



# ZHURAYL

**Friends of Muraviovka Park**  
*An Affiliate of the International Crane Foundation*

**February 2004**

## Certification offers promise, challenges

by *Margaret Scoles*

When George Danner asked me if I knew any inspectors willing to go to Russia, I jumped at the chance to volunteer.

As Executive Director and Training Manager of the Independent Organic Inspectors Association, my time for doing inspections is very limited and this was a perfect organic inspection for me. It is important that I keep in touch with the needs of inspector members and this afforded me an excellent opportunity to work internationally. I had very little experience inspecting in another language—through an interpreter—and I was intrigued with the idea of traveling to the other side of the world and inspecting in a climate much like that of my own state of Montana. In high school, I had studied Russian literature. It has been 5 years since I worked

with children in the classroom. Now I could take all this background, travel, teach children again, and do an organic inspection. Last, but not least, my daughter Emily dreamed of going to Russia as her high school graduation present. As the teachers team for 2003 included young adults to teach the International Languages Summer School at Muraviovka Park, Emily's opportunity to travel to Russia and work with her peers from both cultures was also a reality.

The demonstration farm at Muraviovka Park is working towards marketing organic grain crops. The organic certification process begins with a written application involving an Organic Systems Plan to a certification agency. The certification agency has an established set of standards and reviews the application

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## Language school builds skills and friendships

by *Trina Bower*

The International Languages Summer School that takes place at beautiful Muraviovka Park of Sustainable Land Use in Far Eastern Russia is one of a kind!

This summer school allows students from Russia's diverse countryside to increase their knowledge of the English language. I was one of the English teachers and we spent many hours preparing the lessons so that classes would be fun, as well as educational.

Each morning of this ten-day school was spent conducting three



*International Languages Summer School teachers (left to right) Adam Wehling, Carmen Illichmann, Barb Thompson, Emily Scoles, Ashley Vogds, Margaret Scoles, and Trina Bower celebrate another successful season at Muraviovka Park.*

“traditional” classes, of forty-five minutes each, working on formal English skills for the Russian students. Then, after lunch, a group of Russian students would

spend thirty minutes instructing their English teachers in the basics of the Russian language. Afternoon

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*Inspector Margaret Scoles takes notes on crop conditions during her visit to Muraviovka Park.*

## Certification

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to determine if it meets this criteria. Annual inspections are the next step in this process.

The inspector is a “third party” verifier that records the activity of the operation and ascertains if the Organic System Plan is being followed by physically visiting the farm (crops/livestock) or processing facility. The inspector’s report is submitted to the certification agency and contains information that prohibited materials (synthetic fertilizers or pesticides) are not being used and have not been used for three years prior to certification. The report provides insight into whether the operation is protecting and enhancing the natural resources of the land. It also determines if records are in place to track the crop from organic seed to sale. After reviewing the inspector’s report, the certification agency makes a determination to award or postpone certification of the applying operation.

Sergei Smirenski gave the first tour of the fields, shortly after we arrived. Soybeans had been planted

two weeks previous and were just emerging, due to drought conditions. Everyone was concerned about the lack of rain.

Then I worked with Sergei Shalagin, the farm manager, and Marina Kolodina, who interpreted. The farm workers we spoke with were friendly, enthusiastic, and willing to participate, even though the word “inspector” has negative connotations in Russia.

Small grain crops (barley and spring wheat) were just starting to develop grain heads. Last year’s grain crop had not been sold. By the time the Languages Summer School was over, we’d experienced a few downpours of rain, the grain was fully headed out, last year’s grain had been marketed, and the soybeans were being cultivated for weed control. Most fields were inspected on foot, with side benefits of wild peonies, roses, orange lilies, irises, cackling pheasants, and the mournful call of doves.

As the demonstration farm at Muraviovka Park moves towards organic certification they are facing a number of challenges, some of which are unique to the situation in Russia. Until livestock can be introduced on the farm, there are limited options for developing soil fertility. Few legume varieties will persist through the very harsh winter conditions to provide a green manure crop. With limited

resources and equipment, it is difficult to transition unruly weed-infested fields into mechanically-cultivated clean crops. A species of wormwood is especially pernicious and pervasive. Very little organic certification is being done in Russia and there are few organized crop improvement groups or Russian certification agencies. The distance from European or American certification agencies and inspectors greatly increases the cost of annual fees. Finally, marketing of organic crops can realize higher prices, but they also incur the higher costs of getting into specialty markets and export fees involved when registering with foreign governments. In spite of all these challenges, a demonstration model for local farmers in the value of sustainable agricultural practices has the potential to encourage far-reaching change.

Wildlife habitat and biodiversity are protected and enhanced by organic and sustainable farming. The future will be determined by what our young people, whether Russian or American, learn by our examples and their experiences. Carrying projects such as Muraviovka Park forward with unique learning opportunities for young people gives us reason for hope. Emily and I are grateful for our opportunity to participate.



*Sergei Shalagin, Marina Kolodina, and Margaret Scoles compare notes on the organic certification process for Muraviovka Park.*

# Park staff attend Ukraine conference

by *Marina Kolodina*

From October 7<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> 2003 at a place called Askania-Nova, Ukraine (close to the Black Sea), a workshop for the Crane Working Group of Eurasia took place. This working group consists mainly of ornithologists and crane researchers from Russia and the former Soviet Republics. The purpose of the conference was to discuss the modern status of crane populations at their nesting and resting sites in different parts of Russia, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan. Special attention was paid to the issues of "Agriculture and Cranes," and "Environmental Education at the Crane Reserves."

