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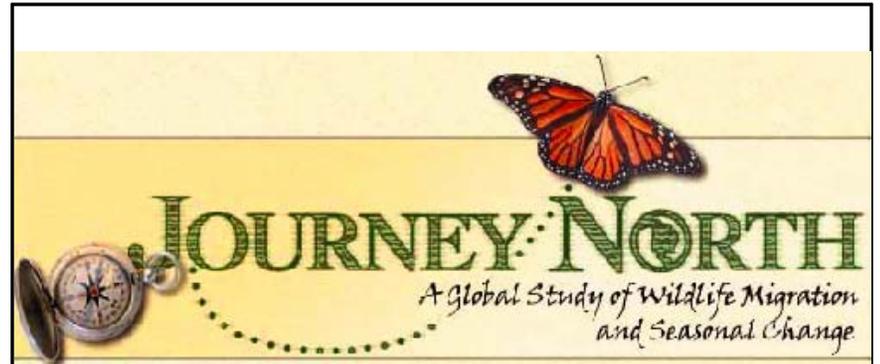


Photo © Abby Studnicka

## Nadia Helps the Cranes

As Told by Nadia Studnicka to Journey North

In 2006 my mom and I started studying the Whooping Crane Reintroduction project with home schooling.



When the class of 2006 died in February, we were really, really sad. Before they died, my sister Eve had taught my mom and me how to fold origami cranes. We had also read the story of *Sadako and the Thousand Cranes*, which said that if you fold 1,000 cranes you will get one wish. We all decided to fold 1,000 cranes and that our wish would be that the Whooping Cranes would come back to the wild in eastern North America.



We also had the idea to sell the cranes we made for \$2.00 each and give the money to Operation Migration.



It took us seven whole months to fold and sell all of our cranes. We thought we would never get the project done. But we did! We didn't just make 1,000 cranes; we made over 1,500. We got letters and donations from all over the U.S.A. including Hawaii and as far away as Australia.

By summer we had raised \$3,100. After a local woman read our story in the newspaper, she gave us \$2,000. Then Caterpillar, the company she works for, matched her \$2,000. That made our total \$7,100 to give to Operation Migration.

## Nadia and the 1,000 cranes

By Peggy Holmes Hicks  
For the Independent

With each fold of the origami paper she uses to form a crane, nine-year-old Nadia Studnicka comes closer to breathing life into a real whooping crane. Heartbroken when she learned that 17 of these rare birds had died in a storm, Nadia channeled her feelings into action. She and her family have launched an ambitious project to help save the endangered whooping crane.

February 3, 2007 is a date Nadia Studnicka will never forget.

It was on that evening that the Chillicothe girl learned of the tragic death of her beloved whooping cranes, presumably all 18 of the birds she had come to know through months of reading.

Nadia says she was devastated when she discovered that these cranes, so carefully and lovingly raised by humans, had died, apparently when a storm surge swamped their Florida enclosure.

"Me and my mom stayed up until midnight crying," Nadia says, her large brown



Determined to make a difference 9-year-old Nadia Studnicka is launching a fundraiser to help save the whooping crane.

eyes somber. She says her family's flock of adopted house pets sensed her distress and the dogs and cats came to lie down beside her.

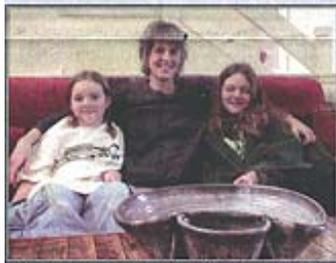
"I love all animals," Nadia says, "but I especially like birds. I really like whooping cranes because they are an

endangered species and I want to help them."

The homeschooled third grader had been studying the lives of this current batch of juvenile cranes since her school year began last September. She had come to know each bird and its personality until the flock felt like avian friends.

Nadia was captivated by these majestic white birds whose wingspan reaches up to eight feet. And she learned about the ingenious methods humans have devised to raise the hatchlings through their first year of life and to teach them how and where to migrate.

Dubbed Operation Migration, the clever enterprise uses a fleet of ultralight aircraft to shepherd each



Nadia, Abby and Eve Studnicka are determined to make a difference through their crane project.

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On August 12, 2007, we packed our bags and drove up to Necedah, Wisconsin to deliver the money in person. When the day finally came to meet the crew and see the chicks, we were so excited! We woke up at 4:00 in the morning, and drove from our hotel to Necedah National Wildlife Refuge. We were going to meet Bev at 6:00 a.m., but since we were an hour early we went to the observation tower. It was so pretty with all the fog and the sun just rising. We didn't see any cranes at the observation tower, but we heard them.



Then we went to see the crew in their camp. It was still dark when we drove up, but right away we could see Bev waiting for us by her trailer. We were so excited and she was very nice. Eventually Nathan, Megan, Brooke and Brian joined her. They were all really nice, and just how I expected them to be. Bev and Nathan walked us over to an old van, and we all piled in to take a private tour of the refuge. As we drove, Nathan stopped to point out different birds to us. We saw hawks, deer, kingfishers, eagles, and my first wild Whooping Cranes!



When we got to the **blind**, it was not what I expected it to be. The blind was a small room, which looked like it was built into a hill. It had windows across one of the sides, with camouflaged paper over them so the birds could not see us. We watched Nathan put on the costume, and walk over the hill to the pens where the third cohort was kept. Then we went inside the blind.

We could see Nathan open the gates of the pen, and #726 and #727 came out and they were trained for a while.

After that we all drove back to the hangar, where we saw Richard for the first time. Brooke was there too. They talked about the ultralight. Then Eve and I got to put on the costumes and sit in the ultralight!!!



After my mom photographed us with the crew, we got into the van and drove back to the camp. When we got out everybody came over so we could give them the checks. We had made an envelope decorated with pictures of the class of 2006 on it. Inside were our checks. Eve baked them some delicious chocolate chip cookies, and we brought them 50 of our paper cranes as gifts.



Next my mom took group pictures. I held the check, Eve and Brian each held a fake crane, and Bev held the envelope. Then it was time to leave.



*Nathan, Nadia, Brian, Eve, Bev, Richard, Megan, Brooke*

What I have learned from this project is that anyone can make a difference. Even if it's just one small thing, it is still helping. By doing our crane project we not only hope to save the cranes but to inspire other people to make a difference as well. If kids start trying to help animals and the environment now, then maybe someday our world will be a better place to live for everyone.

