and winter 2016/2017, Vasilii Dugintsov and Anatoly Isaev came regularly to the park to refill bird feeders and spread food along the terrace – sunflower and small grain seeds that were donated by citizens of Blagoveshchensk. In spring we prepared and planted 35 hectares of lure corn field to provide a critical food source for wildlife, especially during winter and spring. Corn seeds were donated by local agricultural producer, Baikal Ltd. A half-acre sunflower field was developed near the Park headquarters (Fig. 11) and supported hundreds of pheasants and song birds through a big part of winter.



Fig. 11. A sunflower field near headquarters. Photo S. Smirenski

In the fall during each day of surveys in the park, we sighted over 1500 cranes multiple times. Probably over 2500 Hooded Cranes make stopover here annually during the fall migration. So the park and its neighborhood are extremely important for this and other species (Fig. 12).



Fig. 12. Over two thousands of Hooded Cranes make stopover at MP every fall. Photo Vadim Ivushkin

Unfortunately, many local people including officials still believe cranes are too common to be concerned about them. Now, when the first part of Igor and Svetlana Ishchenko's film (Spring & Summer) was posted on YouTube

(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JFjKL3WBENs>), we hope the film will raise understanding and awareness about the importance of the park for migratory species.

Captive birds

In spite of quite good conditions of wetlands, only two Red-crowned Crane pairs bred at the park last year. It reflects a worsening situation with the western flock of the declining mainland population. In 2016, a number of our actions should have led to a reduction of the negative impact of fires. We plan to begin releasing into the wild the young birds raised in the Park's pens by parents, to support the wild population in the park.

In January we moved young Red-crowned Cranes to a separate pen and vaccinated all captive birds. In early February we made a screen from reeds (Fig. 13) and set it in the pen to create some privacy for our nesting Red-crowned Cranes.



Fig. 13. Collecting reeds for the nest site. Photo S. Smirenski

The pair successfully raised two chicks that by the fall overgrew their mother. A pair of our Graylag Geese and, for the first time, the pair of Swan Geese successfully raised goslings. So in late summer we had heavy-packed pens with new birds as well as birds hatched in 2015. There is not space enough for all birds in our winter facilities. With the plan provide more support to vanishing populations, we decided to focus on two species, ship other birds to other places, and extend our pens. Thanks to Vadim Ivushkin, we shipped one-year-old Red-crowned Cranes and Graylag Geese to the Zoo gallery in Irkutsk, and a pair of Mandarin Ducks to Khekhtsirsky State Nature Reserve. We also began construction of new winter facilities for cranes, and hope to see two new chicks in summer 2017!

Reforestation

In 2016, the Amur Region government donated 6,000 pine tree seedlings. More than 300 volunteers, including the Amur Region Governor and the Minister of Forestry, planted them on the National Day of Forests in early May. In addition, over 150 tree and bush seedlings were planted by Friends of Muraviovka Park (see A. Trizhytsak, page 18).

Education

In winter and spring 2016, we trained the teacher team and developed the camp program, and The Erica P. John Fund provided support for international and domestic flights for the American team, but due to incomplete staff, we – for the first time in 23 years! – did not hold the traditional international summer camps. Our partners, language school “Tutor” in Khabarovsk, who annually brought their students to the Park, jumped in and successfully hosted the camp at campgrounds on the Amur River (see pp. 7, 11, 13 & 16). In the fall we organized an exchange visit of a teacher from Khabarovsk Region (p. 7) to Wisconsin.

In late June, Sergei Smirenski and Boris Belyaev, together with German ornithologists Wieland Heim and Ramona Fitz, traveled to the summer camp for orphans at Krasny Yar (we have partnered with this camp in the Amur Region for the last 15 years). For two days they led outdoor environmental education activities in Russian language for over 100 students ages 4-16 years. Wieland and Ramona Fitz demonstrated to older students how to capture, band, measure, and release

birds and explained why this work is so important. They also played a game with kids which they developed themselves specially for campers and visitors of the park. Even during so short a time, we were able to involve students of all ages in our activities. To do it, we trained older students. One of them was reading stories about cranes from books that were published by the park; several other students from the senior group performed as Crane, Rabbit, King and other characters from two fairy tales, *Rabbit on the Moon* and *How Crowned Cranes Got Their Crowns* (Fig. 14-15).



Fig 14. Activities at the summer camp for orphans



Fig. 15. Younger children were very much into plays and did not miss a word of narration or any movement of artists. Photos Sergei Smirenski

Infrastructure

Every year bit by bit we upgrade our living and working conditions. In 2016 we installed fire-resistant insulation and siding on the first floor and mansard walls on the HQ duplex, bringing the building into compliance with fire department regulations and making the building better insulated and more cost-efficient in winter time. In late September 2016, we hired Anastasia Fedichkina as the new Deputy Director for Administration and Finance. Anastasia is still learning the ropes but looks like a good addition to our staff. Prior to her employment with MP, Anastasia worked as a certified public accountant for several farming cooperatives in the Amur Region and in recent years as an Administrative Assistant to several members of the Amur Legislative Assembly.

We are very thankful to all who share our concern and make investments in protection of this special place. In 2017, we need your support to build a medical nurse's station, host children from low-income families in environmental camps, construct cabins to house researchers, develop lure corn fields, and complete the video film about birds.

Schools, Students, Teachers and Friends of Muraviovka Park in Wisconsin

By Yuliya Sukhovetchenko

Curriculum Director, Language School "Repetitor", Khabarovsk

Thanks to International Crane Foundation, Baraboo WI, the Erica P. John Foundation, Milwaukee, Muraviovka Park, many Friends of Muraviovka Park and of course to Elena and Sergei Smirenski, co-founders of Muraviovka Park, I took part in a teacher exchange program and visited Milwaukee, Wisconsin in November 2016.