A grant from the Trust for Mutual Understanding (TMU) gave Muraviovka Park a chance to participate in the workshop. The topics discussed concern activities that are being done and problems

that are being solved at the Park. People had heard about Muraviovka Park and its director, Sergei Smirenski. But, they didn't know the updated information on the Park. They were interested to know that the Park continues to exist, is developing, runs a number of diverse programs, and has been achieving positive results. The population of some crane species, especially Red-crowned Cranes, is declining everywhere. At Muraviovka Park, crane populations are increasing.

The presentation about the Park and its activities attracted a lot of listeners. People asked many questions. Some of them were surprised to hear that Muraviovka Park is celebrating its 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary next year. "Such projects with no governmental support end in a year or two. You must be doing an effective job!" exclaimed a man from Azerbaijan.

It became obvious after the workshop that Muraviovka Park is the only area, among the countries enumerated, where problems are being solved, and a number of projects are being completed. None of the other protected areas deal with crane study, agriculture, environmental education, and international collaboration simultaneously. People were amazed to hear that the Park has a group of international supporters that provides information, financial and moral support.

Our participation in this workshop became possible due to the financial support of International Crane Foundation. On behalf of Muraviovka Park, I would like to thank TMU and ICF for providing this opportunity.

*Marina Kolodina is the Education Coordinator for Muraviovka Park.*

## *New bus paves the way for success*

by *Barb Thompson*

It arrived in early June. A bright, clean, shiny, new bus for Muraviovka Park!

From scheduling to camper participation, it helped to insure the success of this year's summer camps in more ways than we could count. Gone are the days where we schedule a bus for a field trip or to deliver students to camp only to find out that the bus has broken down or the driver cannot make the trip. This year students arrived at camp on "our" bus and it was there to pick up the team of American teachers when they arrived at the airport in Blagoveshensk. During one day of the Language Camp, Russian students were tour guides for the American teachers, as they drove around the capital city of the Amur Region, Blagoveshchensk.

This summer one of the participants in the teachers workshop invited us to her village to see her school and talk to the educational staff about environmental education. Because we had ready, reliable transportation we were able to make the trip and spent a wonderful two days with these dedicated teachers. As a result, they asked if they could send more staff to the teacher workshop at Muraviovka Park in the summer of 2004.



*Park Deputy Director Sergei Shalagin and volunteer Adam Wehling show off the newest addition to the Muraviovka Park fleet.*

Planning camp activities can be a real challenge for the American teachers. We ask them to plan lessons for children and teachers who cannot speak English, on a site they have never seen before, and to work closely with people they have never met. Anytime we can replace an "uncertainty" with a sure thing and get kids and adults out to the Park, we most definitely strengthen our impact there. The bus has helped us do just that!

We thank everyone who has contributed and helped to make this purchase possible!

# From the fire into the flood

By *Sergei Smirenski*  
& *Elena Smirenski*

When the Russians want to say that someone was trying to get out of trouble but instead got into another, even worse one, they say: "Iz ognya da v polymya" ("From the fire right into the flames"). The spring 2003 situation in Muraviovka Park wetlands can be described as "Iz ognya da v potop" (From the fire right into the flood")!

**Environmentally**, the weather and fires were of greatest concern. Although two to three weeks of dry weather in spring is rather normal for the Amur Basin, during the last five years drought has become a serious threat to wildlife, with each spring being drier than the preceding one. The Amur River water level dropped to a record low, and underground water levels decreased by 2.5 m (over 8 ft.), resulting in numerous lakes and wetlands turning into dry land.

The big fire of 2003 came to the Park on April 4th from the farm fields of Cooperative "Amur," where

farm workers were burning old straw. Winds were so powerful that firebreaks, plowed by our team, failed to stop the roaring flames. A fire front spread out for 7 km (5 miles) as fires raged for four days and nights, in spite of all our efforts, use of tractors and pumps, and help from our neighbors. Flames turned the Amur flood land into ashes. Only one nest of Red-crowned and one of White-naped Cranes survived the disaster.

Fortunately, two pairs of White-naped and one pair of Red-crowned Cranes built new nests inside small grassy islands that we managed to save from the flames. Two pairs of Oriental White Storks also built new nests to replace the burnt ones. Thanks to their persistence, overall breeding success was higher than could be expected: three pairs of White-naped, two pairs of Red-crowned and eight pairs of storks raised their young.

Because of the drought and fires in early spring, a large concentration of "homeless" and young non-breeding cranes was

already being formed in the Park. They were attracted by a combination of vast, safe resting/roosting grounds and an abundance of corn in the Park's lure fields. Later, large flocks of migrating geese also started gathering. All these birds preferred not to fly beyond the boundaries of the Park. In spite of a ban on spring hunting, shooting was constantly heard in adjacent lands. We conducted monitoring and video filming of the birds in the lure crop fields and also organized field trips for school students. At first, these activities stopped poaching in the Park, but around mid-May (when game refuge wardens were hosting "visitors"), shots were heard in the Park again.

**The Demonstration Farm**, which has become one of the sources of the Park's income, suffered serious crop losses in 2003.

By mid-June there were still numerous bare spots in the fields due to drought. Weeds would not even sprout, without saying anything about soybeans. In mid-June, however, a sudden change in the weather brought daily pouring rains and unusually cool temperatures. The skies were darkened not only by stormy clouds but also by the smoke from forest fires that engulfed huge areas in Siberia. The rains continued practically non-stop until late September. Heavy clay soils held the moisture on the surface until November, and when the ground froze, the fields stayed flooded.

