



EASTERN CRANE BULLETIN

December 2019

The Eastern Crane E-bulletin covers news about the Eastern Populations of Sandhill and Whooping Cranes, as well as general information about cranes and the continuing work for the protection of these birds and their habitats.

Raising public awareness of Whooping Cranes one decade at a time

Editor: *After the recent ruling of “probation” for the poacher responsible for the 2018 shooting death of a Louisiana Whooper in the non-migratory flock (see below in General News/Louisiana), my thoughts turned to public awareness of these endangered birds. Poachers are seldom charged under the Endangered Species Act, because prosecutors have to prove that the poacher knew that the killed animal was endangered. Even before the 1918 passage of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, and biologists and others sounded the alarm that Whooping Cranes were headed toward extinction, Whooping Cranes had been in the public eye – whether as a target or as something to be protected. This quarter’s bulletin is dedicated to all the Whooper “educators” out there – the scientists, conservation groups and concerned individuals who have worked through the decades, and continue to work in loose tandem with one another, toward the common goal of bringing an awareness of Whooping Cranes to others. The following is a partial history.*



Hunter posing for portrait with a Whooping Crane, Sandhill Cranes and waterfowl, date and location unknown.

The Whooping Crane once ranged over most of North America, from the Arctic coast south to central Mexico, and from Utah east to New Jersey, South Carolina, and Florida. Within historic times, the breeding range extended northwest from central Illinois through Iowa, Minnesota, North Dakota, southern Manitoba and Saskatchewan, to the general vicinity of Edmonton, Alberta. Estimates from the mid-1800s put the total Whooping Crane population at 1,200 to 1,500, but by the 1890s breeding populations of the cranes had disappeared from the heart of their historic breeding range in the north-central United States. By the early 1900s, Whooping Crane numbers had plummeted.

What caused this rapid decline? The cranes’ known wetland breeding grounds were altered and disturbed as settlers plowed the native prairies and drained

marshes for farming. Whooping Cranes also were hunted, and their eggs collected, leading to increased pressure on an already small population.

In 1918 the passage of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act made it illegal to hunt Whooping Cranes. Despite this and other early protection efforts the Whooping Crane population continued to decline. By the late 1930s, only two small flocks remained: a few nonmigratory birds around the tallgrass prairies near White Lake in southwestern Louisiana and one migratory flock that wintered in southeastern Texas and summered in western Canada.



Taking Louisiana's last whooping crane to Port Aransas, Texas, after its capture in Louisiana swamp.

In 1940 a hurricane “drove the birds in to the rice fields and most of them were shot by hunters or killed by the storm,” and the number of Whooping Cranes in the wild dropped to just 21 birds by the mid-40s. In 1950 the last individual in the Louisiana population, “Mac,” was removed from the wild (*photo left*, [Eastern Crane Bulletin, March 2018 issue, pp.9-10; http://laconservationist.wlf.la.gov/past_issues/1950-vol-2-no-78/](http://laconservationist.wlf.la.gov/past_issues/1950-vol-2-no-78/)), leaving a total of only 34 surviving Whooping Cranes in the migratory flock.

Because of the critically low number of Whooping Cranes, biologists proposed a program of captive breeding. Beginning in 1967, eggs were transferred from the breeding grounds at Wood Buffalo National Park in Canada to the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) Patuxent Wildlife Research Center near Laurel, Maryland. The captive Whooping Cranes at Patuxent first produced eggs in 1975, and gradually the captive flock at Patuxent grew. This was the beginning of a long, complicated process involving the efforts of many individuals, conservation organizations and government agencies to protect the endangered Whooping Cranes. (The Patuxent captive breeding program ended in 2018.) In 1986, the [Whooping Crane Recovery Plan](#) was created by the Whooping Crane Recovery Team, a group of crane biologists and officials from the United States and Canada.

The results have been mixed. In 1975 biologists began an ambitious, first-time reintroduction attempt to establish a migratory Whooping Crane population in the Rocky Mountain states, placing Whooping Crane eggs in nests of would-be surrogate Sandhill Cranes at the Grays Lake National Wildlife Refuge in Idaho. This approach was discontinued when it was shown that the Whooping Cranes imprinted on the Sandhills and would not mate with Whooping Cranes. In 1993 biologists began a project to reintroduce a nonmigratory population of Whooping Cranes to Florida, but discontinued the program due to losses from predation, disease and reproductive failure. In 2001 the Whooping Crane Eastern Partnership (WCEP) initiated a project to restore a migratory population in eastern North America using ultralight-led migration. A variation of the WCEP project continues but is plagued by ongoing reproductive failure and poaching. In 2011 a reintroduction project began to establish a nonmigratory population of the species in Louisiana. Despite poaching losses, the Louisiana reintroduction project is gaining traction as cohort members are starting to breed, nest and successfully fledge young. The goal of all the experimental populations is to achieve a self-sustaining population to help safeguard the Aransas-Wood Buffalo wild population.

The following article, “Whooping Cranes in Louisiana,” appeared in the Science News Letter, September 20, 1929. (Science News is available at <https://www.sciencenews.org/>.)

“Two whooping cranes, lone representatives of a species almost extinct as the passenger pigeon, were seen by Dr. E. W. Nelson former chief of the U.S. Biological Survey, on a recent trip along the coast marshes of Louisiana.

A hundred years ago whooping cranes, five feet tall standing, and almost pure white, used to fly over the prairies at migration times in vast armies. The clamor rising from the trumpeting of the vast hordes, early naturalists tell us, was almost deafening. Now, thanks to their size, conspicuous plumage and commendable flavor on the dinner table, they have virtually vanished.

Dr. Nelson declared in a report to the Cooper Ornithological Club, that the Louisiana cranes were the first specimens he had seen in the field since 1870. At that time, he stated, eight and ten whooping cranes at a time might be seen hanging in the markets in Chicago, where they were considerable sought after by keepers of the larger restaurants.

According to local trappers the pair seen by Dr. Nelson were the only ones in the region and had wintered in the marsh four successive years without rearing any young."

James Osborne Stevenson (1908-1991) became the first refuge manager of the Aransas National Wildlife Refuge in Texas under the Bureau of Biological Survey. There he spent much of his time observing, studying, and photographing Whooping Cranes. He took the first color films of their courtship dances and published a number of scientific and public interest articles on these cranes. In 1943, he published an article called "Will Bugles Blow No More?" Following are excerpts.

"Old-timers, who once owned small cattle ranches in the Blackjacks, told me that back in the '70s and '80s [1870s and 1880s], hundreds of the big white birds were present from October to April.... The sandhill crane, a much commoner bird, usually stayed inland on the prairies or in brush-lands. Mexican cowhands recognized this habitat preference of the whooper and, with their penchant for picturesque names, called it Viejo del Agua—the old man of the water.

Most local names are based on the color of this species or on its call notes. Adults are known as white cranes or Grulla Blanco [sic]; immature, cinnamon-colored birds as red cranes. One accepted name in Texas is bugle crane—since the loud piercing notes sound like a trumpet.

For three winters we kept careful count of the cranes on the refuge. In 1938-39 there were 10 adults and 4 immatures; the next winter 15 adults and 7 young; in 1940-41, 21 adults and 5 young—the largest population noted in recent years. We were inclined to consider this growth in numbers as a hopeful sign that the species was increasing until we realized that possibly it was due to "foreign" birds from the Louisiana marshes supplementing the usual wintering flock.

They formerly wintered by the hundreds in the lagoon country of northeastern Mexico, but none has been reported from that region in recent years. As far as is known, the only important wintering grounds are now those in the White Lake region of southern Louisiana, and in the Aransas Refuge and vicinity on the south coast of Texas. It so happens that only 15 birds (13 adults and 2 immatures) spent the winter of 1941-42 on the refuge; and persons who searched the Texas bays and marshes for other groups were unsuccessful.

IS THE OLD WHOOPER doomed? What can be done to help this bird? For one thing, we need a complete life history study that will point out the specific requirements to save this species from oblivion. This approach to the problem is fundamental; it has already been used by the National Audubon Society in the case of the roseate spoonbill and the ivory-billed woodpecker. We know there is need for additional patrol, for an educational campaign to be carried out in the vicinity of the birds' wintering grounds. The Canadian breeding grounds are now mainly restricted to southern



Male crane (calling) and immature bird in Mustang Lake, Aransas Refuge.

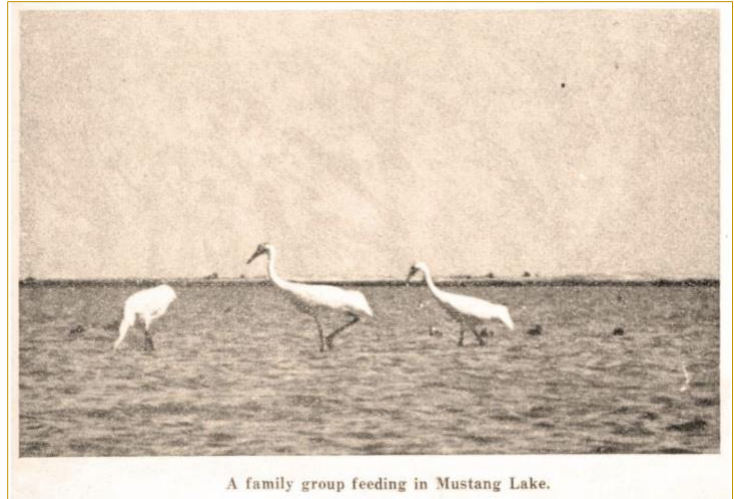
Mackenzie and northern Saskatchewan, and possibly sections of Alberta; however, the exact location of nesting areas is shrouded in mystery."

MAY THE OLD WHOOPER continue to trumpet down through the years! Though the outlook for his survival is dark, may the day never come when the last bugler blows taps for his race.

~ James Osborne Stevenson, 1943

To read the entire article, go here:

<https://friendsofthewildwhoopers.org/will-bugles-blow/>



Voices from The Past: A 1954 recording of Whooping Cranes at Aransas NWR

The Macaulay Library of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology now has a number of Whooping Crane recordings, but an early recording is particularly interesting. On January 26, 1954, Julian Howard, then manager of the refuge, accompanied by Arthur A. Allen made a recording of the unison call of a Whooping Crane pair at Aransas National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR). According to Howard, 1954 was the first year in recent times that three colts successfully migrated with their parents from Wood Buffalo National Park in Canada to Aransas. That winter the Whooping Crane population at ANWR totaled 24 cranes, including the juveniles. The first speaker you hear in the recording is Arthur A. Allen, founder of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. Established in 1967, the Arthur A. Allen Award is named after him and honors those who have made significant contributions to ornithology, while making the science of birds accessible to the public. To listen to the recording, go here:

[Whooping Crane \(Grus americana\): ML2739](https://macaulaylibrary.org/asset/2739), or, here: <https://macaulaylibrary.org/asset/2739>

Here Come the Cranes

by John O'Reilly, *Sports Illustrated*,
20 September 1954

"The surviving remnant of the great race of whooping cranes, hardly more than two dozen birds will be "escorted" this fall from Canada to Texas. That is, they will be escorted insofar as it is possible for human beings to escort wild creatures which fly high and come to rest in lonely places. But, elusive though they may be, these huge white birds with the black wingtips will be followed on their route by thousands of well-wishers.