It was an unforgettable and priceless journey. John and Sharon Hushek – teachers from Milwaukee and also friends of Muraviovka Park, hosted me in their family. I was given a unique opportunity to see American family traditions and daily life from the inside.

Furthermore, all the people I met, whether it was just a passer-by or a university professor, school staff and teachers or principal, and of course students with their genuine interest and sincere hospitality, really pulled my heart strings.

According to the program itinerary, during my stay I was to visit different schools

in Milwaukee where the teachers, who participated in summer camps in Muraviovka Park and - in 2016 - in Khabarovsk, work. Since 2009, students from my school have participated in eight language-environmental camps organized by the park. And as a director of this school, I find that the experience our students get while studying ecology with American teachers is hard to overestimate. This time I was fortunate to visit different schools and universities in Wisconsin and gain the invaluable experience of personal communication with American teachers and their students.

Every day we went to a different school, and every school was different. The first school I visited was the Blessed Sacrament School in Milwaukee where Katie Wenzell teaches children. Most of her students are Spanish-speaking and they come from immigrant families. In spite of the fact that Katie teaches math and science, she also helps her

students to deal with difficulties in English which is not their native language.

After the lessons on that day, all students were gathered in a hall where I made a presentation. The presentation was about our cooperation with Muraviovka Park in the Amur Region of Russia. This is the place where every year environmental summer camps with American teachers take place with the support of International Crane Foundation. In 2016 our school hosted the camp in Khabarovsk.

Needless to say, the very fact that we live very far from each other, almost “on the other side of the planet,” caused great interest among children. But as it turned out, long distance does not prevent us from having a lot in common. The nature and the weather in Wisconsin are very similar to the Far Eastern region in Russia.

Moreover, in the USA as in Russia there are a lot of species of animals and plants which are endangered. And cranes are

among them. We need to work together to preserve these beautiful birds and our unique planet. And of course American children were very interested to find out how Russian children live and study.

On the second day Jason Nickel gave me a tour of Mequon Nature Preserve. Jason is a teacher at this center and he told me about the work done at the center to restore local landscape and animal world to a 100 years ago state—before the land was given to farmers. Teachers have the opportunity to give outdoor ecology and biology lessons at this Nature Preserve. There are also a lot of animals, reptiles and fish kept at the center, and students can not only watch but take care of them as well. Moreover, you can examine a real hive in the glass case and see the queen bee if you are lucky enough. But what is most important is that Mequon Nature Preserve provides its visitors with an opportunity to help to conserve and restore flora and fauna of its territory and take part in a volunteer movement. The example of such a center in Russia is Muraviovka Park.

Personally, I think that reaction of people after they

have visited these centers is what matters most. I am happy to see how these visits raise children's awareness about threats to wildlife, how they decide to take personal responsibility for what is happening in the world, and how they begin to understand that everything in the nature is interrelated.

On my third day I visited Project STAY school in Milwaukee, and a school for teenagers from disadvantaged families where Meghan Wagner works. I delivered my presentation to four classes (more than 35 students) and here as well topics raised in my presentation aroused teenagers' interest and a lot of questions.

The next school was Greendale High School. I couldn't help feeling that I got into one of the American films: corridors with individual lockers, fountains with drinking water, children of different nationalities and skin tones. Katie Wipfli, a teacher with a constant warm smile on her face, told me that students were looking forward to meeting a teacher from Russia. So, on that day I made presentations in four classes with 30 children in each. I received countless questions about daily life in

Russia: food, drinks, clothes and computers. In the end, I was even asked to explain the Russian alphabet. The fifth day was spent at Ben Franklin Elementary School where the leader of the American teacher team, Sharon Hushek, works. In spite of the fact that children at this school are younger, the number of questions was even bigger. I was lucky to communicate with more than 60 students. Open-hearted and modest, curious and spontaneous, well-mannered and restless—children are so different... but also so similar...The children of the Earth.

I'd like to express my deepest gratitude to Olga and Vladimir Trubetskoy for their warm hospitality. I am grateful to Kurt Brownell for the opportunity to get acquainted with the life and work of Aldo Leopold and to see the place where he lived and worked. Thanks to Aldo Leopold, now we have the opportunity to admire these majestic cranes in the wild.



From the Sea to a Wetland

By Elena Krasnova

Senior Researcher, White Sea Biological Station of Moscow State University

I am a marine hydro biologist, but when I received an invitation to return to Muraviovka Park in 2016 I could not decline. Together with my two colleagues, I had already conducted studies of the Giltchin River and its wetlands five years ago. Even though this river could be crossed in certain places by a chicken, there was a lot to learn from it. And then there were cranes and other beautiful birds. So I answered without any hesitation – YES!

Muraviovka Park is a critically important site for endangered birds that depend on water. Due to dam construction, small lakes in the park are losing connection with the Amur River; the frequency of floods has sharply reduced, causing big changes in aquatic ecosystems. We need to know the current situation to have clear vision of what the future has in store for these wetlands that are so important both for birds and people.

To come up with a reliable forecast, our studies had to

cover as many types of wetlands as possible and include several different approaches -- hydrology, hydrochemistry, and hydrobiology. We are **very thankful to Prof. Natalia Frolova, Dean of the Department of Geography at Moscow State University**, who accepted our proposal and loaned us some very valuable modern equipment (a sonic depth finder for continuous mapping of the bottom relief; a conductivity meter to record water conductivity which reflects concentration of salts in the water; and a fast acting oximeter with probe tip to estimate concentration of dissolved oxygen in different water horizons). And – most important! – Natalia loaned us her best student Boris Belyaev who carried all this equipment and did excellent work with it.