Certain parts of crop fields (50% of all arable land in the Amur Region) became impassable for our caterpillar tractors and therefore were not harvested and left unprepared for the next growing season. Besides, due to low temperatures and scarce solar radiation, crops did not mature and average germination rates of 12% or



*After an unusually dry spring, heavy rains from June through September flooded many parts of the demonstration farm, hampering crop maturation and germination rates.*

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*A volunteer plants trees along some of the 2 km of new windbreaks constructed at the park last year.*

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lower are common. All farms in the Amur Region suffered losses and next year's prognosis for crop growing does not look very promising.

On the other hand, we practically completed the construction of the grain dryer facility and purchased equipment for grain cleaning. We also purchased a grain crusher and a small flour mill. This equipment will allow us to produce better quality seeds, even during wet years, to offer flour and animal feed to the locals, and to increase profitability of the Demonstration Farm. Construction and equipment were financed by a generous grant from the Wagner Foundation (Wisconsin).

Park staff and volunteers planted 2 km of windbreaks to protect crop fields from wildfires and wind erosion (planting over 4,000 seedlings and 3,000 seeds).

The Park is very interested in having its Demonstration Farm become certified as an organic producer. As part of the certification process, an inspection was conducted by an independent organic farm inspector from the United States.

**Our Woodshop**

provided lumber (boards and beams) for all construction projects in 2003 and covered the expenses for a black top floor in the grain storage. The solar kiln facility was constructed. Solar collectors and fans will be installed in spring 2004.

Construction of the winterized building for the woodshop was started and the Park purchased three pieces of woodworking equipment. Due to the sudden death of Vladimir (the lead carpenter, who died from a heart attack

in early spring), the woodwork project had to slow down until we could find a good replacement for this wonderful person and exceptionally skillful carpenter (and such people are not easy to find locally).

**Summer language classes, environmental schools and seminars** were very successful, as

usual. Our new bus and improvements made in the stationary camp and at the headquarters building provided better opportunities for classes and recreation. Because of the SARS scare, the camp in China was postponed until summer 2004. Binoculars and a spotting scope donated by Eagle Optics of Middleton, Wisconsin were used intensively, not only during the summer camps but from early spring to late fall.

A weekly TV broadcast "Provincial America" developed by Nikolay Zemyansky (see *Zhuravl* 2003) maintained the highest viewer rating in the Amur Region for six consecutive months. Many Amur Region residents told us that through this program they discovered real America and Americans for the first time in their lives.

The Center for Social Adaptation of Youth had to be shut down because Muraviovka Park and Tambovka District Administration failed to raise needed funds and other co-founders of the Center failed to provide their expected support.

Since early October, we had a series of meetings about the construction of a power line to the

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*The solar kiln nears completion, awaiting the installation of fans and collectors this spring.*

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Park headquarters. Finally, we “saw the light” when Leonid Korotkov (Governor of the Amur Region), Sergei Tkachenko (Head of the Tambovka District Administration), Gennadiy Ivanov (Head of the Amur Region Committee on Agriculture and Ecology under the Regional Council of Representatives), and Nikolai Starkov (Head of the Committee on Natural Resources in the Amur Region Administration) provided strong support to this project. We hope that next summer we will have a sufficient source of permanent power.

**Public Presentations** continue to be possible due to the tireless efforts of Friends of Muraviovka Park in setting up speaking engagements. A total of 12 presentations about the Park and its programs were presented in the U.S., Japan, and Russia. These public talks brought to the Park approximately \$2,200 in honoraria and another \$1,000 through the sales of FOMP merchandise (t-shirts, Matrioshka Owls, crane necklaces, etc.). Especially noteworthy were the presentations given at the Wisconsin Science Teachers Convention in Lake Delton, Wisconsin; at the International Symposium - “Parks Across Boundaries”<sup>1</sup> in Tokyo, Japan; and at the first state-wide Montana Organic Farming Conference<sup>2</sup> in Great Falls, Montana.

The Park activities became possible thanks to the generous support from ICF, Woodland Park Zoo<sup>3</sup> (Seattle, Washington), American Zoo & Aquarium Association (AZA), Wagner Foundation, Ecofund of the Amur Region, Tambovka District Administration, and the growing Friends of Muraviovka Park membership.

<sup>1</sup> An article about this symposium was published in the 26 November 2003 issue of *The New York Times*, quoting Sergei as “the director of Muraviovka Park for Sustainable Land Use, which helps protect nesting cranes in far eastern Russia.” The



**Workers unload grain cleaning equipment, which will allow the demonstration farm to offer higher quality seed in the future.**

symposium organizers invited us as panel speakers because they value Muraviovka Park as a model project for establishment of international protected territories, such as on the border between North and South Korea (in the Demilitarized Zone) or between Russia and Japan on Kunashir Island (Kurile Islands).

<sup>2</sup> The Independent Organic Inspectors Association and the

Alternative Energy Resources Organization collaborated to organize this event at which Sergei was the keynote speaker. His appearance was cosponsored by the Conference and by the Montana Audubon Society.

<sup>3</sup> Woodland Park Zoo has declared Sergei a Field Associate and has made a commitment to supporting three years of research at Muraviovka Park.

## *Memories and surprises highlight 2003 Annual Meeting*

The focus of the 2003 Annual Meeting on March 23 was a surprise celebration and acknowledgment of ten years of dedicated work by Sergei and Elena Smirenski in establishing Muraviovka Park for Sustainable Land Use.

