

"If only I could find a guy who wasn't in his 70's to talk to me about white cranes, I'd be madly in love." Actress Leelee Sobieski

An event, ranked as one of the top 10 wildlife spectacles in the world, occurs every year in Nebraska. As a sure sign of spring, over a half million Sandhill Cranes, among the oldest living birds on the planet, pack into a 60 mile stretch along the Platte River, known as the Big Bend region, starting in February and lasting until April. I don't make it every year, but as often as I can, I take one of my kids and hike to a riverside bunker-blind at dusk to witness a spectacle that stirs the senses and sparks the imagination like few experiences can. I don't know if it is the visual image of thousands of birds falling out of the sky like on parachutes, or hearing the eerie, haunting, ancient cry as they come in to roost along the broad shallows of the Platte River that keeps me coming back. The cry has been described as the sound of geese honking, frogs croaking, cats purring, whistles blowing, castanets clicking, trumpets blaring, and flutes trilling. ([http://www.michiganaudubon.org/bakersanctuary/crane\\_calls.html](http://www.michiganaudubon.org/bakersanctuary/crane_calls.html)) It's over in about 30 minutes, and I am never disappointed. I am always humbled to have participated in an event that has occurred like clockwork for millennium, and will continue long after I am gone.

They come from as far away as Mexico, and will travel as far as Siberia to breed. In order to reach these destinations, the cranes must build up enough energy to complete their journey in a healthy state. Nebraska is the most important stop in their migration. Individuals stay about 3 weeks, get rested, and fatten up on grain and invertebrates found along the river, which also serves to protect them from predators while roosting. If you weren't able to make it this year, here's the National Geographic cranecam website, best to view at dawn or dusk before mid-April: (<http://magma.nationalgeographic.com/ngm/cranecam/>)

It is with mixed emotions that we are about to witness the migration of our first graduated class of residents. I'm not sure they got rested or fattened up, but I think we protected them from a few predators and I know they made a lot of noise. I am incredible proud of and grateful to this group, since they trusted us to be their teachers and provide them with the attitudes, knowledge and skills they will need to have a fulfilling career in emergency medicine. They will migrate to Logan, Utah, Cheyenne, Wyoming, Cedar Rapids, Iowa, and Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Two will stay in Nebraska. One will work in Omaha, and the other in North Platte, where he will be able to see the cranes every day.

We wish them the best of luck.

Another sure sign of spring is match day. Our applicant pool continues to increase in quantity and quality. We had applicants from dozens of states, and are very pleased with our matched class. Three are from Nebraska and three will migrate in from Texas, Missouri and Indiana. I'm sure they are pleased, as are we, that the RRC approved our residency program for the maximum 5 year accreditation at the February meeting. Congratulations to Dr. Wadman, Dr. Hoffman, and Tammi Erickson for all of their hard work in putting together a quality program. For a new program to get a 5 year approval is a rare event. In some ways, I'm going to miss being one of the 'new' programs, but it's also nice to have a program with a track record and a tradition developed. It has exceeded my expectations.

Our EM family continued to grow this year. Drs. Asher, Bott, Dierks, Cunningham, Zeger and Branecki all had health babies this year. I guess they didn't want to wait until their migration ended. Also, Drs. Oakes, Pedersen, and Jones are expecting in the next few months.

Our faculty has had a busy year in other ways too. There are several ongoing research projects, and they will be presenting seven papers various national meetings this spring.

Arguably, the biggest news this year is that we were granted departmental status at UNMC on January 1<sup>st</sup>. This is an important landmark in our growth, and raises the bar in terms of academic contribution for our residents and faculty members. The faculty has worked hard for this, and is well deserved. To have it happen the year our residency got 5 year accreditation, and graduated our first group of residents is almost overwhelming.

As you can see, our program continues its flight to success. As you prepare for your migration, consider roosting here for 3 years. We haven't been training residents for a millennium, but I'm sure the training program will continue to be successful long after I am gone.

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