In advance of their coming a campaign is being conducted to alert the human population along the migration route of the cranes. As was the case last fall, radio stations will broadcast appeals to report the birds but not molest them. Their trip will be announced by newspapers. Sportsmen's clubs and civic organizations have helped spread the word. Thousands of post cards bearing the facts and a picture of a whooper have been mailed to persons living along the flight lane.

All of this is part of the international effort to help America's tallest bird in its struggle for existence.

...Now the Fish and Wildlife Service, the Canadian Wildlife Service and the National Audubon Society are partners in a project designed to save the whooping crane from extinction. Numerous state agencies and private groups are cooperating. One of the prime workers on the project is



A 1955 Canadian stamp of Whooping Cranes, Grue Blanche, flying over Wood Buffalo National Park breeding habitat.

Robert P. Allen, research ornithologist of the National Audubon Society. Allen devoted three years to an intensive study of the cranes, hoping to find a way to halt their decline....

As a result of Allen's recommendations, numerous steps have been taken to aid the cranes. One of the main objectives has been to find the nesting grounds and learn whether there are any factors there which are limiting the increase. Canada has announced that when the nesting area is found it will be declared an inviolate sanctuary...."

Whoop for Cranes

By John O'Reilly, *Sports Illustrated*, 21 November 1955
"Project Whooping Crane"

In the *Sports Illustrated*, "Memo from the Publisher," introducing O'Reilly's article announcing the discovery of the Canadian nesting grounds:

"...In this week's issue, as the cranes whose progress southward has been followed by the hopes of thousands, move into their government protected winter quarters near Corpus Christi, Texas...Apart from the interest which surrounds almost all rare things, this story is especially satisfying as a reflection of the responsibility for the protection of wildlife which governments now more than ever share with millions of citizens who recognize the problem as one for personal concern and action...."

And excerpts from the article itself:

"The appearance of eight young birds this year is cause for rejoicing among followers of the cranes both in the United States and Canada. The eight youngsters represent the largest crop since wildlife experts first started counting the remaining cranes 17 years ago. The largest previous number was seven young in 1939.



1952 Continental Oil Company (CONOCO) ad about Whooping Cranes

During the summer, workers on Project Whooping Crane, the international effort to keep the big birds flying discovered the long-sought nesting ground of the last whoopers. As a result, it was known that the cranes had hatched at least six young.

Last summer, just as interest in the whoopers was reaching its height, the United States Air Force announced plans for establishing a photoflash bombing range within a mile of part of the birds' wintering grounds. The National Audubon Society and local Audubon societies all over the country sent protests. More protests came from the National Parks Association, the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, the National Wildlife Federation, the American Nature Association and individuals who had helped in the struggle to save the cranes. Then the Canadian government made a verbal inquiry to the State Department. Last month the Air Force announced that its proposal to establish the bombing range had been withdrawn.

Robert Porter Allen... research ornithologist of the National Audubon Society and leader in Project Whooping Crane...as he and others continued their work, public interest increased steadily.

The cause of the whooping crane became of such widespread interest that thousands of persons were on the lookout for them. Then in June 1954 some whoopers were spotted from a plane in Canada's Wood Buffalo National Park, a wilderness area of 17,300 square miles, most of which is never visited by anybody, tourists or otherwise.

This knowledge led the international partners in Project Whooping Crane—the Canadian Wildlife Service, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Audubon Society—to launch an all-out effort to find the nests. Their aim was to discover whether anything or anybody was molesting the birds as they reared their young....

...William A. Fuller, biologist of the Canadian Wildlife Service, became the first man to see a wild whooper's nest since that "last" nest was reported 33 years ago. Fuller was flying in the wild country along the Sass River on May 18 with Edward Wellien and Wesley Newcomb of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service when he spotted a pair of whoopers and a nest. On the same flight two more were seen...."



Ongoing public education and outreach efforts

New Hunter Education Strategies to Protect Whooping Cranes in Texas and Kansas

Johnson Linam, L.A., H.M. Hands, and J. Roberson. New hunter education strategies to protect whooping cranes in Texas and Kansas.

Folk, MJ and SA Nesbitt, eds. 2008. *Proceedings of the Tenth North American Crane Workshop, Feb. 7-10, 2006*, Zacatecas City, Zacatecas, Mexico: North American Crane Working Group. pp. 138-140.

Abstract: The decline of the whooping crane (*Grus americana*) has often been attributed primarily to loss of habitat and overharvest. Although hunting of whooping cranes is now prohibited, shootings sometimes occur. Recent incidences have prompted the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (Texas) and the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks (Kansas) to develop new strategies that increase hunter recognition of legal game species and awareness of endangered species concerns. Both agencies have produced or updated publications for goose and sandhill crane (*Grus canadensis*) hunters. Texas has developed video news releases for the general public and a video/DVD for hunter education classes designed to help goose and crane hunters avoid taking protected nongame species. Kansas has developed an online test that crane hunters must pass annually before they may purchase a crane permit.

To read or download full text PDF of the article, go here:

<https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1183&context=nacwgproc>

Whooping Crane Recovery Activities October 2010 – August 2011

by Tom Stehn

Whooping Crane Coordinator, U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service

"Twelve whooping crane juveniles were captured in Wood Buffalo National Park (WBNP) in August 2011, bringing the total number of radioed birds to 23. Crews visited migration stopover sites to gather habitat use data. This project is being carried out by the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) with partners including The Crane Trust, Canadian Wildlife Service (CWS), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and others. It is funded by the Platte River Recovery Implementation Program, The Crane Trust, and the Northern Prairie Wildlife Research Center. The tracking is the first done on the [Aransas-Wood Buffalo Population] AWBP in 25 years and is a top research priority of the Whooping Crane Recovery Team! Since the 1950s, 525 AWBP whooping cranes have died with only 50 carcasses recovered, and approximate cause of death was determined in only 38 instances. It is imperative that we learn more about whooping crane mortality."

To read or download full text PDF of the article, go here:

<https://whoopingcrane.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/09/Whooping-Crane-Recovery-Activities-2011.pdf>

Report on Whooping Crane Recovery Activities 2014 breeding season-2015 spring migration

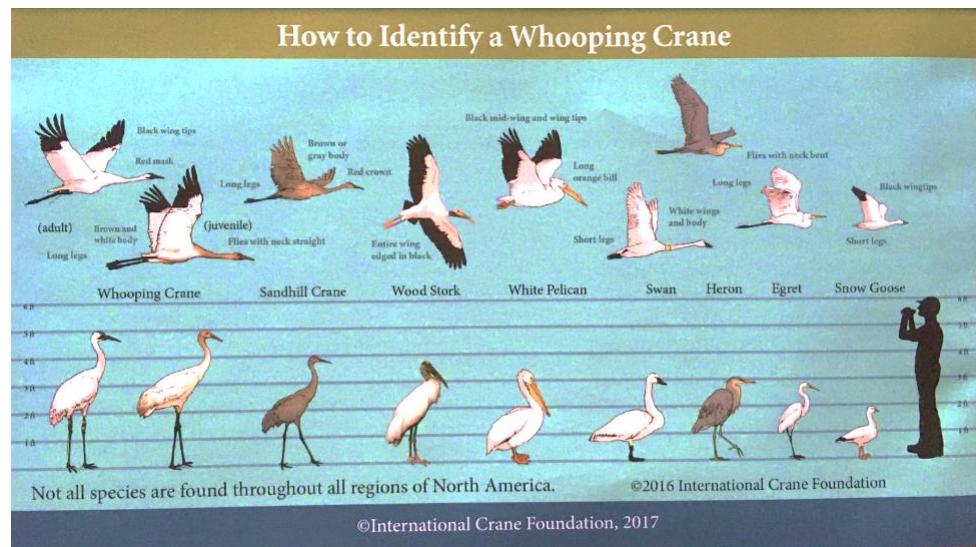
By Wade **Harrell**, Whooping Crane Recovery Coordinator, US Fish & Wildlife Service and
Mark **Bidwell**, Whooping Crane Recovery Coordinator, Canadian Wildlife Service
October 2015

Education and outreach efforts

The WCEP communication and outreach team issued numerous press releases and statements highlighting major reintroduction activities such as spring and fall migration, ultralight-led migration, hatching and survival of wild-born chicks and updates on illegal shooting rewards. These events were communicated through a variety of venues including print and television media, internet and social media and directed outreach. For example, 105 stories were shared via Facebook. WCEP expanded its media contacts in 2014 to other states in the flyway not previously contacted. Presentations were delivered throughout the year to partner organizations, schools, conservation and birding clubs, professional conferences, civic organizations and zoos. A number of regional and national outreach festivals were attended in 2014, reaching about 12,000 people.

A working group was established in 2013 to address illegal whooping crane shootings. Along with a number of agency and NGO partners, ICF developed two hunter education panels that were installed on kiosks at the Patoka River NWR in Indiana. These signs complement existing WCEP hunter education materials. The International Crane Foundation has established a "Keeping Cranes Safe" initiative that focuses on reducing whooping crane shootings...*[Federal and state governments and conservation partners have spent significant resources and used their best science to help Whooping Cranes recover. However, now that Whooping Cranes are more prevalent, they are being illegally shot at an increasing and unsustainable rate. ICF is launching a Keep Whooping Cranes Safe (KWCS) 5-year initiative that intends to (1) create communities that care about Whooping Cranes where the cranes are most at risk, (2) involve citizens in their protection, and (3) work with partners and the criminal justice system to increase negative consequences of shooting Whooping Cranes.]*

To read or download a pdf of the full report, go here: <http://www.nacwg.org/wcra%202015oct.pdf>



International Crane Foundation
Large Water Birds: An
Identification Guide

Report on Whooping Crane Recovery Activities 2016 breeding season-2017 spring migration

Report on Whooping Crane Recovery Activities 2016 breeding season-2017 spring migration
Prepared by: Wade **Harrell**, Whooping Crane Recovery Coordinator, US Fish & Wildlife Service, and
Mark **Bidwell**, Whooping Crane Recovery Coordinator, Canadian Wildlife Service

2016-2017 Louisiana Whooping Crane Report

Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries Coastal and Non-game Resources

The Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF) continues to prioritize educating the public about the Whooping Crane reintroduction program. Educator workshops were held to foster professional

development among area teachers who are able to incorporate lessons highlighting the importance of Whooping Crane conservation. Public outreach efforts consisted of LDWF staff participating in numerous festivals and outreach events around the state where literature and other information were disseminated to the public. LDWF staff presented information on the reintroduction effort to various clubs and organizations throughout the year. LDWF biologists also presented research at several professional meetings including the 14th North American Crane Workshop held in Chattanooga, TN, which was a gathering of the leading experts in the field of crane conservation. We focused our social media campaign on raising public awareness regarding both positive and negative aspects of the program, including re-emphasizing the issue around illegal shootings involving Whooping Cranes which accounts for an alarming 20% percent of mortality in the population.