I also was heavily loaded with equipment that I carried from my main work place at the White Sea Biological Station: a pump to take samples of water from different water horizons, meters of acidity and redox index (reduction and oxidation reaction of water),

a submersible lux meter to define underwater illumination, a bottom sampler for benthic (bottom) organisms, a microscope, a binocular, some lab glassware, and guides for species identification – all packed into two large and heavy suitcases. My object of studies was zooplankton; Tatyana Nikulina from Vladivostok agreed to study periphyton and phytoplankton; Olga Gerasimova, a retired oceanologist from Vladimir Region with huge experience in hydro-biological studies, joined us to study bottom dwellers; and hydrochemists Antonina Pakusina and Tatiana Platonova from Blagoveshchensk came to identify chemicals in water. During the first days at the park, the rain poured non-stop making the dirt roads impassable. For awhile, we could only take samples of water and conduct biometric surveys of 70 sample stations of vertical sensing in different parts of Lake Kapustikha, located by the park's headquarters. This lake, however, is definitely worth such close attention: during the last 30 years it has evolved from a favorite

among the locals for swimming with clear and deep water and a nice sandy beach and bottom into a muddy wetland overgrown with reeds.

All lakes in the park are shallow – only two of them in some places are deeper than 7 feet. We, however, discovered significant differences in oxygen distribution between parts of Lake Kapustikha that do not differ much by depth. We were puzzled by the fact that while at some stations oxygen content was declining from surface to bottom, in other stations it was higher near the bottom compared with upper layers of water! How can we explain this phenomenon?

With the help of lux meters, we discovered that because water in the deepest part of the lake has high clarity, the light reaches its bottom creating good conditions for the growth of filamentous algae which line the bottom and produce oxygen. At the same time, the bottom layer of water was much cooler than the upper layer, so it was capturing and accumulating the oxygen. In some places the water had 200% of oxygen saturation – a true oxygen cocktail!

Eventually the weather improved and we could pay attention to the other ten lakes. Now it rained only in the afternoons, which did not slow us down but rather sped up our work in mornings. We were actually thankful that the weather last summer was untypically cool – it made our field work much more comfortable! We would drive to lakes in the morning and then process collected samples long into the night.

Each of these ten lakes has its own character. We found that the higher above sea level – and consequently farther from the Amur River – a lake was located (and as a result was less frequently flooded by polluted Giltchin River water pushed by the Amur

River into the lakes), the higher was the water quality in the lake. I must state that the water quality in all Muraviovka Park lakes and wetlands is still very good. Several lakes, including our all-time favorite Kapustikha, are of the second class quality (pure water), while others are on the border between the third and second classes (very slightly polluted).

We are very grateful to Muraviovka Park leadership and to the German Wetland Foundation (Stiftung Feuchtgebiete) for supporting our studies in 2016, and hope to come back to Muraviovka Park in summer 2017 for more surprises and discoveries!



Fig. 16. From left to right: Antonina Pakusina, Boris Belyaev, and Elena Krasnova collect water samples in Lake Peschanoye. Photo S. Smirenski

Environmental summer school 2016

By Margarita Agulina

Senior teacher and Director of the Branch #1 School of Foreign Languages "Repetitor"

This summer school was unique in many ways. Firstly, despite the established tradition, it took place first time in the children's camp "Mir Detstva" ("The World of Childhood") not far from Khabarovsk.

Secondly, the shift lasted longer than the previous ones. The children spent 21 days in the camp. Ten days were devoted to the language and environmental school and the rest of the shift was filled with the life of the summer camp: sport, games, contests, disco, etc.

Thirdly, the number of participants, who got the opportunity to take part in the summer shift, was unprecedented for our school. According to the results of the test written in the beginning of March, thirty students aged 11-16 were selected. Due to this qualifying round, we managed to form three relatively equal teams of three different age groups. This allowed us to make the classes more vivid in terms of content as well as in terms of English language knowledge. We didn't waste time on translation and explanations in Russian.

We would especially like to underline the great work of

the invited teachers under the guidance of Sharon Hushek: Emily Wilmoth, Katherine Wenzell, Meghan Wagner, and Sam and Ian Hushek. They were energetic, talented and friendly. They "infected" the children with their enthusiasm. The teachers made a lot of them look at the world around us through the lenses of language, science, and game combined. Visiting the zoo, walks in the forest, board games, role-playing games, creative projects and team games... The list of the "tools" to make it easier to join the world of science is not full yet. The science stopped being just science, and it became closer and more understandable for the children. The teachers were so open and frank, so interested in the kids and benevolent that the borderline between the two countries and the two cultures vanished practically immediately. The children could not help feeling mutual sympathy and shared the teachers' desire to work, to communicate and to spend time together. Some extracurricular activities like sports or dance competitions united the teachers and the children as well. Our Russian "Katyusha" performed by our American guests sounded moving and sincere.

Of course, we can't help but mention the main participants of the camp. The summer school wouldn't have been if they hadn't been there. We're speaking about the children. They turned out to be extremely talented. They proved to be hard-working explorers and strong team players. They drew, danced and took part in different camp activities. They got some first prizes and even the Grand Prix. The children made a lot of new friends and became closer to each other.

Summing it up, we'd like to emphasize the impression of something light and bright which the camp left in our hearts. Tears in the eyes and on the cheeks, when we were saying goodbye to our American friends and later to each other, said more than millions of words. We wish this summer school were not the last one in the chain of happy moments connected with learning English. We would like to say big thank you to Muraviovka Park and the team of Wisconsin teachers who made this amazing event possible.

