



# Dashanbao:

## Yunnan's Largest Winter Habitat of Black-necked Cranes



Dashanbao National Nature Reserve is located in Zhaoyang District, Zhaotong City of Southeast Yunnan Province. It covers a land of 19,200 hectares with an altitude difference from 2,250 to 3,364 meters. Every winter, many kinds of migrating birds choose Dashanbao as one of their resting places because it lies on their migration route. And some of them, including black-necked cranes, spend their whole winter there.

Dashanbao Reserve is covered with meadows and marshes, full of underground fountains and rich in biological diversity. From every September in the Chinese Lunar Calendar, black-necked cranes will fly from southeast Qinghai-Tibet Plateau to Dashanbao Reserve, and they will fly back from every lunar March of the next year.

Professor Wang Zijiang of Yunnan University first noted the black-necked cranes in Dashanbao on December 4, 1988. At that time, their number was only 300. Today, there are more than 1,300 black-necked cranes wintering in Dashanbao Reserve, which has become the largest winter

habitat for black-necked cranes in Yunnan and is regarded as one of the Hometowns of Black-necked Cranes in China. Because of the increasing population of black-necked cranes, many scientists, environmentalists and photographers have paid close attention to Dashanbao.

Dashanbao first became a black-necked crane nature reserve through the approval from the Zhaotong City government in 1990. And in 1994, with the approval of the Yunnan provincial government, Dashanbao Reserve was upgraded to the provincial level. And in 2003, the state government approved the change to become a national nature reserve. For years, the government has converted cropland to forestry and grassland and built a dam to recover wetlands in Dashanbao Reserve, enlarging the foraging area for black-necked cranes and protecting them.

On December 4, 1998, after ten years when black-necked cranes were first discovered in Dashanbao, a Volunteers' Association to Protect Black-necked Cranes was established in Zhaotong

City. Since then, the Association has been devoted to the protection which nowadays is not only enjoyed by black-necked cranes but also by other species in the Reserve. Now the Association has over 300 members, including civil servants, teachers, students, workers and farmers. Every year it publishes news and holds activities to increase people's awareness of protecting black-necked

cranes and the Reserve. Its fund mainly comes from membership fees, government allocations and donations.

Giving food to the cranes is an important work of the Association. Food is rare for black-necked cranes from January to February since Dashanbao Reserve is covered by snow during these two months. Up to now, the Association has provided 30,000 kilograms of food for the cranes. It even grows food for them. Every year, the Association grows 88 mu of potatoes and never has a harvest. When black-necked cranes come, they dig out and feed on the potatoes. The Association also helps and heals wounded cranes.

Birds are the most sensitive animals to environment. If they feel the environment is unsafe for them, then next year they will choose another habitat. Though coming to Dashanbao Reserve every winter, black-necked cranes won't land as soon as they arrive. They'll swirl in the sky for a long time and make sure the Reserve is safe for them.

Every winter, many photographers and tourists come to Dashanbao to watch black-necked cranes. To avoid disturbances, a tunnel was built in the Reserve. It is covered by grass and there is a row of windows on its upper part. Anyone who wants to watch or take photos of black-necked cranes shall stay in the tunnel.

For all above-mentioned and unmentioned, Dashanbao's ecological environment is becoming better and the population of black-necked cranes is increasing.