Education, outreach, and media

- Teacher Workshops /Give a whoop!
- Creation of the “Wildlife Tracking: Using Data in the Classroom” workshop (allows educators to understand how Louisiana wildlife populations are managed through the collection of scientific data)
- Participation in state-wide events is vital in both informing and updating the residents of Louisiana about the reintroduction project
- Outreach to increase the level of awareness and appreciation with the general public
- Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries-Whooping Crane Facebook page continues to grow in both popularity and frequency of posts
- Quarterly newsletter which is directly emailed to subscribers who don’t follow social media
- WHCR exhibits at festivals and outreach events where literature and information were delivered to the public
- The LDWF public outreach media plan included the use of billboard space provided by Lamar (sizes ranging from 11 x 36 to 12 x 40 feet)
- Advertising, newspaper, magazine, and digital ads, targeting specific audiences in parishes used by or visited by Whooping Cranes.
- Newspaper ads
- Full page color magazine ads were printed in *Louisiana Farm and Ranch*, and *Marsh and Bayou*

To read or download a full text PDF of the article, go here:

https://www.fws.gov/uploadedFiles/WHCR%20Recovery%20Activities%20Report_Sept-April%202017_Appendices_sub.pdf

Editor: *The long-term, and wide range of recovery efforts undertaken to bring the Whooping Crane back from the brink have been encouraging partly because the wild Aransas-Wood Buffalo population of cranes is slowly increasing each year due to successful nesting and fledgling rates, and because of the continued cooperation and collaboration among a diverse group of private, state and federal organizations and highly dedicated individuals. Without this concerted effort, it is likely that the species would have been extinct long ago. As the Whooper population continues to grow, there will be more possibilities for the general public to see the cranes out on the landscape. Increasing public contact means that it is even more crucial to continue educational outreach to the public. Following is a list of government agencies, non-profit groups, refuges and individuals that have played a role in both the migratory and non-migratory populations of Whooping Cranes. It is by no means a complete list – just the tip of the iceberg of a much larger picture. Thanks to all for working to save and protect the cranes we love and teaching us along the way.*

- [Aransas National Wildlife Refuge](#), established in 1937, winter home of the Aransas-Wood Buffalo population of Whooping Cranes
 - Wade Harrell, *the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services Whooping Crane Recovery Coordinator*
 - Dr. Elizabeth Smith, [ICF Director of North America Programs](#), and the Texas team
 - Tom Stehn, *retired Whooping Crane Coordinator, U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service* (monitored the cranes at Aransas for 29 years)
- Arthur A. Allen ([Cornell Lab of Ornithology](#))
- Robert Porter Allen (*The Whooping Crane Research Report No. 3 of the National Audubon Society, by Robert Porter Allen, June 1952*)

- Canadian Wildlife Service (CWS) – monitors Whoopers at Wood Buffalo NP (seasonal nest and fledgling surveys)
- [Friends of the Wild Whoopers](#)/Chester McConnell - assesses “stopover” habitat for the wild population of Whoopers in all states along their migration route; FOTWW works to protect, improve or replace decreasing habitats.
- [Goose Pond Fish & Wildlife Area](#), Greene Co. Indiana – a quarter of the EMP of Whooping Cranes has overwintered here in one season
- [International Crane Foundation \(ICF\)](#)
 - George Archibald and Ron Sauvey, Co-founders of the [International Crane Foundation \(ICF\)](#)
 - Lizzie Condon, ICF Whooping Crane Outreach Coordinator (WI, IN, AL, TN), “Keeping Whooping Cranes Safe;” “[I Give a Whoop](#);” “Whooping Crane Ambassadors” programs for the Eastern Migratory Population
 - Dr. Barry Hartup, International Crane Foundation veterinarian
- [International Whooping Crane Recovery Team](#)
- [Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries](#)
- [Operation Migration](#) - Joe Duff and OM’s amazing, dedicated group of workers and volunteers
 - [Chassahowitzka National Wildlife Refuge](#) – original destination of the ultralight-led migration of juvenile Whoopers
 - [St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge](#) – second destination of the ultralight-led juvenile flock
- National Audubon Society – “Project Whooping Crane” in the 1950’s
- [Texas Whooper Watch](#)
- [Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge](#), Decatur AL- where increasing numbers of Whoopers from the Eastern Migratory Population over-winter with thousands of Sandhill Cranes.
- [Whooping Crane Conservation Association](#)
- [Whooping Crane Eastern Partnership \(WCEP\)](#)

Founding partners include:

 - U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), International Crane Foundation (ICF), Operation Migration (OM), Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR), U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) Patuxent Wildlife Research Center, USGS National Wildlife Health Center, International Whooping Crane Recovery Team, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and the Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin (NRF)
- [Whooping Crane Tracking Partnership \(WCTP\)](#) (*a partnership of researchers from multiple organizations that uses GPS devices to track individual Whooping Cranes of the Aransas-Wood Buffalo population*)
- Whooping Crane trackers and monitors – the eyes on the ground for WCEP– along the migratory routes of both the wild and Eastern Migratory Population of Whoopers
- [Wood Buffalo National Park](#), Northwest Territories Alberta, Canada – breeding grounds for the endangered wild population of Whooping Cranes

Eastern Migratory Population of WHOOPERS

Cranes and people can coexist

1. Don’t actively feed cranes.
2. Crane damage to certain crops, most notably corn as it germinates in spring, can be prevented. Avipel is an EPA-registered deterrent that will prevent the damage, while not moving birds to other fields where more damage could occur. [Learn more about ICF research on this deterrent.](#)
3. Cranes are highly territorial. To prevent potential damage from the cranes pecking at their reflection, cover or block access to the reflective surfaces.
4. Be observant for wildlife where human development intersects with wildlife habitat and slow down, it will be safer for animals and people alike.
5. When observing cranes from the roadside, remember to respect private property and do not trespass.
6. If you encounter a Whooping Crane in the wild, please give them the respect and distance they need. Remain in your vehicle and do not approach any closer than 200 yards. Also, please remain

concealed and do not speak loudly enough for the birds to hear you. If the birds begin changing their behavior from loafing or feeding to walking away, you are likely too close!

7. If you find an injured bird, search for a local licensed wildlife rehabilitation facility online through your state natural resources agency.
8. If you see a banded crane, [please report your sighting here](#), and here for a [banded Whooper](#)
9. As an endangered species, it is illegal to hunt Whooping Cranes. Sandhill Cranes are legally hunted during specified hunting seasons in 17 states (including the eastern U.S. states of Kentucky, Tennessee and most recently Alabama) and two provinces in several flyways.

To read the September 27, 2019 article by ICF, go here:

<https://www.savingcranes.org/top-ten-facts-about-cranes-and-people/>

Female Whooper pair set up housekeeping

In a story by International Crane Foundation's Crane Research intern Nicki Gordon, a female-female pair of Whooping Cranes was documented nesting and incubating eggs together in Wisconsin for the second time. Females 2-15 and Direct Autumn Release 28-05 ("Poe") have been together since 2017.

A camera set up near the nest in order to monitor the pair's nesting behaviors captured 8,444 photos that helped biologists gain insight into the pair's incubation routine. Numerous behaviors were categorized – such as preening, egg manipulation (moving or repositioning eggs), incubation, vigilance and more. And, when compared to behaviors of male-female Whooping Crane pairs, this female-female pair was found to be very similar.

Although these females are potentially reducing the number of breeding pairs in the population by not breeding with available males, they are behaving similar to male-female pairs and potentially could have a productive nest if they had fertile eggs.

To read more here and see a photo of the hard-working pair, go here:

<https://www.savingcranes.org/two-whooping-crane-mothers-hard-at-work/>

Eastern Migratory Population WHCR Update – December 3, 2019

In the last month most of the Whooping Cranes have migrated to their wintering grounds! A huge thank-you to the staff of the Fish and Wildlife Service, the Departments of Natural Resources of flyway states, the [International Crane Foundation](#), and all the volunteers who help us keep track of the cranes throughout the year. We appreciate your contribution to the recovery of the Whooping Crane Eastern Migratory Population.

– [Whooping Crane Eastern Partnership](#)

Eastern Migratory Population Estimate

The current estimated population size is 86 (41 Females, 42 Males, 3 Undetermined), which now includes both released parent-reared juveniles from fall 2019. To the best of our knowledge, as of 3 December 2019: 1 is in Michigan, 33 are in Indiana, 10 are in Illinois, 4 are in Tennessee, 4 are in Kentucky, and 20 are in Alabama. At least 4 Whooping Cranes were last seen in Wisconsin during November and haven't been detected on the wintering grounds yet. The remaining birds' locations have not been confirmed in the last month.

2019 Cohort:

W1-19 (F) was seen during November with parents 12-11 and 5-11 in Gibson Co, IN.

W14-19 (F) is with parents 12-03 and 12-05 in Knox Co, IN.

W19-19 (U) is with parents 9-05 and 13-03 in Greene Co, IN.

79-19 (F) migrated with adults 67-15 and 3-17 to Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge in Morgan Co, AL.

80-19 (F) was released in November at Goose Pond Fish and Wildlife Area in Greene Co, IN, near adult Whooping Cranes W1-18, W5-18, and W10-18. 80-19 is still in Greene Co. and has been seen associating with adult Whooping Cranes.

2018 Cohort

W1-18 (F) is still in Greene Co, IN, in the vicinity or associating with other Whooping Cranes.

W3-18 (F) and W6-18 (M) also migrated to Greene Co., IN, and are with other Whooping Cranes. W5-18 (M) and W10-18 (U) are still together in Greene Co., IN. They also associate with other adult Whooping Cranes.
73-18 (F) and 74-18 (M) migrated to Jasper Co., IN, and are sometimes seen with 28-17 (M) who they associated with last winter as well.
75-18 (M) and 78-18 (F) left Dodge Co., WI together during November. During migration, 78-18 died due to powerline collision (see below), and 75-18 is now alone in McLean Co., IL.
77-18 (M) is now in Hamilton Co., TN.

Mortality or Long-term missing

78-18 (F) died due to powerline collision in Woodford Co., IL, during November.

For the monthly Whooping Crane Eastern Migratory Population updates that include population estimates, reproduction, wild-chick updates, cohort updates and mortalities, go here:

<http://www.bringbackthecranes.org/project-updates/>

To follow where the reintroduced eastern population is, go here: <http://map.bringbackthecranes.org/>

To learn more about the individual cranes in the eastern population, go here:

<http://www.bringbackthecranes.org/emp-whooping-crane-biographies/>

Data courtesy of [Whooping Crane Eastern Partnership \(WCEP\)](#)

UL = Ultralight (Chicks were captive-hatched, then raised by costumed handlers and taught to follow an ultralight for their first migration to Florida); **DAR = Direct Autumn Release** (Chicks are captive-hatched then released in the fall in the company of adult cranes from whom they will learn the migration route); **PR = Parent Reared** (chicks are captive-hatched and raised by captive Whooping Cranes, then released near a wild crane pair in hopes the pair will “adopt” the juvenile and lead it on migration); **W = Wild hatched** to a wild Whooping Crane pair that then teach the migration route to the juvenile.

To report a banded Whooping Crane sighting, go here:

<https://www.savingcranes.org/report-whooping-crane/>

Aransas-Wood Buffalo WHOOPERS

Abundant Whooping Crane stopover habitat on some Corps of Engineer Lakes in Dakotas and Montana

[Friends of the Wild Whoopers \(FOTWW\)](#) wildlife biologist Chester McConnell and field assistant Dorothy McConnell travel to all seven states in the Whooping Crane migration corridor to assist where FOTWW can. During the past two years the McConnells have traveled to 34 Corps of Engineer (COE) lakes in 7 states. They recently returned from a long trip to South Dakota, North Dakota and Montana to evaluate “stopover” habitat on 7 COE lakes. FOTWW’s objective is to protect, improve or replace decreasing habitats. All of the lakes visited are on the Missouri River which flows through the prime migration route of the wild population of Whooping Cranes.

