

## University of Nebraska - Lincoln DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln

---

North American Crane Workshop Proceedings

North American Crane Working Group

---

2001

# THE ONE-8Y-ONE METHOD FOR RELEASING CRANES

DAVID H. ELLIS

*USGS Patuxent Wildlife Research Center, david\_h\_ellis@usgs.gov*

DANIEL P. MUMMERT

*Northern Arizona University*

RICHARD P. URBANEK

*U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and International Crane Foundation, richardurbanek@gmail.com*

MATTHEW KINLOCH


*USGS Patuxent Wildlife Research Center*

CAROLEE MELLON

*USGS Patuxent Wildlife Research Center*

*See next page for additional authors*

Follow this and additional works at: <http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/nacwgproc>

 Part of the [Behavior and Ethology Commons](#), [Biodiversity Commons](#), [Ornithology Commons](#), [Population Biology Commons](#), and the [Terrestrial and Aquatic Ecology Commons](#)

---

ELLIS, DAVID H.; MUMMERT, DANIEL P.; URBANEK, RICHARD P.; KINLOCH, MATTHEW; MELLON, CAROLEE; DOLBEARE, TRESSA; and OSSI, DAMIEN P., "THE ONE-8Y-ONE METHOD FOR RELEASING CRANES" (2001). *North American Crane Workshop Proceedings*. 60.  
<http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/nacwgproc/60>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the North American Crane Working Group at DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln. It has been accepted for inclusion in North American Crane Workshop Proceedings by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln.

---

**Authors**

DAVID H. ELLIS, DANIEL P. MUMMERT, RICHARD P. URBANEK, MATTHEW KINLOCH,  
CAROLEE MELLON, TRESSA DOLBEARE, and DAMIEN P. OSSI

## THE ONE-BY-ONE METHOD FOR RELEASING CRANES

DAVID H. ELLIS,<sup>1</sup> USGS Patuxent Wildlife Research Center, 11410 American Holly Drive, Laurel, MD 20708-4019, USA

DANIEL P. MUMMERT,<sup>2</sup> School of Forestry, Northern Arizona University, Flagstaff, AZ 86011, USA

RICHARD P. URBANEK, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and International Crane Foundation, Necedah National Wildlife Refuge, W7996 20th Street West, Necedah, WI 54646, USA.

MATTHEW KINLOCH,<sup>3</sup> USGS Patuxent Wildlife Research Center, 11510 American Holly Drive, Laurel, MD 20708-4019, USA

CAROLEE MELLON,<sup>3</sup> USGS Patuxent Wildlife Research Center, 11510 American Holly Drive, Laurel, MD 20708-4019, USA

TRESSA DOLBEARE,<sup>4</sup> USGS Patuxent Wildlife Research Center, 11510 American Holly Drive, Laurel, MD 20708-4019 USA

DAMIEN P. OSSI, USGS Patuxent Wildlife Research Center, 11510 American Holly Drive, Laurel, MD 20708-4019 USA

**Abstract:** Although the trend for the past 2 decades has been toward releasing naive groups of juveniles after a lengthy acclimation period, in 5 separate releases (1996–2000) we tested the idea that naive juvenile greater sandhill cranes (*Grus canadensis tabida*) would survive better if released singly into a wild flock of predator-wary birds than if left as a group, inexperienced at foraging and ill prepared to avoiding predators. We released 3 groups of hand-reared juveniles ( $n = 12$  [1996];  $n = 8$  [1998],  $n = 12$  [1999]) into a wild flock of sandhill cranes (ca 300 birds) on wintering grounds near Gila Bend, Arizona. Another 8 parent-reared colts were released into a small group (4) of subadult greater sandhill cranes (survivors of the 1996 trucking experiment [Ellis, et al. 1997; Ellis et al. 2001, Mummert et al. 2001]) in northcentral Arizona. Another 8 juveniles, costume-reared from hatching, were released into wild sandhill crane flocks in central Wisconsin at autumn staging areas. In all of these tests, cranes were released 1 or 2 at a time, either at the periphery of a wild flock or at a known roost site. Most birds were released in daylight at a foraging area, but because this was a pilot project, we tried a variety of methods. We released a few individuals at odd times (e.g., midnight) and in odd ways (e.g., by flushing a release crane as a wild flock passed overhead). A few birds were initially left stranded after we placed them at ephemeral roosts that had been used recently, but not subsequent to our visit. However, once we made the necessary adjustments, and regardless of release time or situation, all of our cranes very quickly joined their adoptive flocks. We experienced excellent survival, including 100% survival for all 8 of our parent-reared fledgling colts released on the summering ground and followed until they disappeared at the time of migration. Further, all (32) hand-reared birds released on the wintering grounds survived the winter. Also all 8 of the juveniles reared and released in Wisconsin successfully migrated south and returned north to Central Wisconsin the following spring. These results recommend the one-by-one method as a promising strategy for releasing juvenile cranes with minimal training, handling, and maintenance. The method provides a likely strategy for building wild flocks of endangered cranes once a core group is established by some other method.

### LITERATURE CITED

- Ellis, D. H., B. Clauss, T. Watanabe, R. C. Mykut, M. Kinloch, and C. H. Ellis. 1997. Results of an experiment to lead cranes on migration behind motorized ground vehicles. *Proceedings North American Crane Workshop* 7:114-122.
- \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, M. Shawkey, D. P. Mummert, D. T. Sprague, C. H. Ellis, and F. B. Trahan. 2001. Results of the second (1996) experiment to lead cranes in migration behind a motorized ground vehicle. *Proceedings North American Crane Workshop* 8:122-126.
- Mummert, D. P., D. H. Ellis, and C. L. Chambers. 2001. Fate of the survivors of the 1995 and 1996 Arizona trucking migrations of costume-reared greater sandhill cranes. *Proceedings North American Crane Workshop* 8:127-131.

PROCEEDINGS NORTH AMERICAN CRANE WORKSHOP 8:225

**Key words:** *Grus canadensis*, reintroduction techniques, sandhill crane.

<sup>1</sup>E-mail: david\_h\_ellis@usgs.gov.

<sup>2</sup>Present address: University of California Cooperative Extension, 2156 Sierra Way, Suite C, San Luis Obispo, CA 93401, USA.

<sup>3</sup>Present address: 1222 Jo Apter Place, New Windsor, MD 21776, USA.

<sup>4</sup>Present address: 827 Valley Drive, Crownsville, MD 21032, USA.