

Testimony of Rep. Tammy Baldwin
Crane Conservation Act
Committee on Natural Resources
Subcommittee on Fisheries, Wildlife, and Oceans
September 6, 2007

Thank you Chairwoman Bordallo and Members of the Committee. I appreciate the opportunity to testify today. The Crane Conservation Act is an important measure that will help protect and preserve the world's 15 species of cranes for generations to come.

Cranes are revered throughout the world for their beauty, grace, and long distance migrations, frequently spanning numerous countries. In fact, their appeal is so vast that they figure prominently in the culture, folklore, and art of many peoples around the world. Unfortunately, they also are the most endangered family of birds in the world, with eleven of the world's fifteen crane species at risk of extinction.

Our North American whooping crane is the rarest species. In 1941, only 21 whooping cranes existed in the entire world. Today, there are almost 400 birds in existence. The resurgence is attributed to the birds' tenacity for survival and to the efforts of conservationists in the United States and Canada. In fact, since 2001, coordinated efforts have focused on encouraging young whooping cranes, some bred in captivity, to migrate from their breeding grounds in Wisconsin's Necedah National Wildlife Refuge to their destination in Florida in an effort to reintroduce a migratory flock into their historic range in the eastern United States.

Fortunately, these efforts have been successful and the Crane Conservation Act would complement these feats both domestically and internationally. My bill would provide the resources to support initiatives that protect the birds and their habitats, which have deteriorated due to industrial development, pollution, and other human disturbances.

The bill also would provide the means for the United States to fulfill various international obligations and commitments, thus having a large environmental and cultural impact across the globe. Additionally, the Crane Conservation Act will provide resources for the United States to encourage conservation, the development of adequate habitats and overall goodwill. This action is desperately needed in many Asian, Middle Eastern, and former Soviet Republic nations, where strained relations between bordering countries impact the cranes migrating across those shared borders.

Specifically the Crane Conservation Act would authorize up to \$5 million per year to be distributed in the form of conservation project grants to protect cranes and their habitats. It would pay for the conservation efforts through programmatic and administrative offsets at the Department of Interior.

As you know, this Committee and Congress have passed similar bills in support of globally significant and endangered wildlife species. These include tigers, rhinos, elephants, and neotropical migratory birds. And just as these efforts took significant steps in international wildlife conservation, the Crane Conservation Act would play a similar and promising role in improving endangered wildlife and their habitats.

Before I conclude, let me take a moment to thank Dr. George Archibald of the International Crane Foundation for testifying today. The International Crane Foundation, which is located in Baraboo, Wisconsin, is dedicated to conserving cranes and the wetland and grassland ecosystems on which they depend.

Thank you for your consideration.