FOTWW’s first visit was on the COE’s [Lewis and Clark Lake](#) in Nebraska and South Dakota (10 Sept 2019). The lake is approximately 28 miles in length with over 90 miles of shoreline. The 31,400-acre reservoir has some good “stopover habitat” but much more needs serious management attention. Phragmites, an invasive plant has spread over large areas in and around the lake. Such areas will not be used by Whooping Cranes unless management controls the phragmites by spraying with herbicides then a controlled burn when the plants die.

[Lake Francis Case](#) in North Dakota (11 Sept 2019). This lake is 107 miles long, at normal pool, with 540 miles of shoreline providing numerous areas where Whooping Cranes can stopover to rest, forage and roost.

[Lake Sharpe](#) in South Dakota (12 Sept 2019). The reservoir length is 80 miles with 200 miles of shoreline. Whooping Cranes have already been observed using the lake near by the Crow Creek Indians on their reservation. FOTWW visited this area previously and has worked with colleagues on both the Crow Creek and Lower Brule Indian Reservations.

[Lake Oahe](#) in South and North Dakota (13 Sept 2019). Somsen described Lake Oahe as a 370,000 acres reservoir at maximum pool. The reservoir length is 231 miles with a shoreline length of 2,250 miles. The lake connects South Dakota's capital at Pierre with North Dakota's capital at Bismarck. Phragmites is not an issue here due to earlier burns and management.

[Lake Sakakawea](#), the largest COE reservoir in the U.S., is 178 miles long, six miles wide at its widest point and has a shoreline of 1,884 miles. The lake contains a third of the total water stored by the Missouri River mainstem reservoir system.

[Fort Peck Lake and Dam](#) in Montana. With a volume of 18,700,000 acre feet when full, Fort Peck is [the fifth largest artificial lake](#) in the [United States](#). It extends 134 miles through central Montana, and its twisting, inlet-studded shoreline has a total length of some 1,520 miles. The lake covers an area of 245,000 acres, making it the largest in Montana by surface area. Bordering nearly the entire reservoir is the 1,719-square-mile [Charles M. Russell National Wildlife Refuge](#), which has preserved much of the high prairie and hill country around the lake in a more or less natural state.

[Pipestem Lake](#) in North Dakota is relatively small with an 840 acres conservation pool. The length of the conservation pool is 5.5 miles with a shoreline of 14.5 miles.

To read the FOTWW 22 November 2019 post, and to see photos of the lakes and habitat visited, go here: <https://friendsofthewildwhoopers.org/abundant-whooping-crane-stopover-habitat-coe-lakes-in-dakotas-montana/>

Report Your Observations

[Friends of the Wild Whoopers](#)

(FOTWW) asks the public to report any Whooping Cranes seen along rivers, wetlands and fields along their migration path. Report your observations to the wildlife agency in your state. Should you see a Whooping Crane, please stay at least 200 yards away and don't disturb it, make a note of date, time, location, and what the Whooping Crane is doing. If the Whooping Crane is wearing bands or a transmitter, please note the band color(s) and what leg(s) the bands/transmitter are on.



Whooping Crane foraging intercoastal waterways, TX 1970

All documented sightings help FOTWW and other conservation groups monitoring the cranes gather important data as to the stopover habitat used by the wild population of Whooping Cranes during migration. With just over 500 wild Whooping Cranes migrating along the Central Flyway, every sighting is important.

To become a member of [Friends of the Wild Whoopers](#), or, to just learn more about the group and its important, ongoing research, go here: <https://friendsofthewildwhoopers.org>

The following is a 2019 Central Flyway list of agencies and contact information compiled by FOTWW. If you need help with species identification, please click on the FOTWW [Whooper Identification](#) page.

Montana Reports

Allison Begley
MT Fish, Wildlife, & Parks
1420 East Sixth Avenue
Helena, MT 59620
abegley@mt.gov
(406) 444-3370

Jim Hansen
MT Fish, Wildlife, & Parks
2300 Lake Elmo Drive
Billings, MT 59105
jihansen@mt.gov
(406) 247-2957

North Dakota

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
offices at Lostwood,
(701) 848-2466
Audubon, (701) 442-5474
National wildlife refuges
North Dakota Game and Fish
Department in Bismarck,
(701) 328-6300 or to local game
wardens

South Dakota

Eileen Dowd Stukel
eileen.dowdstukel@state.sd.us
(605) 773-4229
Casey Heimerl - (605) 773-4345
Natalie Gates
Natalie_Gates@fws.gov
(605) 224-8793, ext. 227
Jay Peterson
Jay_Peterson@fws.gov
(605) 885-6320, ext. 213

Nebraska

Nebraska Game and Parks
(402) 471-0641
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
(308) 379-5562
The Crane Trust's Whooper Watch
hotline (888) 399-2824
Emails may be submitted to:
joel.jorgensen@nebraska.gov

Kansas

Jason Wagner
jason.wagner@ks.gov
(620) 793-3066

Ed Miller
ed.miller@ks.gov
(620) 331-6820

Whooping Crane sightings at or near Quivira NWR should be reported to:

Quivira National Wildlife Refuge
(620) 486-2393
They can also be reported to this
email: quivira@fws.gov

Oklahoma

[Sightings can be logged online
here](#)
Matt Fullerton
Endangered Species Biologist
(580) 571-5820
Mark Howery
Wildlife Diversity Biologist
(405) 990-7259

Texas

Texas Whooper Watch also has a project in [iNaturalist](#) that is now fully functional. You can find it [here](#). You can report sightings directly in [iNaturalist](#) via your Smart Phone. This allows you to easily provide photo verification and your location.

If you are not a smart phone app user, you can still report via email: whoopingcranes@tpwd.state.tx.us or phone: (512) 389-TXWW (ext. 8999). Please note that our primary interest is in reports from outside the core wintering range.



© John Martell

General News

Alabama:

Whooping Cranes return to Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge

For the second year in a row, a wild-hatched female Whooping Crane known as [W7-17](#) was the first to arrive at the [Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge](#) in Decatur after completing a 670-mile (1,080-kilometer) flight southward from Wisconsin to Alabama.

The [International Crane Foundation](#) reported that the 2-year-old female arrived in early November and since then 16 others have followed, tracking devices and other reports show. The cranes are among 85 Whooping Cranes in the eastern migratory population that were taught to migrate from Wisconsin to Florida by following ultralight aircraft. More are likely to arrive in coming weeks, said supervisory ranger Teresa Adams.

While the very first Whooping Cranes showed up at Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge in 2004, initially the refuge didn't publicize their presence to avoid disturbing them, Adams said. However, from that time the number of Whooping Cranes wintering at the refuge almost doubled each year. Once Whooping Cranes began showing up around the refuge's visitor center and the two-story observation building about 200 yards (180 meters) down a trail from it, the refuge began alerting the public "that we were getting these wonderful birds," Adams said.

Farmers are allowed to farm on part of the refuge in exchange for leaving some of their corn and soybeans in the field for ducks, geese and other migratory birds. Thousands of Sandhill Cranes can also be seen in the fields on the refuge.

A [tracking map](#) shows 17 Whooping Cranes now at the refuge. *To follow where the reintroduced eastern population is, go here: <http://map.bringbackthecranes.org/>; or to report a banded Whooping Crane, go here: <https://www.savingcranes.org/report-whooping-crane/>*

We look forward to seeing everyone soon at the annual Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge [Festival of the Cranes, January 11-12, 2020](#) at the refuge visitor center!

Canada:

Sandhill Crane research study begins in Ontario

A study by [Environment and Climate Change Canada \(ECCC\)](#) for developing a proposal concerning Sandhill Cranes across Ontario, including Manitoulin Island, has begun.

In an 18 October 2019 *Manitoulin Expositor* article, Marilyne Lavoie, spokesperson for ECCC explained that "fieldwork for research concerning Sandhill Cranes across Ontario began in September (2019) and since that time 14 transmitters have been deployed on Sandhill Cranes in Northeastern Ontario and the Abitibi region of western Quebec. Many of the cranes with transmitters have already migrated to the agricultural areas along the North Shore of Lake Huron."

According to Lavoie, Sandhill Cranes were once near extinction due to habitat loss, human disturbance and over-harvesting. However, a shift from forested to agricultural landscapes throughout much of eastern Canada and the United States, coupled with agricultural practices that provide abundant and reliable food sources throughout much of the year, has enabled the species to rebound.

"Currently, the population is increasing throughout much of its range and re-establishing in areas that it occupied historically," said Ms. Lavoie. "This has resulted in increased conflicts between agricultural

producers and Sandhill Cranes.” Ms. Lavoie pointed out ECCC-CWS has been collecting data to assess the status and harvest potential for Sandhill Cranes in Ontario as well as to evaluate if a hunting season would help mitigate agricultural conflicts in Ontario.

Ms. Lavoie noted, “the proposed study is a multi-year initiative and is still in planning stages as we are working with partners to finalize study design. Initial fieldwork is set to begin this fall and much of the work will be completed by one or more graduate students from the University of Waterloo over the next several years.” The study area will include Manitoulin Island and the North Shore of Lake Huron, and other parts of Ontario and Quebec.

Search continues for shooter of Manitoulin Island Whooping Crane

Crime Stoppers of Sault Ste. Marie and Algoma District, in partnership with the Wildlife Enforcement Division of Environment & Climate Change Canada is still seeking the public’s assistance in identifying suspects in connection to the shooting death of a two-year old female Whooping Crane, [#39-17](#). According to reports on social media, shots from a shotgun and small caliber rifle were heard the evening of May 5, 2019, where the crane was later found dead. The crane was on private property in the north end of Barrie Island in Northern Ontario.

[Female #39-17](#), one of 85 cranes in the reintroduced eastern migratory population of Whooping Cranes, was tracked by its telemetry from southern Indiana to the upper peninsula of Michigan before settling on Manitoulin Island in late April 2019. People were aware of its presence as it moved about the island in the company of Sandhill Cranes. In Canada Whooping Cranes are protected by the [Species at Risk Act \(SARA\)](#),).

To listen to the Radio “Up North” Wendy Bird interview with Sheldon Jordan, Director General of Wildlife Enforcement for Environment and Climate Change Canada, go here:

<http://www.cbc.ca/player/play/1527471683602/>

June 2019 [Sault Ste Marie CrimeStoppers](#) announcement of shooting:

<https://youtu.be/z1w3ovPYO-M>

Anyone with information concerning the shooting should contact the Crime Stoppers Tips Hotline at **1-800-222-TIPS (8477)**. The [Whooping Crane Conservation Association \(WCCA\)](#) and [International Crane Foundation](#) are offering a \$3,000 reward for information leading to the suspect’s arrest.

Kansas:

“Annually each fall, central Kansas is one of the few places where it is possible to see Whooping Cranes,” Barry Jones, visitor services specialist at Quivira National Wildlife Refuge said. They occur in and around Quivira National Wildlife Refuge in small groups over a period of several weeks, most often in late October and early November. The earliest recorded first arrival is October 5, 2018, but the average first arrival date is October 21.

Whooping Cranes use Quivira’s open salt flats, shorelines, and wetlands to roost during their visits, but each group typically doesn’t stay more than a day or two, with many just stopping overnight. Group size averages two to five birds, but it has not been uncommon for Quivira to host flocks of 12-15.

Quivira personnel ask that if you see what you believe to be Whooping Cranes, to report any sighting as soon as possible to Quivira National Wildlife Refuge. Be sure to note the location, date, and time, as well as a physical description of the birds and their behavior.