Scientific Work and Romantic Atmosphere

By Ramona Fitz

Master of Science in Ecology, Evolution and Nature Conservation, University of Potsdam, Germany

The season of 2016 started for some members of the team with a long, interesting and sometimes very exciting trip through Russia on the Trans-Siberian Railway. The team had started their work at bird banding station and in the field immediately upon arrival at Muraviovka Park. Because of the team members' diverse interests, in 2016 we carried out a plethora of projects.

Yellow-breasted Buntings were among the target species of our research, together with Siberian Rubythroats (*Luscinia calliope*) and Brown Shrikes (*Lanius cristatus*). Two Danish professors came to the park and equipped birds with data loggers. Hopefully many of these birds will return in 2017 and will help to shed light on their yet unknown migration routes.

With great perseverance and precision, Tom Wulf led the work at the station. Thanks to him, our team documented some uncommon species such as the Northern Hawk-cuckoo (*Hierococcyx hyperythrus*) and the Rufous-bellied Woodpecker (*Hypopicus hyperythrus*) – the latter for the first time in the Amur Region.

Apart from scientific work there were a lot of other things to be done. When Mikhail Barabanov was not busy capturing and banding birds or looking for magpie nests, he provided the rest of the team with fantastic cakes and built so needed shelves. I did some gardening in the greenhouse and on the open ground to add fresh vegetables to our meals.

All in all, there was a lot of work to be done – but we also had a lot of fun! Almost for every meal we had to play hide and seek, looking for Tom, who was hiding behind bushes and trees to record bird songs – together with Alex he recorded a broad range of the park's voices. We had a wonderful time in the park – we started the days with fabulous mornings, when the air was full of bird songs, and ended the days with colorful sunsets and a wide scenic view over the wetlands. Life in Muraviovka Park is not just filled with work, it is also very romantic!

Every year, fires strike big parts of the Amur Region with huge impact on the ecosystem. So this year we decided to look at the impact of fire on plants and birds. Wieland documented breeding birds in areas that were affected by fire and in those spared from it, and I looked at the composition and development of the vegetation in the same areas (Fig. 17). Our experts in small mammals, Anna Hannapel and Kolja Wolanska, took a deeper look at the occurrence of different hamster and mouse species and, of course, of the adorable chipmunks.

Arend Heim started the days early, when it was still dark and cold outside, to listen to voices and songs of different bird species. On his long trips into different corners of the park, he mapped breeding birds. In addition to all these projects, we had to keep the bird banding station going.

Fig. 17. Ramona Fitz in the field. Annually since 2011, volunteers from all over the world have been studying the wildlife of Muraviovka Park. Photo Wieland Heim

One of the main goals this year was to get information about the endangered Yellow-breasted Bunting (*Emberiza aureola*) breeding in Muraviovka Park. Wieland Heim equipped birds with data loggers to obtain data on the migratory route, while Alex Thomas studied the habitat structure and looked for nests to install temperature loggers. Since Yellow-breasted Buntings are clever birds, catching them and finding their hidden nests proved to be quite difficult and time-consuming.

2016 Summer Environmental Camp Reflections

By Katie Wenzell

Blessed Sacrament School, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, USA

In summer 2016, I got a unique opportunity to visit and teach in Russia. The students were great along with the people of Russia. While I was there, the American team and I went on a short tour of St. Petersburg and Moscow along with Khabarovsk. I learned so much about the history, people and the culture. I got to meet and see places I would not have gotten to see. The people were friendly and open to help us get to places we wanted to go. I really enjoyed having a host family because I believe if you do not stay with a person from another country you will never know how those other people really live.

At the camp I got to work with a terrific group of kids. We studied environmental science, and we also got to participate in Russian Day learning different games that we had never played before (Fig. 18). I got to learn some Russian and how school was run based on the similarities and differences with American schools.

We explored the forests and saw the endangered animals in a wonderful nature preserve. In the afternoon we played many card games and once -- a great game of volleyball. Some of the students tried to teach me how to play soccer (they call it football!).

competitions which they take very seriously. The dance director at the camp had to watch us perform and then say Yes or No if we qualify to be in the dance competition.

I found that they were very pro-exercise -- they were



Fig. 18. At the camp Katie got to work with a great group of kids and teachers. Team leader Sharon Hushek in the middle. Photo Katie Wenzell

While I was there I also participated in two dance

competitions which they take very seriously. The dance director at the camp had to watch us perform and then say Yes or No if we qualify to be in the dance competition. I found that they were very pro-exercise -- they were constantly getting these children to move and getting them very active. And I really loved the oxygen cocktails that they had to replenish their oxygen levels!

Our Own Rochelle

In the loving memory of Rochelle Robkin

By Sergei and Elena Smirenski



Among 200-some American teachers, who since 1994 have volunteered to lead annual environmental and language summer camps at Muraviovka Park, there are quite a few whom we like to call “our own.” Not only would they generously share their knowledge and experiences with the Russian school teachers and students

at the camp, but upon return to their homes in Wisconsin, New Jersey, Florida, or California they speak with delight and enthusiasm about the people and wildlife of the Amur Region and continue supporting the park in different ways.

Rochelle Robkin had always been on the top of this list.

It would be hard to find a long-time resident of the small Wisconsin town of Baraboo who would not know Rochelle Robkin. Thanks to Rochelle, who certainly did not waste her Ph.D. in creative arts, many generations of school students were able to absorb the meaning and the power of art and to master

the drawing and painting skills.

The scope of Rochelle's interests and activities was not limited by the school where she worked as a teacher.

A long time ago, in 1973, she joined the International Crane Foundation and became one of its first members and volunteers. She was a lifetime member of the Baraboo Optimist Club. Rochelle participated in the international meeting on cranes in China and, not knowing the Chinese language, was able to communicate with crane experts and children using a language everyone could understand – the language of art. She made numerous friends in Russia who will never forget her – her expertise, her kindness, her laughter, her dancing in the rain at the camp, and of course, the chopsticks in her hair bun that somehow amplified Rochelle's always elegant and classy look.