About 40 people attended, including Sergei and Elena’s son from Florida and their son-in-law from Chicago. Barb Thompson presented t-shirts to ICF President Jim Harris, ICF founder George Archibald, and Elena. Jim Harris talked about the beginning efforts at Muraviovka Park while George Danner and Ruth Bauer gave a power point presentation of Park history from 1992 through 2002. George Archibald started a comment session in which memories from each trip were shared.

Gifts were presented to Sergei and Elena. They both were totally surprised by all the activities of the day. A great time was had by all!

For more information about the upcoming 2004 Annual Meeting on **Saturday, March 6**, see page 14.

# Muraviovka Park: A Retrospective

*2003 marked ten years of dedication, hard work, and memories at Muraviovka Park.  
Below are some of the highlights from the Park's first decade.*

## 1991

●Sergei Smirenski discusses his vision of the AMUR program as well as establishment of a non-profit, non-governmental territory for sustainable land use with George Danner, President of Global Agri-Tech, George Archibald, President of the International Crane Foundation (ICF), and Jim Harris, ICF Vice-president.

●Request to support a lease of the territory near Muraviovka village, that is critical breeding ground and stopover for cranes wintering in Izumi as well as for many other endangered birds, is sent to Noritaka Ichida, Director of the Wild Bird Society of Japan.

## 1992

●POP Group Co., LTD, a textile company from Japan, agrees to provide funds for the land lease and for the construction of a nature center.

●International workshop "Cranes and Storks of the Amur Basin" is organized by ICF and Sergei as a launching activity for the AMUR program.

●Noritaka Ichida, of the Wild Bird Society of Japan, Ken Strom of the National Audubon Society, and John Shepard of the Wilderness Society visit Muraviovka.

●George Danner visits Muraviovka and upon his return home continues to work on developing strategies to ensure the establishment of an environmental preservation/economic development project there.

●The memorandum of understanding about land lease is signed by Sergei Smirenski; A. Surovegin, the Head of Tambovka District administration; and directors of the three farms managing the property (State Farm "Karfovski", Collective Farm "Amur" and Collective Farm "Zarya").

## 1993

●Agreement on cooperation between the International socio-ecological Union (ISEU) and Tambovka District Administration as well as the first document for the land lease are developed.

●Jim Harris, Noritaka Ichida, and Catherine Gray from the Nature Conservancy (TNC), along with local people and officials, participate in the Park's opening ceremony. Official sign of Muraviovka Park is erected.

## 1994

●Contract to lease 5,206.7 ha is approved by the Amur Region authorities.

●A two-room trailer for the Park's office is purchased.

●Dining and kitchen shelters and first shower stalls are built.

●First group of American teachers (all from New Jersey) conduct environmental education and art classes in the Park and in Khingansky Nature Reserve (First Amur Expedition).

- Teachers sleep in canvas tents.
- Day camp only.
- Water hauled to the Park by truck.
- Eight-seat jeep purchased with funds from The Nature Conservancy.
- Natalia Gromova and Galina Lukianova become the first and faithful local allies and helpers to the Park.
- First steps to develop the farm and to test corn and soy bean varieties undertaken.

## 1995

●Second Amur Expedition with outdoor classes in the Park and in Khingansky Nature Reserve.

●First group of Wisconsin teachers conduct classes in the Park.

●First training workshop for local teachers.

●During rainy days vehicles could not drive through mud to the Park and some classes were organized right on the main road.

●First two staff educators are hired.

●Begin digging the foundation for construction of staff housing and guest rooms.

●Muraviovka Park and adjacent wetlands are listed as Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar Convention).

●Exchange training visits of teachers, educators and students from the Amur Region to the USA.

●Series of brochures "Rainbow of the Amur Land" developed.

●Proceedings of the international workshop "Cranes and Storks of the Amur River" published.

●Photo exhibits "Cranes of Izumi - Our Cranes" and "Platte River - Cranes' Eldorado" organized.

●First group of birdwatchers from the USA under leadership of Tom Hoffmann, Grus Ltd., visits the Park.

## 1996

●Muraviovka Park for Sustainable Land Use as an independent, non-profit, non-governmental organization is officially established by the ISEU (Moscow) and registered with the Amur Region government.

●Third Amur Teacher Expedition.

●Teachers stay in new tents at kids camp.

●Day camp for kids.

●Begin building the house with living facilities for staff and guest rooms.

●Korean TV crew films the Oriental White Stork during its nesting period in the Park.

●Barb Thompson participates in teacher expedition for the first time.

●The first environmental camp on Udyk Lake (Khabarovsk Region) organized by the Park and led by the American teachers.

## 1997

- Fourth Amur Teacher Expedition.
- First overnight kids camp (tents).
- Marina Kolodina volunteers as interpreter.
- Gravel road to the headquarters 2.5 km is built from the main road with support from the Amur Region Ecological Fund.
- First training school on controlled burning is held.
- Begin building the nature center.
- American team stays in tents near the headquarters.
- Water trucked in, improvised shower.
- Park leases additional crop lands and begins development of the Demonstration Farm.
- Sergei Shalagin becomes farm manager.
- First environmental camp in Ussuriyskiy Nature Reserve (Primorski Region) is organized by the Park and led by the American teachers.
- Amur Program of ISEU receives an outstanding achievement award from the Society for Conservation Biology for the establishment and activities of Muraviovka Park.