To report a Whooping Crane sighting, or to find out more information about the birds, check the “Whooping Crane Page” on Quivira’s website, www.fws.gov/refuge/quivira, or call the Refuge, (620) 486-2393. A table of the latest Whooping Crane sightings can be viewed on the website.

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Louisiana:



2017 PSA billboard announcing the presence of Whoopers in Louisiana

Louisiana man gets probation in Whooping Crane death – stiff penalties needed as deterrent to poaching

In a 2016 article in *The Wildlife Society*, marking the historical event of the first egg hatched in Louisiana since the 1930s to a pair of nesting Whooping Cranes, it was noted that challenges continue to face the reintroduced population of cranes. According to Sara Zimorski, Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF) biologist with the Whooping Crane reintroduction project, since 2009, 23 Whooping Cranes in eight different states have been shot and killed. LDWF provides hunter education courses about the importance of conserving Whooping Cranes, the shootings are a result of illegal poaching. “There’s time, money and effort put into these birds,” she said. “If someone shoots one or two, it’s a big blow to a new project that’s just getting started.”

On November 1, 2019, at the United States District Court for the Western District of Louisiana in Lafayette, a Louisiana man was sentenced to probation for killing one of the state’s oldest Whooping Cranes. Gilvin P. Aucoin, Jr., of Ville Platte, who admitted to shooting the endangered Whooping Crane with a .22 caliber rifle on July 25, 2018, while working near a crawfish pond in Evangeline Parish, changed his plea from “not guilty” to “guilty.” Initially Aucoin was cited in July for violating the Endangered Species Act – which would have carried up to a year in jail and a \$50,000 fine. A bill of information filed in August charged him with a misdemeanor carrying up to a \$15,000 fine and 30 days in jail.

However, Magistrate Carol B. Whitehurst sentenced him to 2 years’ probation, during which time he cannot hunt or fish, and 120 hours community service to be served with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Aucoin must also complete a hunter education course. He was given no fine. [This judge had previously sentenced a Whooping Crane shooter to a fine and prison time; <https://friendsofthewildwhoopers.org/gueydan-man-pleaded-guilty-for-illegal-shooting-of-whooping-crane/>]

The Evangeline Parish shooting sadly marked the [29th confirmed Whooping Crane shooting](#) since 1967, the year the federal government listed the species as endangered.

Understandably disappointed by the outcome of this case, and in a response to the ruling, [International Crane Foundation](#) (ICF) President and CEO Rich Beilfuss said ICF was concerned that “soft penalties like this ... send the wrong message and do not serve as a deterrent to future shootings of Whooping Cranes or other threatened species.” Louisiana has the highest shooting rate of any state or province that has Whooping Cranes and does not have a record of strong penalties for perpetrators of this crime. Since the beginning of the reintroduction project of the species in 2011, nine Whooping Cranes have been poached in the state.

According to an ICF Facebook post, “Before the hearing... several conservation groups were invited to meet with the US Attorney’s office to discuss this case. Representatives from the [International Crane](#)

[Foundation](#), [Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries](#), Orleans Audubon Society, Audubon Louisiana and Louisiana Ornithological Society spoke with the attorneys prosecuting the case about the cultural importance of Whooping Cranes to Louisiana, the financial investment that goes into each released bird and the challenges that shootings present to this fledgling population. Although we are upset by the outcome of this case, we are grateful for the opportunity to engage with the US Attorney's office and look forward to building this relationship."

Poachers are not often charged under the Endangered Species Act because prosecutors have to prove that the poacher knew that the killed animal was endangered. The stiffest penalty to be administered against a Whooping Crane poacher in Louisiana was to Lane Thomas Thibodeaux, who shot and killed a crane in 2014. He was sentenced to 45 days in jail and a \$2,500 fine.

Found only in North America, Whooping Cranes are among the world's most endangered birds – with a total population of approximately 826 cranes, 660 of which are in the wild. Nearly all of Louisiana's birds, like the one killed in 2018, were raised by people in crane costumes so the birds will stay wary of humans. Rearing, releasing and monitoring one crane in Louisiana costs \$93,700, said Lizzie Condon, Whooping Crane Outreach Coordinator for the International Crane Foundation, in an interview with the [Washington Times](#).

The adult male Whooping Crane was designated L8-11, the second number indicating he was released in 2011. He and his partner, L7-11, were the first Whooping Cranes in the new Louisiana flock to nest and lay eggs. "That makes it particularly devastating," Condon said.

"The defendant's actions are those of a poacher and a vandal," Condon continued. "His hunting and fishing rights were revoked for two years, but he was not hunting when he shot Whooping Crane L8-11. Rather, he was participating in an illegal activity. Hunters know that you have to be sure before you shoot."

"There have to be consequences for people who commit these crimes. Every Whooping Crane in this small population counts as we are trying to reach self-sustaining status," she said. "The Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries has been trying to educate the public, but we also need stiff penalties to serve as a deterrent."



Whooping Crane L8-11 (left) with its mate L7-11 on nest with chick, April 13, 2017 in Avoyelles Parish.



2017 PSA billboard announcing the presence of Whoopers in Louisiana

New cohort of juvenile Whooping Cranes in southwest Louisiana

Eleven juvenile [Whooping Cranes](#) are currently in southwest Louisiana, being prepared to join 69 adults in the wild. The cohort of juveniles will spend about two weeks in a net-covered pen at the [White Lake Wetlands Conservation Area \(WLWCA\)](#) near Gueydan. According to Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries biologist Sara Zimorski, the new arrivals will be counted as part of the Louisiana flock once they're released to a bigger uncovered pen, about November 25. LDWF will provide the juveniles with supplemental food in the pen into January 2020.

Four young birds were raised at the [Audubon Species Survival Center \(ASSC\)](#) in New Orleans, and the others at the [International Crane Foundation](#) in Baraboo, Wisconsin. The two groups were brought together at ASSC in early October when Windway Capital Corporation transported the seven chicks from the International Crane Foundation to Louisiana.

To keep up with, and for photos of the Louisiana cohorts, go here:

<https://www.facebook.com/lawhoopingcranes/>



Whooping Cranes Return Celebrated at White Lake Wetlands Conservation Area W.C.A.

In February 2011, ten Whooping Cranes received from the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) Research Facility in Laurel, Md., were released in the coastal marsh of Vermilion Parish within LDWF's White Lake Wetlands WCA. This re-introduced population, annually supplemented with cohorts of juvenile cranes, marks the first presence of Whooping Cranes in the wild in Louisiana since 1950.

To watch a video of the 2011 arrival of the first cohort of cranes, go here:

https://youtu.be/J8mn_m5leDE



2014 PSA billboard announcing the presence of Whoopers in Louisiana



**The Flight to Survive:
Saving Whooping Cranes**
National Fish and Wildlife
Foundation (NFWF), 2012
<https://youtu.be/Ye4Swf3-yDM>

Louisiana Whooping Crane PSA with Zachary Richard

<http://www.wlf.louisiana.gov/wildlife/whooping-cranes>

Game Bird or Nongame Bird? Maybe an Endangered Species...

In the 1940s there were only 16 Whooping Cranes left in the wild. Today, they are making a comeback right here in the Lone Star State, but they need your help. The tall, majestic birds depend on habitats in this area, as do many other game and non-game birds.

Whooping Cranes:

- Are white with black wingtips; juveniles have rusty feathers.
- Are large – 5 feet tall with a wingspan over 7 feet.
- Fly with their long neck and legs extended.
- Have a red crown and black feathers on the face.
- Usually occur in groups of 1-3 and very rarely in groups larger than 8-10.
- Are normally in this area between October and April.

You can help:

- Give them plenty of room. If you see Whooping Cranes, do not try to approach them or get closer.
- Hunters, be careful if a large bird with slow wingbeats approaches your spread. Study the drawings on this sign. "Be sure before you shoot!"

Report observations to **Texas Whooper Watch**
at 512-389-TXWW (8999).

Report violations to **Operation Game Thief**
at 800-792-GAME (4263).

Important Notice: Whooping Cranes are protected under state and federal laws, including the Endangered Species Act. Harm or harassment can result in stiff penalties, including heavy fines and/or prison time.

WHOOPING CRANE IDENTIFICATION

Height: ~5 ft.
Weight: ~11-17 lbs.
Wingspan: ~7-8 ft.

Juvenile Bird

Adult Bird

In-flight Whooping Cranes Have:

- Black Wing Tips
- Extended Neck
- Legs That Extend Past Tail

www.wlf.louisiana.gov/wildlife/whooping-cranes

Several Species of Birds Resemble Whooping Cranes

The **Snow Goose** is the **ONLY** species that can be shot during hunting season.

KNOW YOUR TARGET BEFORE YOU SHOOT!

<p>Whooping Crane</p>	<p>Snow Goose "Only LEGAL game species"</p>	<p>White Ibis</p>
<p>Wood Stork</p>	<p>Great Egret</p>	<p>Sandhill Crane</p>
<p>White Pelican</p>		

Hunter, farmer and public education Whooping Crane Identification sheets

Whooping Cranes & Crawfish Farming

In 2010, the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF), along with the LSU AgCenter and other partners, began a whooping crane reintroduction program in southwestern Louisiana. The goal of the reintroduction program is to establish a population within its historic range, but outside of its current range. Our objective is to establish a population in Louisiana, consisting of at least 120 individuals and 25-30 reproductive pairs, and to sustain those levels for 10 years without further reintroductions.

Achieving our goal would restore an iconic wildlife species that was once more abundant in Louisiana than anywhere in North America. Reintroduced populations of whooping cranes are designated as nonessential experimental populations (NEP), which provides management flexibility as the species is not treated as endangered but as threatened. As a result of this designation, farm management activities can continue as planned. Intentional killing, harming or harassment of a whooping crane, however, is illegal as they are still protected under both state and federal laws.

LIFE HISTORY

The whooping crane is a large white bird but its size (up to 5 ft tall) and the red patch on its head distinguish it from other white wading birds. The whooping crane is a long-lived species that can live up to 30 years in the wild but has a low reproductive capacity. Whooping cranes begin breeding at 3-4 years of age and lay one to two eggs, which are incubated for about 30 days. They may hatch two chicks but usually only one survives.

Whooping cranes may initially nest from February to April, but may re-nest into June if the first nest fails. They build floating platforms of wetland vegetation; young pairs may build nest platforms without laying eggs the first season. Chicks are flightless for about 90 days and are susceptible to predation by snakes, turtles, birds and mammals.

Adults are also flightless for about six weeks during a molt of all their flight feathers. They first undergo this molt at 2-3 years of age and then again every two to three years. In Louisiana, molt can begin in mid-April but most will begin in late May with birds being able to fly again by early July. The birds are susceptible to predators at this time and they often become shy and secretive and will not open their wings. Stable water when walking distance is an important habitat component to facilitate escape from predators.

Whooping cranes reintroduced to Louisiana utilize a wide range of habitats including coastal marshes, crawfish ponds and rice fields. They are non-migratory; therefore, they are present on these landscapes throughout the year. Whooping cranes often forage in shallow water and have a varied diet consisting of frogs, snakes, turtles, mice, crawfish, aquatic and terrestrial invertebrates, tubers, and seeds. They also depend on shallow water environments when roosting at night and for nests to provide protection from predators. Thus far, whooping cranes released in Louisiana have molted in marsh, rice fields and crawfish ponds. Whooping cranes will flock together in small groups (usually < 10) when young, but as adults they are territorial. Whooping cranes have never existed in large numbers due to their low reproductive potential, thus they are not likely to exist in great numbers on the Louisiana landscape into the future. Further, their territoriality as adults will limit the number of birds in a single location.