We were blessed and honored by hosting Rochelle three times at Muraviovka Park – in 1995, 2001, and 2004, and the children and teachers in the Amur Region – by having the privilege to learn from this amazing teacher.

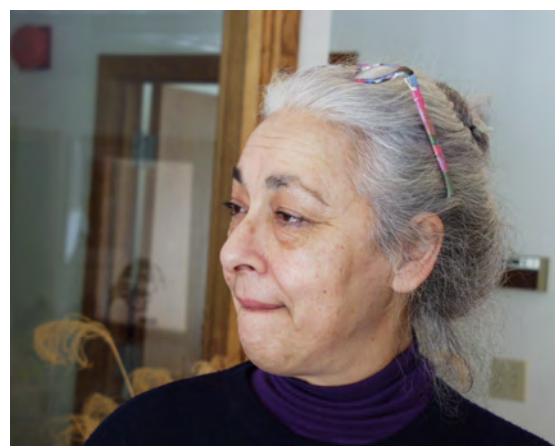
Rochelle joined the support group *Friends of Muraviovka Park* (FOMP) from the moment of its creation. For many years she served as one of its directors, helped organize art exchanges and exhibits for the park's Crane Fests, and together with husband Gene, hosted exchange visitors from the Amur Region and supported the park with annual financial contributions.

In America everything, even private life, is much more organized than in Russia (sometimes, we Russians think, even too organized!). People begin funding their retirement while still in college, set the dates and places of their vacation at least a year ahead of time, and schedule meetings or dinners with friends at least a week prior to the date. Born in the USA, our Rochelle must have inherited from her parents (who came to the US from the city of Feodosia in Crimea in early 1900's) and somehow managed to preserve certain character traits typical of people from Russia. She was amazingly easy-going, cheerful, and flexible, and always ready to extend her helping hand. You could drop in on her at home without a preliminary phone

call and find the most hospitable and warm reception. No matter how busy she was, Rochelle always found time for friends.

We, as well as all who met Rochelle in their life, were incredibly fortunate to know her. May we long cherish the memory of the wonderful teacher and a beautiful human being, who we all like to call our own!

Photo on page 14: Rochelle Robkin (center of second row) with the Friends of Muraviovka Park Board of Directors, circa 2000



Summer Camp Experience 2016

By Emily Wilmoth

Wehr Nature Center, Franklin, Wisconsin

I was incredibly fortunate to have the opportunity to travel to Russia as part of a teacher exchange program sponsored by the International Crane Foundation. When I first became aware of this opportunity, I knew that I had to take advantage of it. I will be attending graduate school this fall to earn a master's degree in environmental education. What better way to prepare for my studies than to teach children about nature on the other side of the world?

Before teaching at camp in the Russian Far East began, we did some exploring in Moscow and St. Petersburg. The other five Americans I traveled with were wonderful, but we would have been completely lost without help from Russian friends who acted as our tour guides. I was amazed at how big and busy both cities were. The architecture and beauty of the cathedrals was striking. I enjoyed shopping for nesting dolls and other souvenirs to bring home to friends and family.

Though sight-seeing in the big cities was great, I was most excited to head east to Khabarovsk where the camp was located. I enjoyed the opportunity to live with a host family for a few days before the

camp began. They could not have made me feel more comfortable and welcome. Only one family member spoke English, but our language barrier did not prevent us from connecting. They made me feel at home, even though I was 5,611 miles away.

During our stay in Khabarovsk, the other American teachers and I met with a group of Russian teachers at their school. We exchanged teaching methods and experiences. It was great to hear the Russian teachers tell stories that I could completely relate to. They were very curious about American schools and curriculum, and I enjoyed answering their questions.

Finally, it was time to head to the camp. It was heartwarming to see the excitement on our students' faces when they first got to meet their American teachers. Our students were ages 10 to 16, and had all studied English as a second language. I was truly impressed with their English skills and enjoyed teaching them new words while learning some new Russian words from them. They were very proud to have taught me to count all the way to 10 in Russian! Aside from participating in dance competitions with the kids,

teaching the science lessons was my favorite part of the camp.



My favorite part of the camp

I appreciated the challenge of effectively teaching the lessons to a group of students whose primary language was different than mine. They were incredibly bright and interested, and I think they learned a lot.

It was heartbreaking to say goodbye at the end of camp. We had formed such a strong bond during our time together. We exchanged many gifts and teary-eyed hugs. My adventure to Russia was even more valuable than I ever imagined. I look forward to using what I learned and sharing my experiences with others as I continue my environmental education career back in America.

A Happy Catch in the Dark

By Elena and Sergei Smirenski



For the sixth consecutive field season, the hard-working bird research team from Germany arrived at Muraviovka Park in April 2016. Immediately they set up mist nets and began capturing, banding, and measuring birds. By early June, with the arrival of the Gray's Warbler (*Locustella fasciolata*) and the Chinese Bush Warbler (*Bradypterus tachanowski*), the spring migration was practically over. Then a series of rainy and windy days made capturing and banding birds impossible, so the team finally had the opportunity to catch up on their sleep. Their break, however, had to be short since they switched from bird banding to bird surveys. Soon after the surveys had begun, one of the team members, Alex, recorded a bird call (listen at

<http://www.xeno-canto.org/collection/spotlight/84>) and excitedly announced that it belonged to a very poorly known bird – the Swinhoe's Rail (*Coturnicops exquisita*) – the smallest rail in the world that is! The next day after supper and in complete darkness, they walked to the Amur floodplain. They found the site where the rail's voice had been recorded and attempted to chase the bird out of hiding and into the mist net, but the tiny rail would not cooperate. It was close to midnight, but no one wanted to call it quits. Finally, after the birders played back the recorded voice, a Swinhoe's Rail walked towards them, and Tom managed to gently cover it with a big butterfly net. Everyone was overjoyed by the capture of this mysterious bird!

