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COMMON CRANE MANAGEMENT IN GERMANY-MONITORING, PROTECTION, AND SCIENTIFIC WORK

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Abstract: About 200,000 common cranes (*Grus grus*) from northern, middle, and northeastern parts of Europe are migrating on the West-European route. In the northeast part of Germany 160,000 cranes stop over simultaneously during migration. This number has increased since the early 1980's by 3-fold. About 60 sites with from 200 to 50,000 cranes are systematically observed from August to December by local expert groups. The overnight roosts are in ponds, swamps, and lakes, actively flooded meadows, and brown coal mines as well as in shallow backwaters of the Baltic Sea. They have been used year after year. More than 80% of the roosts are protected. Pre-assembly stop-overs are located in small wetlands which the cranes use before finally entering the roost at late dusk. These areas also need to be protected. Daily movements are 8-15 km but reach a maximum of 25 km from the roost sites. To minimize damage to agriculture, "diversion feedings" or lure crops were established at 6 places in 2004, paid for by government and private organizations. Problems can be further reduced by combining these tactics with leaving stubble-fields, early new sowing, and actively harassing cranes before they land. Guiding nature tourists with posted information occurs at 17 sites. The sites are used by thousands of people and are often led by rangers. Special societies are founded at several larger resting sites with about 60 members (20-250) on average. Problems often arise, especially with hunters, farmers, and holiday makers. To keep the level of disturbances low, the nature conservation, agriculture, hunting, and tourism agencies need to cooperate and develop a local crane management plan that would consider the interests of all parties. Scientific work is done at several large roost areas by institutions and members of the German Crane Working Group. This includes the yearly monitoring of breeding and roosting areas and the ringing (banding) and radio-tracking programs.

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