Louisiana Endangered Species license plate

HISTORY OF WHOOPING CRANES IN LOUISIANA

- 1890s - Records indicate "large numbers" of both whooping cranes and sandhill cranes on wet prairies year-round; whooping cranes also used coastal locations in winter.
- 1918 - 12 whooping cranes shot north of Sweet Lake. Last official record of whooping cranes on the Louisiana prairies.
- Late 1930s - early 1940s - Last records of wintering whooping cranes on southwest Louisiana's chenier ridges and in brackish and saltwater marshes near the coast.
- May 1939 - Biologist John J. Lynch sights 13 whooping cranes north of White Lake. Two of the cranes are "young-of-the-year." This record confirms a resident flock of breeding whooping cranes in Louisiana. This is the last record of the species breeding in the wild in the United States prior to experimental and captive-raised whooping cranes hatching chicks in the wild.
- August 1940 - Hurricane and flooding from associated rainfall scatters the resident White Lake whooping cranes. Only six cranes return.
- 1941-1945 - White Lake whooping crane flock loses one bird each year...only two cranes remain in 1945.
- 1947 - Only one whooping crane remains at White Lake.
- March 1950 - The lone White Lake crane is captured and relocated to Aransas NWR, TX. This is the last official record of whooping cranes in Louisiana.
- February 2011- The Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF) releases the first cohort of whooping cranes into Louisiana. A new cohort of cranes has been released each winter since that date.

Based on Louisiana whooping crane chronology compiled by Dr. Gay Gomez, McNeese State University



Photo by Danielle Desourdis Reese

FACTS ABOUT WHOOPING CRANES

- Tallest North American bird, reaches height of 5 feet.
- Wingspan of 7-8 feet.
- Solid white, except for red patch on head and black facial markings and wing tips. Black wing tips only visible during flight or when wings are spread.
- Cinnamon brown when immature, takes on a mottled appearance as white feathers begin to emerge.
- Live approximately 20-30 years in the wild.
- Omnivorous - diet includes insects, snails, frogs, fish, rodents, small birds, berries, blue crabs, and crawfish.
- Form life-long, monogamous pairs, though they will re-pair after the death of a mate.
- Share parental duties, such as egg incubation and chick-rearing, between mates.

If you are lucky enough to encounter whooping cranes please observe them at a distance and do not approach them. Also please contact us to report your sighting at 337-536-9400 ext. 4. Thank you.

If you witness suspicious activity involving whooping cranes, please call LDWF's Enforcement Division
1-800-442-2511



For more information about the return of whooping cranes to Louisiana, please visit the department's website at:

<http://www.louisiana.gov/wildlife/whooping-cranes>

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WHOOPING CRANES RETURN TO LOUISIANA



THE PRESENT... RETURNING HOME

February 2011 marked the beginning of the LDWF whooping crane reintroduction program with the release of 10 juvenile cranes.

The goal of the Louisiana project is to establish a self-sustaining whooping crane population on and around WLWCA. A self-sustaining population requires approximately 120 individuals and 30 productive pairs with those levels maintained for 10 years without additional restocking. Whooping cranes that are reintroduced to Louisiana will be non-migratory. This means the birds will be residents of Louisiana year-round.

The Louisiana whooping crane population is designated as a Non-Essential Experimental Population (NEP). This designation is made possible by provisions contained within section 10(j) of the Endangered Species Act, as amended. This designation protects the reintroduced cranes as appropriate to conserve the species, while still allowing their presence to be compatible with routine human activities in the reintroduction area. Despite being an NEP species, it is illegal to shoot whooping cranes. Whooping cranes are protected under applicable state laws for non-game species and the federal Migratory Bird Treaty Act, which protects all birds that migrate such as sandhill cranes, herons, egrets, and songbirds.



THE FUTURE... YOU CAN HELP!

LDWF and project partners will continue to reintroduce a new cohort of birds each year. Research and monitoring of released birds will be ongoing and is an important component of this project. The continued progress towards our goal depends on you.

Success of this project is made possible through private and corporate donations. If you would like to support the Louisiana whooping crane project, by making a tax-deductible donation, please contact Kell McInnis at the Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries Foundation:

- (225) 765-5100
- kmcinnis@wlff.la.gov
- P.O. Box 80378, Baton Rouge, LA 70898



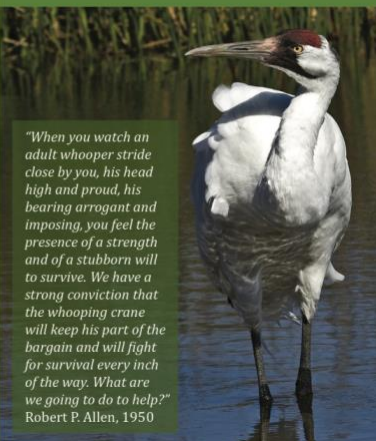
Visit the foundation's website at:
<http://lawff.org>



THE PAST... LOUISIANA WAS ONCE HOME

Historically, whooping cranes occurred in Louisiana in both a resident, non-migratory flock as well as migratory birds that wintered in the state. Conversion of prairies and wetlands to mechanized agriculture and unregulated hunting led to the decline of this species both nationally and at the state level. By 1945, only two cranes remained in Louisiana. In March of 1950, the lone Louisiana crane referred to as "Mac" was captured at White Lake and transported to Aransas National Wildlife Refuge on the central Texas coast.

For 60 years whooping cranes were absent from the Louisiana landscape until their reintroduction in 2011 at the White Lake Wetlands Conservation Area (WLWCA) located in Vermilion Parish.



"When you watch an adult whooper stride close by you, his head high and proud, his bearing arrogant and imposing, you feel the presence of a strength and of a stubborn will to survive. We have a strong conviction that the whooping crane will keep his part of the bargain and will fight for survival every inch of the way. What are we going to do to help?"
Robert P. Allen, 1950

Report Whooping Crane Violations to 800-442-2511

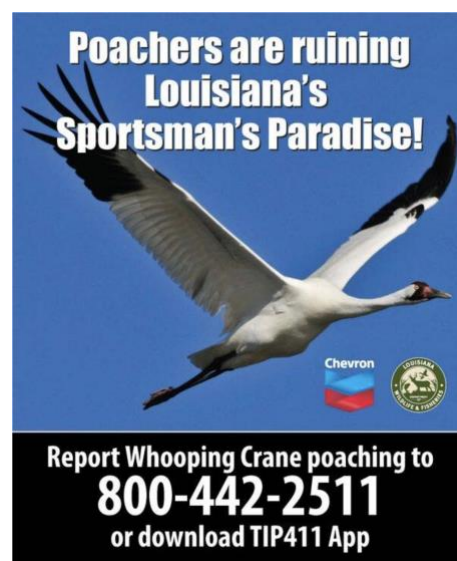
LDWF knows that the sportsmen and farmers here in Louisiana only want the best for our wildlife and the habitat they utilize. As conservationists of our state resources, you have high regard for our Sportsman's Paradise, not only for your pleasure, but so your children and grandchildren can share in its enjoyment. Unfortunately, a small group of individuals threaten that reputation by poaching. Please help by reporting all illegal activity to our law enforcement office at 800-442-2511.

Support the Whooping Crane Project

LDWF is working cooperatively with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the U.S. Geological Survey, the International Crane Foundation and the Louisiana Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit to restore the Whooping Crane in Louisiana. Project funding is derived from LDWF species restoration dedicated funds, federal grants and private/corporate donations. LDWF's budget for the initial year of the project was \$400,000. The project costs escalate in year two and beyond as the project expands. LDWF estimates that it will be necessary to raise \$3 to 4 million private dollars to help fund a portion of this

15-year project. You can help support Whooping Crane restoration by:

- Donating to the Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries Foundation and designating your gift as "in support of The Whooping Crane Project." [Click here](#) for information.
- Purchasing a [Whooping Crane License Plate](#)
- Purchasing a [print of the R.C. Davis painting "Taking Flight"](#).



Full page ad in "Marsh and Bayou Magazine" that ran May-December

Help LDWF by reporting all Whooping Crane sightings

Anyone encountering a Whooping Crane is advised to observe the bird from a distance and to please report your sighting to the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries by using the following link: <http://www.wlf.louisiana.gov/webform/whooping-crane-reporting-form>

Anyone witnessing suspicious activity involving Whooping Cranes is advised to call the LDWF's Enforcement Division at 1-800-442-2511 or use the tip411 program, which may offer a cash reward for information leading to arrests or convictions. To use the tip411 program, citizens can text LADWF and their tip to 847411 or download the "LADWF Tips" iPhone app from the Apple iTunes store free of charge. Citizen Observer, the tip411 provider, uses technology that removes all identifying information before LDWF receives the text so that LDWF cannot identify the sender.

For LDWF updates on the Louisiana non-migratory population of Whooping Cranes, go here: <https://www.facebook.com/lawhoopingcranes/>

Nebraska:

Audubon Nebraska fights for Whooping Cranes by supporting lawsuit

[Audubon Nebraska](#) is deeply concerned about the lack of consideration the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) gave for the threat the R-Project 345-KV Transmission Line (R-Project) poses to the endangered Whooping Crane.

On November 14, 2019 Audubon Nebraska joined an amicus brief against the USFWS regarding Endangered Species Act compliance for the construction of the R-Project across the Whooping Cranes' migratory path.

The USFWS issued its decision notice on June 17, 2019, which permitted the Nebraska Public Power District to begin construction of a 345,000-volt, 224-mile long transmission system through the Nebraska Sandhills. This project includes an Incidental Take Permit under the Endangered Species Act for the American Burying Beetle, but not for the Whooping Crane. The USFWS issued its decision despite being provided recent analyses showing Whooping Crane migration through the vicinity of the planned transmission lines and the harm to cranes that is likely to result from their collision with the power lines.

Audubon will join with the [Center for Biological Diversity](#), the [International Crane Foundation](#), and the [American Bird Conservancy](#) to file an amicus brief supporting a civil lawsuit by Western Nebraska Resources Council, a nonprofit corporation; Hanging H East, L.L.C.; Whitetail Farms East, L.L.C.; and the Oregon-California Trails Association. This lawsuit is in the U.S. District Court for the District of Colorado.

Whooping Cranes: The Tale of the Last Ones Killed in Nebraska

Excerpts from an *Omaha World-Herald*, **22 November 1903** article, author unknown.

"The last Whooping Crane in Nebraska was killed on October 23, 1902 by Harry Counsman and W. Y. Teetzel, up on the tule [giant, freshwater sedge] flats west of Three Spring Lake just west of "Anse" Newberry's old place, north of Cody. Counsman and Teetzel were after ducks and were lying in their blind in the rice and tules awaiting the evening flight...and coming whence the two silent hunters could not determine was a cry so wild and strange, yet ringing as the blast of a silvery horn, that made them peer into each other's faces with much concern. Again it came, a long drawn, sonorous grrrrrrroooo..."

Far in the north, against the overreaching blue, they caught sight of four wisps of down, like splashes of snow against the sky, and instinctively knew that it was from these that ringing, ghostly grrrrrrroooo emanated. Closer the four objects came, enlarging as they came, until the languid motion of their huge sails were visible and their cries growing nearer and more penetrating, the hunters were enabled to make out that they were some species of a rare bird, and simultaneously they exclaimed, "Swan!" Again came that far-reaching tremolo, and the excited hunters saw the four huge birds set their wings and in a line of bluish gray against the sky drift toward them..."