## 1998

- No Amur Teacher Expedition. First summer camp organized and run by the Park staff and local teachers.
- School on sustainable farming is organized by Lewis Williamson.
- A duplex house with an apartment for staff family, an office for the Park, and seven guest rooms is completed and furnished.
- Solar panels shipped to the Park from the U.S. and mounted on the duplex roof with support from John D. and Catherine T. McArthur Foundation.
- Park hosts the first symposium of the North-East Asia Crane Site Network.
- First Crane Fest.
- Friends of Muraviovka Park* established.

## 1999

- Fifth Annual Amur Teacher Expedition.
- American team stays in guest rooms.
- Chinese team comes to the Park to learn about hands-on environmental education, outdoor classes, and sustainable farming.
- First Aldo Leopold bench and table built in Russia.
- First lure crop planted for cranes.
- Opening ceremony of the Nature Center with participation of the donors - President T. Tanaka and Vice-president Sh. Ando of POP Group Co., LTD.
- Melinda Herrold volunteers as English language teacher at Muraviovka and Kuropatino schools for the entire school year.
- Melinda writes part of her doctorate research on the relationship between the Park and local community.
- Russian-American conference "Children - Our Common Joy and Concern" is held with support and participation of the Rawhide Boys Ranch (Wisconsin).

## 2000

- Sixth Annual Amur Teacher Expedition.
- First Russian-Chinese camp.

- First Tambovka Country Fair in the Park.
- Dining shelter, banya, and new shower stalls built at the headquarters.
- Wells dug behind the house, near banya, and at stationary camp.
- First four cabins are built in stationary camp.
- First grain storage unit is built for the farm.
- Start building a woodshop.
- Manual for Crane Research (sponsored by the North-East Asia Crane Site Network) is published.
- Marina Kolodina graduates from the Amur Teachers' University and becomes a Coordinator of Environmental Camps.
- Tree nursery planted.

## 2001

- Seventh Annual Amur Teacher Expedition.
- Second Tambovka County Fair.
- First Russian-American Youth Symposium "Shapers of the Third Millennium" is held in the Park.
- John Deere farm equipment arrives from Wisconsin.
- Heated garage built.
- A four-year tri-lateral agreement signed by the Park, ICF, and the Changlindao State Farm and Nature Reserve (Heilongjiang Province of China), to conduct Chinese-Russian environmental education camps in the Park and at Changlindao.
- First Russian-Chinese camp organized by the Park and run by the Russian teachers at Changlindao.
- Three additional cabins, shower stalls, and outdoor toilets built in stationary camp.

## 2002

- Eighth Annual Amur Teacher Expedition.
- First English Language Camp.
- Third Tambovka County Fair.
- Russian-Chinese environmental camp and seminar in the Park.
- First book about hydrology and plants of the Park published.
- New kitchen built in stationary camp.
- Six cabins are equipped with bunk beds.
- Second grain storage unit built.
- First Russia-South Korean environmental education camp in the Park.
- Second Crane Fest.

## 2003

- Ninth Annual Amur Teacher Expedition.
- English camp becomes an International Language Summer School.
- Fourth Tambovka County Fair.
- American team attends and addresses the 100th Anniversary celebration at Kuropatino village.
- New Russian bus is purchased with support from the Friends of Muraviovka Park.
- First inspection of the farm to be certified as organic.
- Solar kiln for wood curing and dryer for grain built.
- Over 2 km of wind breaks developed.
- Third Crane Fest.

# The 'Good Oak' – a gift and a promise

By *Sergei Smirenski*

The Good Oak had endured many troubles during its long life but it could not survive the powerful lightning hit in the end. Still, that was not the end of the Good Oak story. The Good Oak logs kept the 'Shack' stove warm for Aldo Leopold, who restored for us dramatic events in the life of this oak and nature between 1890 and 1950.

The Good Oak stump had decayed a long time ago but its few surviving descendants are huge and strong and still filling the air with their "green voices." For over 50 years the chronicles of the Good Oak's life have been unveiling mysteries and beauties of the natural world, helping us to understand a threat coming from overconfident, aggressive and well-equipped conquerors and transformers of nature, who lack knowledge and concern about the consequences of their hasty actions.

Thanks to Aldo Leopold's family and his numerous spiritual heirs, the ranks of followers who adopt ideas of harmony between humans and nature are growing every year. Last August, Ed Pembleton, Director of the Leopold

Education Project (LEP) invited my wife Elena and I to their annual training seminar in Wisconsin Dells and introduced us to legendary Mr. and Mrs. Gary Laib, who developed *Adventures in a Sand County Almanac*. We shared stories about Muraviovka Park and its friends. We described the first Aldo Leopold bench ever made in Russia by Wisconsin teachers, and the acute lack of education materials and curricula. Gary Laib smiled, presented us with a miniature copy of the Leopold bench with its assembly instructions, and said that he has a special gift for us.

Within a few days we received a large envelope with two curricula of interdisciplinary activities for environmental education in the Amur Basin. In the same envelope we also found a small leather sack and inside the sack...a small glass tube with a tiny piece of wood labeled "A. Leopold Good Oak"! It is hard to describe the feelings that overwhelm me every time I look at this tiny but precious gift. The Good Oak and Aldo Leopold not only made history but remain in our present as living reality.

