

# Dancing Cranes

## A spring festival of time-honoured choreography

Several fields at the southern end of Lake Hornborga have become a place where humans and cranes celebrate the arrival of spring to the cacophony of some 20,000 bills performing a natural score during a month of eating, flirting and dancing.

The first time you witness cranes “dancing” you may think it is an organised event, but the ballet is highly disorganised and spontaneous. One makes a little pirouette, jumps a metre up in the air, spreads its wings, picks up a twig, throws it and extends its neck in preparation of a magnificent fanfare. Sometimes the dance proliferates throughout the flock like a wave. The show is most impressive at dawn and dusk. At mid-day, the cranes tend to focus on feeding, but every now and then they take a few dance steps. While busy picking seeds from the ground, a couple may stop in front of one another, extend their necks and call out for the sky to hear that they belong together and that they will spend yet another summer in each other’s company. Cranes may have been coming here to pause since the last ice sheet receded on the shores of Lake Hornborga, where the water is shallow and warm in spring. When the Dagsnäs estate began

to throw out left over potato scraps from their aquavit production on the surrounding fields, the site became even more popular among the cranes. These days, the County Administrative Board distributes grain to these visitors that have flown in from as far away as Spain and North Africa.



 **Don't miss:** The eagle breeding season in January. The carrion that has been deposited here for a number of years attracts scores of white-tailed eagles. More information about guided tours can be found at the County Administrative Board web site.

 **Picnic spot:** At the table overlooking the cranes (but during Easter weekends you may be more likely to be watching the backs of other visitors).

 **When to go:** The cranes are usually at their most numerous in early April. The information point is open in season with information about the cranes, tourist information and café. Bird experts are available some weekends.

 **Getting there:** Road 184, Skara to Falköping. A large car park is situated approximately 1 km north of Bjurum Church, and you can park nearer the church too. Bus no. 203 (Skara-Falköping) stops at “Trandansen”.

The dancing cranes are in Falköping Municipality, the visitors watching them are standing in Skara Municipality.

When the cranes get together in spring they are less shy than in the summer. They often come up to 30–40 metres from the fence. Many other species feel safe in the crowd, especially whoopers, various types of goose and ducks that you get to see at close range.