No other bird has the same pomp and ceremony about his movements, and when the four big white cranes, instead of coming down, swept around the lonely amphitheatre in miles of spiral, Counsman and Teetzel gave up all hope of getting a shot. But closer and closer each wind brought them in nearer the tule blind, and it was evident that the birds were circling the lake only as a precautionary manoeuvre before alighting..."

...Four monster birds, three times as big as the biggest Canada goose, pouring a flood of the most far-reaching sound that rolls from a living throat, were wheeling and sheering above them, with the sun's rays glancing from their dagger beaks and wildly waving wings..."

Tennessee:

Online license-Sandhill Crane post-season survey

<https://www.tn.gov/content/dam/tn/twra/documents/sandhill-Crane-Survey-Reference.pdf>

Wisconsin:

Bird Protection Fund to support Wisconsin birds in 2020

Along with habitat loss, threats like outdoor cats, collisions with windows, cars, or power lines, pesticides, invasive species and climate change are all contributing to this unprecedented decline of bird populations.

This is where the [Bird Protection Fund](#) steps in – a collaboration between the [Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin](#), [Wisconsin Bird Conservation Initiative](#), and the [Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources](#). Since the fund was created in 2009 it has given out over \$1 million towards bird conservation efforts. Projects range from habitat recovery to research and reintroduction efforts. On the list for 2020 include help for endangered birds like the Piping Plover and Whooping Crane, and research that will identify “safe havens” for migratory birds on their on their journeys to Central and South America.

The [Great Wisconsin Birdathon](#) began in 2012 and since then has raised more than \$500,000 for bird protection in Wisconsin. The funds are collected and managed by the Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin through the Bird Protection Fund. *Learn more at www.wibirdathon.com.*

The Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin is a nonprofit 501(c)3 created in 1986. In the years since, the Foundation has contributed nearly \$7 million to conservation efforts to protect the lands, waters, and wildlife of Wisconsin and to support environmental education in our state. *Learn more at www.WisConservation.org.*

Neighbors outraged after Portage police kill problem Sandhill Crane

Police in Portage, Wisconsin, had received complaints about a Sandhill Crane(s) causing minor property damage for nearly four years. Based on this, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service issued the Portage Police Department a permit to kill two Sandhill Cranes in that neighborhood between April 29, 2019, and March 31, 2020. Police shot one of the cranes in a city park during the Labor Day weekend while families were present. The shooting led to a huge outcry. The Portage police issued an official public apology.

Habitat Matters!

Louisiana:

Rockefeller Wildlife Refuge celebrates centennial

The [Rockefeller Wildlife Refuge](#) in southwest Louisiana was 86,000-acres (34,800 hectares) when the land was bought in 1914 and donated to Louisiana in December 1919. Mostly made up of marshlands, the refuge is bordered by the Gulf of Mexico for 26 miles. Since that time, coastal erosion has reduced the refuge to its current size of about 71,500-acres. Rockefeller Wildlife Refuge is nationally and internationally known for its pioneering wildlife, fisheries, and wetlands research.

The Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF) has conserved the wildlife and habitat on Rockefeller Wildlife Refuge, in Cameron and Vermilion parishes, through biological management for more than 100 years. Today, the refuge serves as a test site for marsh management strategies to limit saline encroachment, reverse marsh deterioration, provide productive wildlife habitat and has been a site for research to reduce coastal erosion through use of stone breakwaters light enough not to sink in the soft silt near what remains of the shore. Staff also provides land management guidance to private landowners of marshland, as well as expertise regarding the wise use coastal wetlands and other wildlife and fisheries resources.

Ducks, geese, roseate spoonbills and other wading birds, bald eagles, as well Louisiana's reintroduced, non-migratory flock of Whooping Cranes, call Rockefeller Wildlife Refuge home. Recreational fishing is allowed but hunting is forbidden.

Wyoming:

Corridor between river and mountains protected in perpetuity

After family vacations in the Tetons instilled a deep love for the area, lifelong conservationist Nancy Hamill Winter in 2005 purchased 160-acres along the Teton River called Three Forks, an area valuable for its cutthroat, moose, and elk habitat. The property also included a small remnant of the vast sagebrush bench ecosystem that once covered the river valley. Since that time the Winter family has bought 20 additional properties to maintain contiguous undeveloped land from the wetlands west of the Teton River to the foothills of the Big Holes.

2006 marked the Winter's most recent purchase of the 162-acre "Horseshoe Meadows" development property once slated to become a subdivision of 25 lots. With this acquisition, a corridor of protected land was established between the Teton River and the Big Hole Range. The Winter family's mission in protecting the corridor between Big Eddy and the mouth of Horseshoe Canyon was twofold: to enable agriculture to continue in the valley, and to ensure that the valley's population of migrating Sandhill Cranes will always have staging grounds in the valley.

Working with various organizations, the [Teton Regional Land Trust \(TRLT\)](#) first and foremost but also [Friends of the Teton River](#), [Rocky Mountain Environmental](#), [Intermountain Aquatics](#), and Double Diamond Pest and Weed Management, Nancy has been able to find the land with the most intrinsic value, maintain it in order to control invasive weeds, and learn the basics of water rights.

The TRLT holds conservation easements on around half of the 1,400-acre corridor, and Nancy and her family plans to put it all in an easement to restrict future development. Now that she has filled in the holes on the map, her next goal is to establish a cohesive management plan for the land. She intends for it to stay in agriculture, planted or grazed as it has been for over a century.

Science News:

Sandhill Crane finder

Sandhill Cranes are a story of hope for birds in North America. Seventy-five years ago, Sandhill Cranes were declining across the country due to habitat loss and unregulated hunting. The actions of concerned citizens, wetland protection and international legislation have turned the tide. We created this tool to help you explore where Sandhill Cranes live throughout the year and discover new places where you might see these magnificent birds. Check out the tool here. <https://www.savingcranes.org/sandhill-crane-finder/>

Help our Scientists – report banded Sandhills

Reports of banded Sandhill cranes help biologists and researchers to better understand the cranes, their movements during migration and the habitat they use and depend on for roosting and foraging during migration. Please join other citizen scientists by reporting these cranes.

To report a banded Sandhill Crane, go here: <https://sandhillfinder.savingcranes.org/resighting>

Landmark volume on cranes published! – *Crane Conservation Strategy*

IUCN Species Survival Commission, Crane Specialist Group

Mirande CM, Harris JT, editors. 2019. Crane Conservation Strategy. Baraboo, Wisconsin, USA: International Crane Foundation. 454 pp.

Copyright © 2019 by the International Crane Foundation, P.O. Box 447, Baraboo, WI 53913, USA. All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced without written permission.

This landmark volume provides a wealth of new information to guide conservation of the world's fifteen species of cranes and the ecosystems where they occur. It reflects the work and knowledge of dozens of devoted colleagues in the IUCN Crane Specialist Group. It updates and builds upon the group's first report, *The Cranes: Status Survey and Conservation Action Plan* (1996). As such it charts a comprehensive course forward for crane conservation, synthesizing information on the challenges and opportunities that face the world's cranes and all who care about them. The book is intended to serve crane researchers, conservationist practitioners, decision makers, and environmental educators.

To reduce the carbon footprint and promote broad circulation, electronic versions of the book are available free of charge at www.savingcranes.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/crane_conservation_strategy_web_2019-1.pdf

IUCN SSC Crane Specialist Group – Crane Conservation Strategy SPECIES REVIEW: SANDHILL CRANE (*Grus canadensis*)

Gary L. Krapu¹, Gary L. Ivey², and Jeb A. Barzen³

(with inputs from George W. Archibald, Inga Byskatova, and Scott Hereford)

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A full-text PDF download of the chapter is available from Jeb Barzen at:

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/337063895_Species_Review_Sandhill_Crane_Grus_canadensis

Effects of territorial status and life history on Sandhill Crane (*Antigone canadensis*) population dynamics in south-central Wisconsin, USA

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S.M. Crimmins. College of Natural Resources, University of Wisconsin–Stevens Point, 800 Reserve Street, Stevens Point, WI 54481, USA.

T.R. Van Deelen. Department of Forest and Wildlife Ecology, University of Wisconsin–Madison, 1630 Linden Drive, Madison, WI 53706, USA.

Article (PDF Available) in [Canadian Journal of Zoology](#) 97(3) · September 2018

DOI: 10.1139/cjz-2018-0135

Abstract: Population growth rate in long-lived bird species is often most sensitive to changes in adult survival. Sandhill Cranes (*Antigone canadensis* (Linnaeus, 1758) have long life spans, small broods, and delayed first reproduction. Only territorial adult Sandhill Cranes participate in breeding, and territory acquisition reflects the interplay between the availability of suitable territories and the variation in mortality of adult birds occupying those territories. We estimated vital rates of a population at equilibrium using long-term resightings data (2000–2014; n = 451 marked individuals) in a multistate mark–resight model and used a stage-structured projection matrix to assess how strongly territorial adult survival affects population growth rate. Elasticity analysis indicated territorial birds surviving and retaining territories had a 2.58 times greater impact on population growth compared with the next most important transition rate (survival of nonterritorial adults remaining nonterritorial). Knowing how changes in vital rates of various stage classes will differentially impact population growth rate allows for targeted management actions including encouraging growth in recovering populations, assessing opportunity for recreational harvest, or maintaining populations at a desired level. This study also highlights the value of collecting demographic data for all population segments, from which one can derive reproductive output or growth rate.

A full-text PDF download is available from Jeb Barzen at:

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/327587113_Effects_of_territorial_status_and_life_history_on_sandhill_crane_population_dynamics_in_south_central_Wisconsin

Reproductive Failure in the Eastern Migratory Population: The Interaction of Research and Management

Chapter (PDF Available) · September 2018

DOI: 10.1016/B978-0-12-803555-9.00008-6

In book: WHOOPING CRANES: BIOLOGY AND CONSERVATION BIODIVERSITY OF THE WORLD; CONSERVATION FROM GENES TO LANDSCAPES, Publisher: Elsevier/Academic Press, pp.161-178

Sarah J. **Converse**^{*,**}, Bradley N. **Strobel**[†], Jeb A. **Barzen**[‡]

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[‡]International Crane Foundation, Baraboo, WI, United States

Abstract: By almost any measure, the reintroduction of the Eastern Migratory Population of whooping cranes has shown the most promise of any reintroduction effort to date, in terms of progress toward the establishment of a self-sustaining population. However, reproductive success – including both nesting success and fledging success – has been a major challenge. Here, we review the reproductive performance of this reintroduced population, and present the current state of knowledge on causes of reproductive failure. While there is good evidence that a proximal cause of nesting failure is harassment by ornithophilic black flies (*Simuliidae*), this may not be the only factor contributing to nesting failure; we present alternative hypotheses and approaches for testing these hypotheses. The lack of fledging success appears to be a somewhat independent issue, and we present hypotheses for factors contributing to this challenge as well. While much has been learned, there is still substantial uncertainty about how best to manage the eastern migratory population reintroduction effort to improve reproductive outcomes. It is clear, however, that the solution will not be simple, and that the challenges to reproduction in this population may have implications for whooping crane reintroduction generally.