## A Russian teacher reflects...

*Dear Friends,*

I had been hearing a lot about Muraviovka Park. When I got an opportunity to come and participate in the Teachers Seminar, I was determined to seize the chance. That first trip was in 2002 and I was overwhelmed with the impressions: American teachers, Russian teachers, a very tough schedule, I just couldn't take a breath. But today, looking back, I realize that during those three days I learned so many things. Russians teachers, as well as American teachers, have a lot of material to share and it is very pleasant to learn that your classes (activities/work) are recognized by your colleagues in Russia and abroad. During my second visit to Muraviovka Park, for the 2003 Teachers Workshop, it was great that Russian teachers had a chance to teach and demonstrate their methods of teaching.

There is no doubt that the work Muraviovka Park is doing with summer schools is necessary and useful. It's closely connected with "environmental communication"—learning from nature while being in nature. If we want to bring up a nature-caring person, we must bring him outside to nature. Muraviovka Park is a unique place, a wildlife lab, where you get to know the wetland ecosystems, their peculiarities, and can study their plants and animals. Seeing birds which are in the Red Data book is something you can live for. Summer environmental schools are a good practice for students studying ecology. They can test their knowledge in the natural surroundings associated with Muraviovka Park and sometimes discover new things.

During our school course of ecology, we teach about Russian Nature Reserves that are specially protected by the government. Muraviovka Park is a specially protected area, where people do the protection. It's the only Nature Park like this in Russia.

Finally, I really liked the atmosphere surrounding the Park. It was friendly, kind and relaxing (it may sound like a paradox because we were always busy). The Park evokes only positive feelings. Thank you for this!

Good luck,  
*Oksana Mahovskaya*  
The Principle Assistant at High School  
Svobodnyi city  
Amur Region

# *A Typical Day at Muraviovka Park*

*by Barb Thompson*

This summer I will live at Muraviovka Park for the seventh time in the past nine years. I have seen many changes at the Park. The structures have improved, the numbers of students and children attending camps have grown, staffing has become more permanent and the cranes come back in greater numbers each year. For the American team, education remains the focus of the day. So what is a typical day like for a member of the American teaching team?

Most of us will wake up between 6:00 and 7:00 a.m. Some may go for a run or a walk, others will sit on the picnic table overlooking the wetland hoping for their first sight of the cranes, herons, or storks flying over. A quick (cool) shower may be the first order of business before breakfast for others. Breakfast is at 8:00. The team gathers in the dining hall in anticipation of another feast. We get three hot meals a day, all delicious home style Russian cooking. Over breakfast we discuss our plans for the day—do we all know our teaching stations, do we have all our supplies—we make sure we're ready for the kids to arrive.

The students arrive in homeroom at 9:00 and we are with them for the rest of the morning. Usually, we divide the kids into three groups and they rotate through three lessons each morning. Recently, we have been teaching in teams of one to two Americans and one Russian teacher in each team. That has worked very well. At noon, the kids head back to their camp for lunch and the American team, who swear they'll never eat again after their big breakfast, find themselves wandering toward the dining hall.

Classes don't start again until 2:00, so after lunch there is time for a nap, letter writing, laundry, or other odds and ends jobs. I usually head out to the tree nursery for an hour or so of weeding. We also use



*Summer camp students make good use of binoculars donated by Eagle Optics of Middleton, Wisconsin.*

that time to get ready for the afternoon session, which lasts from 2:00 until 5:00. After we've cleaned up from classes there may be time for a hot shower before supper. Supper takes place at 6:00 then a teacher meeting at 7:00. All the American and Russian teachers and translators meet to discuss plans for the following day. We want to make sure everyone understands what is going on. It also gives the translators a chance to ask questions about scientific words or activities they may not understand, so they can interpret correctly for the students.

Evenings end with a campfire at the children's camp. We have a great time listening to beautiful Russian songs, playing games, and watching performances by the kids. The Americans will also give singing a try although once we hear what the Russian kids can do we try to encourage them to do more of the singing! This is also a time for us to just sit and chat with the teachers, translators and kids. It's a wonderful way to end a busy fun-filled day.

This past summer Muraviovka

Park hosted the second International Languages Summer School (involving 40 Russian students, 5 Russian teachers, 3 American teachers and 4 American student teachers). A grant from the Trust for Mutual Understanding helped fund the ninth Environmental Education Camp (involving 36 Russian students, 4 Russian teachers, and 7 American teachers) and a teachers workshop (with 16 Russian teachers participating), both of which were very successful. Some of the Russian teachers were so impressed with the first camp and teacher workshop that they chose to stay and help with the second camp, some at their own expense. This year, two American husbands attended the Park with their teacher wives and provided important maintenance services.

There's never a dull moment at Muraviovka Park. Friendships are made, the air is filled with laughter, questions are asked and answered, and the cranes continue to come back in greater numbers each year!

*Barb Thompson is President of the FOMP Board of Directors.*

## Language school

from page 1

classes were followed with two hours of activities ranging from leadership enhancement, to crazy Olympics, to arts and crafts. Each evening was spent around the campfire getting to know each other on a more personal level.

The International Languages Summer School does more than just teach students how to speak a foreign language; it teaches acceptance of peoples with unique ideas and different cultural customs. I think I learned more from the children than I taught to them. Before classes started, I had no idea what to expect from my students: Would I be able to communicate with them? Would they participate in class? Would they have fun and gain something from my ten thousand-mile journey?

My fears were put aside as I was met every morning by students who had smiles on their faces, desire in their hearts, and that glimpse of hope in their eyes. They came each day eagerly anticipating what they would learn next and what challenges they would have to overcome. Participants would stay after class or come early if they had questions about the day's lesson or just to talk and find out more about the United States.