After they banded and measured the rail, it was released at the site of capture.

The agile bird ran, walked, and swam between the tussocks back to its home of sedge meadow with standing water.

Tom was determined to catch more rails, but chasing these birds at night with a long handled net in the wet meadow was quite challenging. So Tom decided to try a different, rather unconventional, approach. During the next two nights, he captured three more birds by covering them with his baseball hat (see photo on left)! The Swinhoe's Rail (photo below), listed as Vulnerable on the IUCN Red List, is declining as a result of the loss and fragmentation of wetlands in its breeding and wintering grounds. However, Muraviovka Park, with its massive wetland preserve, may be one of the few safe havens for these birds.



Our Park

Antonida Trizhitsak,
Chair, Tambovka District NGO “Association of Victims of Political Repressions”



Tambovka District NGO “Association of Victims of Political Repressions” (AVPR) is involved in studies of the interesting, tragic, and enlightening history of the District. To commemorate the 90th anniversary of the District, the AVPR members, together with schoolchildren and a local historian, Ivan Shchukin, organized a special bus trip around the District in its 1926 borders. One stop was Muraviovka Park, where staff gave us a tour of the headquarters and talked about beautiful birds and plants of the Park. This was a highlight of the trip!

On the 2nd of May, on the eve of *Family Day* (a national holiday in Russia), AVPR, together with two local groups – *Rostok* (or *Sprout*), whose members appreciate flowers and vegetable gardens, and a dancing group *Dance with Us* – and the 5th grade students from Tambovka School arrived at the Park to plant a *Family Bliss* tree alley near the bowing cross. The Head of the Tambovka District, A. Zlobin, donated pine tree seedlings. The bus and a driver were provided by a company *Virage* (Sharp Curve) that charged us only 50% of the usual bus rental fee. We shared the tree

seedlings with volunteers from Blagoveshchensk who also came to the Park to plant trees. Schoolchildren together with their principal helped with the annual spring headquarters cleanup, made flower beds and planted flowers and bushes, and did some other work. The rain did not slow us down, and when the early afternoon sun came out of the clouds we gathered near the Nature center for lunch and entertainment. The dancing group performed “Crane” and “Ox-Eye Daisy” dances; Park staff took us on an excursion. We were so excited that when we came back to Tambovka we shared our impressions and news about the Park so enthusiastically that school children from other grades began begging to be taken to the Park. The school administration agreed to provide a bus, and the parents collected money to buy the fuel for another trip.

So on 21 May, during the All-Russian Day of Tree Planting, I took my fifth graders together with my two children, Tanya and

Vanya, back to the Park to help with tree planting and cleaning of the Park's facilities. After the work was done we again listened to stories about the Park and its wildlife.

All this work did not make us tired but even more interested in the Park. So when we were asked to help with watering and weeding of the planted seedlings, we—about 50 adults and school children—returned to the Park on 20 and 24 September. The District Administration and Tambovka School provided two buses free of charge. We took many pictures, and a sixth grade student, Ilya Ivanov, mailed his photos to the all-Russian contest "Ecology of the Soul" (in two nominations: "The Red List Species of Animals and Plants" and "Natural Landscapes").

That's how in 2016 we became friends with Muraviovka Park. Our students are recalling their work in the Park with great enthusiasm. Here's what they shared with us: "Fatigue did not overcome us; blood-thirsty mosquitoes did not break us; we loved meeting interesting people and helping the Park is a matter of our honor!" These trips, as well as the first part

of the video *Muraviovka Park: Four Seasons – Four Wonders*, were true revelations. Most of us could never imagine that such a gem exists so close to our Tambovka village!

Our Association, together with Lydmila Kokoulina, the Member of the Amur Public Chamber, developed a beautiful badge with a flying crane, the emblem of the Tambovka District. Part of the money raised from the sales of this badge will be donated to the Park, so each person who buys our badge will support protection of this amazing place in our District.

From Elena's Kitchen Russian Beet Salad with Herring

This salad is commonly known in Russia as a "Herring under the Winter Coat" ("Seliodka pod Shuboy").

It is a favorite appetizer for a Russian holiday table, and you will enjoy it, too, -- as long as you like herring and beets.

Ingredients:

- 3 whole Russet potatoes, boiled in jackets (unpeeled)
 - 4 eggs, boiled and chopped (save some chopped yolk to sprinkle on the top of the salad!)
 - 3 large carrots, peeled
 - 2 beets, washed with tops and bottoms removed and boiled
 - ½ sweet onion, chopped
 - 2 green apples (Granny Smith will do)
 - One 12-ounce jar or pack of herring filets in brine (oil is fine but better no vinegar – look for such herring in European deli or international food markets; you can also buy a whole herring there but then you will have to deal with skinning and deboning it!)
 - 6 tbsp. mayonnaise
 - A dash of salt and ground pepper to taste (the saltier the herring, the less salt you want to add!)
 - Greens (parsley or dill), chopped
- (Continued on the p.24)

Wading with Birds

Text and photos by Roland Speck

In the middle of June 2015, I visited Muraviovka Park for the second time. I wanted to take nice pictures, especially of cranes. Thanks to the park's staff, especially Svetlana, everything went smoothly with the logistics, accommodations, and food. The local ornithologists had reached the last week of their spring banding season, and Wieland did not give me much hope of taking pictures of many song birds with the camera. However, fortunately the guys ringing the birds have perfect knowledge about the area, and the ignorant photographer could be "navigated" by them.

