

Putin Might Hang Glide With Cranes

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Putin might fly in a hang glider like this one on a trip to help guide cranes on their migration.

President Vladimir Putin might go hang gliding with a flock of Siberian cranes as part of an event aimed at preserving the endangered species.

Dmitry Peskov, Putin's chief spokesman, said the president would attend the event on his way to the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation summit in Vladivostok. The preservation project, called the Flight of Hope, is taking place in the village of Kushevat in the Yamal-Nenets autonomous district.

Alexander Sorokin, a founder of the project, said Putin might fly a hang glider to help guide the birds, Vedomosti reported.

"The pilot's role is that of the flock's leader," said Yury Markin, head of the Oka State Biosphere Nature Reserve in the Ryazan region. "They show the flight route [to the cranes]."

If Putin decides to glide with the cranes, he will wear a white coat and an artificial beak so that

the birds can recognize him as one of their own, Markin said, Russian News Service radio reported. He added that such suits had been worn by the scientists who raised the cranes.

In mid-September the cranes will fly to Central Asia, led by a pilot, and they will winter there.

But the birds' departure is being postponed because of Putin's planned visit, said Tatyana Kashentseva, who is in charge of rare crane species at the reserve.

"[The birds will be sent away] after the boss comes and makes a flight," she said.

Meanwhile, Markin attributed the delay to bad weather.

This is not Putin's first publicized encounter with animals.

In 2008, he visited the Ussuriisky Nature Reserve, where he shot a tigress with a tranquilizer gun and tagged her with a GPS collar. The event caused a scandal when environmentalist Dmitry Molodsov wrote in March 2012 that the tigress was tranquilized before Putin's visit and later died as a result of a sedative overdose. He added that she was not a wild animal, as the government claimed, but was brought from a zoo. Molodsov also said that Putin's official website featured a fake map tracking the tigress' movements and showed photos of a different tigress.

Later several bloggers wrote that the report about the tigress' death had proved incorrect but it is unclear whether the other details are true.

Putin has also taken part in projects to preserve white whales, snow leopards and Amur leopards.

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