Being one of a few selected Americans these Russian kids might ever meet was quite a unique situation. I wanted to reflect a positive impression of the United States, but also tell the truth. Around the campfire, many students wanted to know about normal teen-age life in the United States, but I will never forget when one of my male students asked me how I felt about the war in Iraq. Here I am surrounded by eight Russian students who are all hanging on my every word, which they may not translate exactly. Their views of Americans, which they may hold for their entire lives, were being formed in this single week by what we said and how we acted. This was very intimidating at first, but as the week went on, relationships changed from that of teachers-versus-students to that of close friendships.

On a rainy day, we decided to combine all of the camp participants into a single class. One lesson was about the clay-type soil that is found at the Park. The American teachers decided to have a little fun while making clay pots. They let their inner child take over and had a good old-fashioned mud fight. The Russian students just stared in awe; for every teacher they have ever had has done nothing but lecture, and here we were running around in the rain and having a mud fight!

After that, the students and teachers had a great time every day; the classroom was more relaxed and the level of participation grew. Every student, even the ones who dared not speak a word all week, spoke up and now wanted to talk constantly. Once the students figured out we were here as friends and just wanted to help, nothing could stop them from wanting to know more. I always had five different spots waiting for me to sit, or another girl making me a bracelet, or a boy

playing me a song on his guitar, or another question about my life back home. The Russian students want to know everything and the American teachers want to teach them everything. The American teachers would stay up late and get up early to make plan changes or additions to the next day's lessons so that they could make the most out of their time with their cherished students. Sleep was hardly an option with so much surrounding you, and yet the ten days went by incredibly fast.

The last day of camp brought tears and sadness to all, but also the most important lesson of all. I rode the bus with a group of students to their drop-off point, and one of my "tough" girls was fighting tears back and she said she hated camp. I asked her why and she responded that it is too sad to say good-bye to those we have become so close to. I replied that she should be grateful for the opportunity to meet such great people. I told her that I felt blessed to have met great people such as herself and everybody at camp, and reminded her of my favorite quote, "Always shoot for the moon, even if you miss, you'll land among the stars." Then the tears started to flow. It was then that I decided I had to come back, because this camp is completely unique and everybody comes away as a better person because of it.

*Trina Bower is a freshman at St. Norbert College in Green Bay, WI, majoring in Math Education. She taught at the International Languages Summer School in 2003 and hopes to return in 2004.*

## **Only Together We Can Succeed**

*A workshop to mark  
the 10th anniversary of Muraviovka Park*

**11-17 June 2004**  
**Muraviovka Park, Amur Region, Russia**

Muraviovka Park is pleased to announce that in June, 2004 it will be hosting the international conference "Only Together We Can Succeed." Our goal is to discuss the 10-year history of the Park, the current situation, and future plans. We'll share our successful experiences in wildlife management, community relations, sustainable agriculture, environmental education, international support, youth programs, and people-to-people diplomacy.

For additional information and to request a registration form, contact Elena Smirenski at ICF:  
tel. 608-356-9462, ext. 130 or [elena@savingcranes.org](mailto:elena@savingcranes.org)

*We appreciate any financial contributions to help  
organize the conference.*



## Join FOMP with 'Adopt a Nest'

While we wait for the honking of geese as they fly overhead on their return from warmer climes or we track the raised-in-captivity whooping cranes in their winter home in Florida, why not think about adopting a nest for cranes in Muraviovka Park?

The Adopt a Nest Program, sponsored by Friends of Muraviovka Park, is a 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 by a certificate, a photo of a crane, and a book entitled *Reflections: The Story of Cranes*. This package comes complete with postcards from the Park and a 1 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? You will be gifting both the person or group (a popular choice for school classes) and the environment, too. To request an adoption brochure please contact [elena@savingscranes.org](mailto:elena@savingscranes.org) or me, Carolyn Parrott at [parroo@earthlink.net](mailto:parroo@earthlink.net).

Carolyn Parrott is a member of the FOMP Board of Directors and chairman of the "Adopt a Nest" program committee.

## Syrniki or Tvorozhniki

(Russian Cheese Cakes)

from the kitchen of *Olga Ilyinichna Putilova*  
(retired math teacher and cook for the summer camp)

### Ingredients:

- 1 pound of well-drained cottage cheese (see below)
- 1/3 cup flour
- 2 tablespoons sugar
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1 egg

1. Whip cottage cheese well, using a blender or mixer.
2. Add flour, sugar, salt, and egg.
3. Knead well.
4. Lay the dough out on a board covered with flour, form a long round loaf (about 3 inches in diameter) and slice into round patties approximately 3/8" thick.
5. Sprinkle each patty with flour.
6. Cook in butter on hot frying pan, until golden crust forms on both sides.
7. Place *syrniki* on a platter. You can sprinkle them with powdered sugar and serve while hot, with sour cream, and/or fruit jam (jelly, honey, etc.) on the side.

## Tvorog

(Russian Homemade Cottage Cheese)

From the kitchen of *Elena Smirenski*

### Ingredients:

- 1 gallon of whole milk
- 2 cups of cultured buttermilk
- 2 tablespoons of cultured sour cream.