Nevertheless, some luck is required to get close enough to the cranes to reach a good



White-naped Cranes

shooting position. To escape from the heat of the summer that had just started (documented over 30°C during lunch time), I headed early morning towards the wetland. Soon, I reached the middle of a vast grassy area covered by water. Wading through wetlands is always a nice experience!

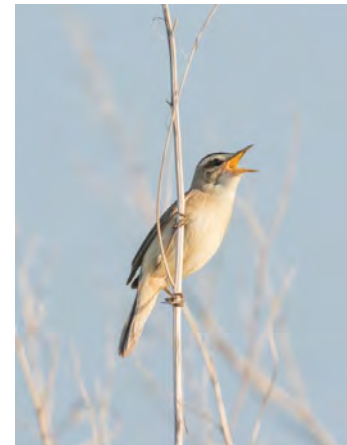
Territories at the edges were occupied by Black-browed Reed-Warblers. In the



The Northern Lapwing

middle of the marsh a couple of Northern Lapwings flew excitedly back and forth. At first I thought that the excitement was caused by my presence and there must be some nests not far away.

I suddenly realized the real trigger: White-naped Cranes who threaten to use Lapwing's chicks like a snack! The cranes had also noticed me, flew away, and landed out of my sight. So it was time to hide and wait. But suddenly the cranes reappeared, probably being aware that I got too close to their chicks, and landed in just 30 or 40 meters from



The Black-browed Reed-Warbler

me giving me a perfect shot! I stood in the water up to my knees. No chance to hide; so I quickly took out the camera, placed the tripod in the swamp, and shot a picture of "my very own" White-naped Cranes. For me, it was fantastic unforgettable experience, to be so close to these beautiful birds; for the park staff, I shared a few good pictures for their further work. And I will be back for more!

Where Birds of Muraviovka Park Fly for Winter

By Roland Speck



Last winter my wife and I had a chance to visit the wintering grounds of cranes in South Korea thanks to the Muraviovka Park contact to [KFEM](#) (Korea Federation for Environmental Movement).

Hardly arrived in Seoul, we drove to the [DMZ](#) (Demilitarized Zone). Within the zone there is no industry, only agriculture. Despite the fact that the country is in a permanent state of being ready to use military force, this retreat area is very important for wildlife.

Apart of it, the car traffic is pretty sparse. One must not get out of a car within the zone according to the unconditional order of the border patrol. On both sides of the road one can notice the warning signs of minefields. While taking photos one ought to pay attention to have no border constructions, military objects or the part of the north border in one's pictures. If you follow all these rules you might have an exciting performance. I was lucky to get a close glimpse of White-naped

Cranes in Muraviovka Park, but the possibility to take a full-formatted picture of these magnificent birds in the DMZ was really unique. Some other kinds of birds enjoyed the calmness of this secluded area. As expected, we saw Red-crowned Cranes, and on a very cold morning next day a lot of White-fronted Geese. From time to time we saw Cinereous Vultures circling above our heads. We got acquainted with them later on. All in all, we spent short

hours within the DMZ, but they were exciting.

The conflict zone is likely to disappear one day, but hopefully the feathery residents of the zone will manage to keep their area. After leaving the DMZ we stopped in a village to the north of Cheorwon. One said that there were Cinereous Vultures in that area. We parked in front of a restaurant. Our guide entered the building and stayed there for a while. When he returned, he was holding a bag full of slaughter wastes. We could foresee what would happen next because the first vultures were already above our heads. Then everything went very fast. As soon as the first pieces of meat were on the field, some vulture landed immediately the ground. Usually one sees

vultures at a long distance, but we saw them not far – no more than 15 meters away from us. They appeared so huge to us that we were petrified. It was evident that the place was known to local people since some more people came to watch the birds and to take photos. We witnessed a scene which struck us: a middle-aged woman put her little daughter wearing a festive pink dress right in front of the vultures and let her make a V-sign with a big smile. Thank God the vultures did not take the child for a piece of meat, and nothing bad happened to the small girl. We travelled farther to the south. Thanks to the connections of the KFEM we arranged a meeting with local ornithologists to be able to see Hooded Cranes while researchers were counting

them. Our target stretched over the Suncheon Bay. Before the sunrise we reached the hill from which had a wonderful view of the resting cranes. As soon as the first sunrays cut their way through the early morning haze, the cranes started moving. The cranes rose gradually and flew in a small group into the estuary direction.

It was very impressive to experience the birds in a huge amount in their breeding habitat far away from the civilization. South Korea remains “wild” only in some rare places, and the retreat areas are endangered. Nevertheless, a lot of people in South Korea realized the importance of the unspoiled nature for their lives.



In Memory of Victor Bakhtin



Victor Bakhtin turned 65 in February of 2016. On October 8th, numerous admirers of Victor's came to ICF to celebrate his "Good Egg" award. Sadly for many of them it was the last time they saw Victor, who passed away on 19 November. Victor was an honorable citizen of the Siberian city of Krasnoyarsk, a man of many talents and endless adventures. He started as a prodigy violinist, continued as a book illustrator, and eventually became an amazing wildlife artist. In 1999, Victor designed a unique logo for Friends of Muraviovka Park (page 1).

Victor was born in Krasnoyarsk, Siberia, Russia. He graduated from Moscow Art Institute in 1974 with a degree in graphic illustration. He illustrated more than 100 books of famous Russian and international authors. He was one of the founders of "Royev Rucheï" Zoo in Krasnoyarsk. All his life Victor was a devoted and passionate nature and animal lover.

He married Maya Valeyeva, a wildlife Russian artist and writer, in 2004. After moving to Wisconsin, Victor began working for the International Crane Foundation (ICF) in Baraboo and UW Madison-Arboretum creating a series of

beautiful murals and other art works.