1. Pour milk into a large enameled pot or saucepan.
2. Pour buttermilk into a separate dish or jar, add sour cream and stir until the mix looks well blended (no lumps!). Add to the milk and stir.
3. Cover the pot or saucepan with its own lid (but not too tightly) and put aside. Set it on the kitchen counter (near the stove, if possible) for 2 days and 3 nights. For example, if you started your *tvorog* on Friday night, it should sit there until Monday morning.
4. On the third morning, put the covered pot or saucepan into an oven (set at 200°F) for 2 hours.
5. After 2 hours, turn off the oven, but leave the covered pot or saucepan inside the oven, to cool slowly.
6. In the evening, drain the curds through a small meshed drainer or gauze and let them sit for a while to get rid of as much whey as possible (it would not hurt to put a weighted plate on top of the curds).
7. Don't dump the whey - you can use it to make delicious low-fat *bleeny* (thin pancakes) - see my earlier recipe in *Zhuravl*, December 1999.

# FOMP Board of Directors Candidates

It is time to vote for members of the Board of Directors for Friends of Muraviovka Park. According to the Bylaws, board members are to be elected every three years. The following candidates have served for the last three years and have agreed to be on the ballot. Additionally, any person wishing to be on the Board can be a write-in candidate. The three candidates receiving the most votes will be elected as members of the Board of Directors.

Use the ballot at the bottom of this page and return by March 6, 2004 to Friends of Muraviovka Park, International Crane Foundation, PO Box 447, Baraboo, WI 53913, or bring along to the annual meeting.

**Ruth Bauer** is an art teacher working with kindergarten through 6<sup>th</sup> grade students at Boscobel Elementary School. She has a Bachelor's Degree in Art Education and a Master of Science Degree in Environmental Education. Recently, she was elected to the Boards of Directors of the Wisconsin Association for Environmental Education and of the Southwest Prairie Enthusiasts. In 1995, Ruth traveled to Muraviovka Park as part of the volunteer teaching staff for the Environmental Summer Camp. She says that even though she went with the idea of teaching Russian children, she acquired more knowledge than she left behind. That experience along with 26 years of traveling around the world has developed her desire and motivation to work with the people, cranes, and wetlands associated with Muraviovka Park. Currently, she is Vice-President of the FOMP Board of Directors and Co-Chairman of the Fundraising Committee. Ruth wants to continue her efforts on the Board of Directors for Friends of Muraviovka Park so that she can help the Park remain a vital activity in the Russian Far East.

**George Danner** is an independent organic farm production and organic food processing inspector. Working for various certifiers, he has the opportunity to travel about the United States. George has been involved with the project at Muraviovka Park since its inception. He made two trips to the Russian Far East and the Park site with Sergei Smirenski, as the original ideas and plans were being developed. He traveled with Sergei to Washington D.C. for meetings that provided monies to initiate the beginning of the Park. Currently, George is the agricultural consultant for the demonstration farm activity at the Park and the editor of Zhuravl. He wants to continue his participation on the Board of Directors for Friends of Muraviovka Park, because of the very important support role the "Friends" provide for the survival of the Park.

**Carolyn Parrott** is an adjunct professor at Cardinal Stritch University and recently retired from full-time teaching of biology, AP biology, and bioethics. Carolyn traveled to Muraviovka Park in 1999 as part of the volunteer teaching team for the Environmental Summer Camp and has been a member of the FOMP Board since that time. She made a quilt with the Russian children and continues to express herself with beautiful quilts. Currently, Carolyn is membership Chairman and administers the "Adopt a Nest" Program for FOMP. She wants to continue her involvement as a Board member, because she believes in the mission of Friends of Muraviovka Park and the importance of the work being done in Russia.

## Friends of Muraviovka Park:

### Membership Application and Board of Directors Ballot

**Please vote for THREE of the following candidates:**

Ruth Bauer     George Danner     Carolyn Parrott     Write in candidate: \_\_\_\_\_

**Membership Renewal** (Membership term January 1, 2004 – December 31, 2004):

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  
Muraviotka 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  
Muraviotka Park and  
in the Amur River  
watershed of the  
Russian Far East.*

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

## FOMP on the WEB!

Information about Muraviotka Park can be found at two locations on the World Wide Web!

Maps of the Park, back issues of *Zhuravl*, and the opportunity to make credit card donations can be found via the International Crane Foundation's web site,

**[www.savingcranes.org](http://www.savingcranes.org).**

Click on "About ICF," and then "Friends of Muraviotka Park."

You can purchase crane gear, the proceeds of which support activities at the Park. In the ICF site, simply click "shop" then "clothing" for a selection of:

- T-shirts with white-naped cranes;
- T-shirts with dancing red-crowned cranes;
- Long sleeve t-shirts with dancing red-crowned cranes;
- Blue t-shirts with flying cranes; and
- Blue hooded sweatshirts with flying cranes.

You can also visit the new Friends of Muraviotka Park website,

**<http://zhuravl.freeshell.org>,**

to view photos of Park projects. Be sure to sign the guest book!

# Annual Meeting set for March 6 in Baraboo

This newsletter is the official publication of the Friends of Muraviotka Park and with its distribution, the official notice of the annual meeting is presented.

The annual meeting will take place in the library of the International Crane Foundation, E-11376 Shady Lane Road, Baraboo, Wisconsin, at **1:00 p.m. on Saturday, March 6, 2004.**

**Curt Meine**, an Aldo Leopold historian and biographer, will be the guest speaker. He is a member of the Wisconsin Academy of Sciences, Arts and Letters and co-authored the *Crane Action Plan* with George Archibald. Curt will talk about the influence of Aldo Leopold's philosophies on the conservation of cranes and their habitats at Muraviotka Park.

**Membership renewals are also due.** Please consider all the great things that continue to take place at Muraviotka Park and continue your support of a unique non-governmental, environmental preservation/ economic development project with multi-national relationships.