George Archibald, ICF Cofounder, wrote about Victor: "Victor was treasured as a uniquely gifted artist in his homeland, Russia. He illustrated with beautiful paintings mammals and birds in the Red Data Book for Endangered Species of Krasnoyarsk Region of Russia, and through brilliant and often humorous ink sketches he illustrated the books of several of Russia's foremost novelists, including Valentin Rasputin.

In 1990, I met Victor at an Estonia of the European and the Soviet working groups on cranes. The USSR was collapsing, the printers who supported Victor were bankrupt, and Victor needed help. I was amazed by the high quality of the paintings he carried in a portfolio, and I pledged to help him get to potentially fruitful markets in the USA if he could learn to speak English. Through the generosity of Milwaukee banker, Mr. Jack Puelicker, English-speaking Victor arrived at ICF in 1992.

During the next few years he lived at ICF's guest house and contributed through his art to the visitor's area of our site, best summarized by the words of ICF's Darcy Love. 'As someone who has been able to share his talent with thousands of visitors to our site, I have seen firsthand, the power of art to tell a compelling story about our work, and why everyone should care about saving cranes. Victor's interpretation of the Platte River has transported our guests to another place, and back in time through the Whooping Crane mural.

Having the crane gates to welcome people to our site is transforming for many who enter. We are so fortunate to have this lasting legacy from such a gifted artist.' Victor's life illustrated the value of friendship and the significance of art in the conservation of nature. Through many happy memories, he remains with us. Through his remarkable art, he will be known and treasured by future generations."

From Elena's Kitchen

Russian Beet Salad with Herring

Bring a large pot of water to a boil to cook the potatoes and beets in the boiling water until cooked but still firm (15 to 20 minutes for the potatoes, 40 minutes for the beets). Allow potatoes and beets to cool to the touch, then peel them. Shred the potatoes, beets, raw carrots and apples into tiny bits and keep them separate.

Arrange about half the onion and half the herring fillets in a layer in the bottom of a bowl. Cover the layer with about half of the grated potatoes, then a layer of about half the chopped eggs, then about half of the carrot, then about half the apples, and finally about half the beet. Spread about 3 tablespoons of mayonnaise over the salad; season slightly with salt and pepper. Repeat the layers in the same order to finish building the salad (sample on the photo shows a version of this salad with only one layer of each ingredient!) Sprinkle chopped greens and chopped egg yolk on top. Cover with plastic wrap and chill in the refrigerator for at least 1 hour. Serve cold and enjoy!



Help them Grow with Adopt-a-Nest!

Adopt-A-Nest is a great way to help protect nest sites for Red-crowned Cranes, White-naped Cranes, Oriental White Storks, and all the other species that raise their young at Muraviovka Park. For a minimum “adoption fee” of \$50, those who adopt a nest (or receive it as a gift) will be acknowledged with a certificate, crane photo, and a book about cranes, their habits, and habitats. This package comes complete with postcards from the Park and a one-year membership in the Friends of Muraviovka Park. Repeat participants in the Adopt-a-Nest program receive a handsome refrigerator magnet!



*For more information or to request an adoption brochure,
contact Elena Smirenski at elena@savingcranes.org.*

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<http://www.causes.com/causes/595771-become-a-member-of-friends-of-muraviovka-park-to-save-cranes>

Note:

Some seats are currently vacant!

Online donations coming soon!

Please cut & return the membership form (see below)

We hope you haven't forgotten about us! Please renew your membership today.

Friends of Muraviovka Park Membership Form (New or Renewal) and Board of Directors Ballot 2017

We hope you will **renew your support** of Muraviovka Park. (Membership 1/1/2017 – 12/31/2017)

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Email _____

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

Please make your check payable to the ICF/FOMP and send to:
International Crane Foundation, attn. Elena Smirenski, P.O. Box 447, Baraboo, WI 53913.

Thank you!

Membership Levels

___ \$15 – Student ___ \$25 – Individual

___ \$35 – Family ___ \$50 – School Group

___ \$50 – Adopt-A-Nest (includes membership)

___ \$50 – Adopt-A-Nest (includes membership; but please don't send me a thank-you gift, use all the proceeds for the Park.)

___ \$100 – Contributing Member

\$___ Other Donation for _____

\$___ **Total Donation**

Thank you!

We greatly appreciate continued generous support from the International Crane Foundation, Woodland Park Zoo, Columbus Zoo, Erica P. John Foundation, Fifth Age of Man Foundation, Das Gupta Fund, Stiftung Feuchtgebiete and Frankfurt Zoo Society, Russian Bird Conservation Union, Amur Region Ministry of Forestry and Fire Safety, Amur Branch of the Russian Ministry of Emergency, Baikal Ltd., Komsomol'skaya Pravda Publishing House (Blagoveshchensk), Biology & Soils Institute of the Far-eastern Branch of the Russian Academy of Science, Moscow State and Far-eastern Agriculture Universities, Amur Region Institute for Advanced Teachers' Education, and all generous personal contributions made by FOMP members from USA, South Korea and Russia, which helped us implement our diverse programs and projects in field research, wildlife conservation, sustainable land use, environmental education, and nature tourism.

Friends of Muraviovka Park invite you to the

Annual Meeting Saturday, April 8

1:00 pm - ICF Library

Please join us to hear from the 2016 Teacher Team and Dr. Sergei Smirenski!

Dr. Curt Meine, Aldo Leopold biographer and our keynote speaker will give a presentation "Aldo Leopold and his impact on the world around us"

**Note: Parking available at the
Main Office or the Guest House Parking Lots**

*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.
Learn more at: www.muraviovkapark.ru or www.rbcu.ru*



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