A full-text PDF download is available from Jeb Barzen at:

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/327872143_Reproductive_Failure_in_the_Eastern_Migratory_Population_The_Interaction_of_Research_and_Management

Ecological Implications of Habitat Use by Reintroduced and Remnant Whooping Crane Populations

Chapter (PDF Available)

DOI: 10.1016/B978-0-12-803555-9.00015-3

In book: WHOOPING CRANES: BIOLOGY AND CONSERVATION BIODIVERSITY OF THE WORLD; CONSERVATION FROM GENES TO LANDSCAPES, Publisher: Elsevier/Academic Press, pp.327-352

Jeb A. **Barzen**

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Private Lands Conservation LLC, Spring Green, WI, United States

Abstract: Though Whooping Cranes historically nested in varied biomes they also needed specific habitat components located within each biome. The goal here is to compare current Whooping Crane habitat use to historical records and inform predictions related to recovery and management in today's changing world. Among 4 populations (Aransas Wood Buffalo, AWBP; Eastern Migratory, EMP; Florida Non-migratory; and Louisiana Non-migratory, LNMP) Whooping Cranes used open wetlands dominated by emergent vegetation and open water for foraging and roosting throughout the year but the amount of wetland use varied among populations and seasons. Summer territories in the AWBP and EMP averaged 4 km² while home ranges of non-territorial cranes were 10 – 100 times larger, making habitat availability between the two groups substantially different. Average natal dispersal distance was < 28 km, making only habitats close to natal areas available for territory establishment. Though not an annual occurrence, cranes used wetlands 92% of the time during the flightless molt and home range was the smallest home range measured, suggesting this period may be the most sensitive of the annual cycle. In winter cranes in the AWBP used mostly natural salt marshes, both day and night, in a narrow band of the Texas Coast

whereas the EMP was distributed throughout the eastern US and utilized agricultural areas. Cranes in the LNMP used man-made wetlands all year. The breadth of habitats used by other populations during winter suggests that the AWBP could utilize alternative habitats if needed. Strong territorial behavior in winter by the AWBP may reduce the rate at which dispersal outside of the Texas Coast can occur. In fall migration, AWBP cranes staged before moving rapidly to winter areas but no staging occurred in the EMP during either migration. If energetic or nutritional needs are unmet on winter or summer areas, spring and fall staging areas could serve as alternate habitats. Future research should address the role of territoriality in cranes and the degree to which use of agricultural fields may be beneficial.

A full-text PDF download is available from Jeb Barzen at:

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/327872052_Ecological_Implications_of_Habitat_Use_by_Reintroduced_and_Remnant_Whooping_Crane_Populations

New Hunter Education Strategies to Protect Whooping Cranes in Texas and Kansas (2008)

Lee Ann Johnson **Linam**, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, 200 Hoots Holler Road, Wimberley, TX 78676, USA
Helen M. **Hands**, Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks, Cheyenne Bottoms Wildlife Area, 56 N.E. 40 Road, Great Bend, KS 67530, USA

Jay **Roberson**, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, 4200 Smith School Road, Austin, TX 78744, USA

Proceedings of the North American Crane Workshop 10:138–140

Abstract: The decline of the Whooping Crane (*Grus americana*) has often been attributed primarily to loss of habitat and overharvest. Although hunting of Whooping Cranes is now prohibited, shootings sometimes occur. Recent incidences have prompted the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (Texas) and the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks (Kansas) to develop new strategies that increase hunter recognition of legal game species and awareness of endangered species concerns. Both agencies have produced or updated publications for goose and Sandhill Crane (*Grus canadensis*) hunters. Texas has developed video news releases for the general public and a video/DVD for hunter education classes designed to help goose and crane hunters avoid taking protected nongame species. Kansas has developed an online test that crane hunters must pass annually before they may purchase a crane permit.

To read or for a full-text PDF download of the article, go here:

http://www.nacwg.org/publications/cranes_sandhill_whooping_2008-24.pdf

The Art of Cranes

“And then, in a flurry and cacophony of sound, primal and singular, the guttural cries of the cranes shattered the darkness like wildness itself, with hundreds of thousands of birds lifting up the landscape with their wings. Everything was in motion: the water, the grasses, the cornfields, the sky. Flock after flock of cranes rising from river, higher and higher, flying above the Platte in all directions, some of the cranes crisscrossing each other like long undulating strands of calligraphy, writing themselves against the pages of a pastel sky. The outstretched wings of the sandhill cranes with their finger feathers extended are the farthest reaches of hope against the press of modernity. Their return is our assurance that the world is still fit for beauty. Nine million years of perfection resides in the bones of these birds that bear witness to the wisdom of evolution in its adaptive grace. Generation after generation, the memory of cranes landing in Middle America to feed and breed on the banks of the Platte River allows their story to continue. I am the pupil of the bird blind, an eye squinting for insight beyond my own kind. The cranes slowly float back to Earth, descending like angels, only to rise and fall and rise again in the amorous play of lovers, leaping and bowing to the embodied knowledge that

the future depends on each gesture granted to the other. In response to one of the oldest dances on the planet—the kind of mastery only evolution can perfect—we, also, rise to an awakened state of being for having witnessed the ongoing nature of grace. We were close to the birds, close enough to be touched by the majesty and presence of these gray-feathered elders standing tall on the prairie with their beaks pointing upward as they danced and bowed to one another. Through the open window framing and focusing our attention, we saw what survival looks like in the shimmering light of awe.”

~ Terry Tempest Williams,

[Erosion: Essays of Undoing](#), (Sarah Crichton Books, October 8, 2019)

Molly of Denali FULL EPISODES | New Nivagi/Crane Song | PBS KIDS

Story of Molly, a ten-year-old Athabascan girl, who offers to help Dr. Antigone band Sandhill Crane colts. The story describes the purpose of banding cranes and an unconventional way of attracting them. Starts at 14:15 / Crane song and dance to band colts. <https://youtu.be/27kWBgJGYpA>



A 1748 hand-colored, engraving of a Whooping Crane by George Edwards, an English naturalist and ornithologist, known as the "father of British ornithology." In 1743 he published the first volume of his *A Natural History of Uncommon Birds*, the fourth volume of which appeared in 1751, and three supplementary volumes, under the title *Gleanings of Natural History*, were issued in 1758, 1760 and 1764. The two works contain engravings and descriptions of more than 600 subjects in natural history not before described or delineated. He likewise added a general index in French and English, which was afterwards supplied with Linnaean names by Linnaeus himself, with whom he frequently corresponded.

Interesting note: Engraved on the top mandible of the bill of the large Whooping Crane head that the full Whooping Crane is standing on is, "G. Edwards, 1748. The great white crane from North America."

Upcoming Events:

2019 Crane Fest / Mississippi Sandhill Crane NWR

Date: December 14, 2019

9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.

Location: Mississippi Sandhill Crane National Wildlife Refuge Visitor Center and Headquarters
7200 Crane Lane, Gautier, Mississippi
(1/2 mile north of exit 61 on Interstate 10)

This event is sure to have something for every member of the family, with activities ranging from meeting live birds of prey and reptiles up close to presentations from many of our partners in wildlife conservation. Some of our highlight presentations include the hawks, owls, and falcons of the Environmental Studies Center, the meeting several species of BATS up close and personal, having a Reptile Rendezvous and special demonstrations of traditional Native American dance and music. This year we will also have three very special guests of honor – our newly arrived Mississippi Sandhill Cranes!

For more information call 228-497-6322 ext. 101

Or visit: <https://www.facebook.com/MSSandhillCraneNWR/> or,
www.fws.gov/refuge/mississippi_sandhill_crane

Holiday with the Cranes on Galveston Island

Dates: December 14-15, 2019

Location: Galveston Island, TX

Holiday with the Cranes is presented by the Galveston Island Nature Tourism Council, a nonprofit volunteer organization that helps connect people with nature experiences and outdoor adventures and promotes the value of natural habitats and resources in the Galveston Island area.

Closer to the festival date, check here for more festival information including the festival itinerary, and to register for fieldtrips please go here: <https://www.galvestonnaturetourism.org/holiday-with-the-cranes-2019/>

Sandhill Crane Kayak Tour at Hiwassee Wildlife Refuge

Dates: Saturday, December 7 and Saturday, December 14, 2019

10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

Location: Hiwassee Wildlife Refuge, TN

The Hiwassee Refuge is located at the confluence of the Tennessee and Hiwassee Rivers, about one hour north of Chattanooga. The area attracts a variety of birds and during the winter, as many as 15,000 to 20,000 cranes have been known to overwinter on Hiwassee Island. This site has the largest winter flock of Sandhill Cranes in the southeast United States outside of Florida.

Cost: \$75 per person. All kayak equipment and guides will be provided by REI and are included for these tours. Previous kayaking experience recommended, but not required.

For more information and to register for the tours, go here:

<https://www.rei.com/events/93323/sandhill-crane-kayak-tour-at-hiwassee-wildlife-refuge>

San Joaquin County Sandhill Crane Wetland Tours

Dates: October 5, 2018 - February 2020

Location: [Woodbridge Ecological Reserve \(a.k.a. Isenberg Crane Reserve\)](#)

Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta, just west of Lodi in San Joaquin County, CA

Note: You must pre-register for your tour, as tour size is limited to 30 people and there are no accommodations for drop-ins at the tour site.

Registration is now open for the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) Sandhill Crane Wetland Tour, which offers guided tours of Sandhill Cranes in their fall-winter habitat. Guided tours, which begin October 5, are offered mid-to-late afternoon during the first three weekends of each month from October through February.

For more information and to register for a tour, go here: https://www.eventbrite.com/o/cdfw-bay-delta-region-4633804151#live_events

Or here:

<https://cdfgnews.wordpress.com/2018/09/07/registration-now-open-for-fall-sandhill-crane-tours-in-san-joaquin-county/>

Save Our Sandhill Cranes

Dates: December 28, 2019 - January 26, 2020

Location: All tours will start at either Staten Island or Woodbridge Ecological Reserve

Sacramento Audubon Society

<http://soscranes.org/visit-the-cranes/free-tours/>

All tours will start at either Staten Island or Woodbridge Ecological Reserve. Our crane season begins in September and typically runs through January.

We begin with a brief presentation about Sandhill Crane behavior, biology and conservation status.

- Saturday, December 28, Staten Island, 4:00p.m. - 6:00 p.m.
- Sunday, December 29, Staten Island, 4:00p.m.
- Saturday, January 25, Staten Island, 4:20p.m.
- Sunday, January 26, Staten Island, 4:20p.m.

Contact Us: <http://soscranes.org/contact-us/>

Address:

SOS Cranes

5930 S. Land Park Dr.

P.O. Box 22192

Sacramento, CA 95822

Festival of the Cranes / Wheeler NWR

Dates: January 11 - January 12, 2020

Saturday 6:30 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

Sunday 8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

Location: Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge

3121 Visitors Center Road

Decatur, AL 35603

For about the upcoming festival, go here:

<http://www.friendsofwheelerrefuge.com/>, or [Facebook.com/FOCatWheeler](https://www.facebook.com/FOCatWheeler)

Over 14,000 Sandhill Cranes, along with a growing number of Whooping Cranes from the eastern migratory population, now spend the winter at Wheeler NWR. Festival attendees are able to view the cranes from an enclosed, heated observation tower.

Some festival events and activities will include:

- Kathy Mattea concert on Friday January 10, and the "Celebration of Flight," a performance combining dance, music and puppets of giant dragonflies and cranes created by Heather Henson, daughter of Jim Henson, on Saturday January 11, both at the Princess Theatre; tickets are required for both events.
- John James Audubon (Brian "Fox" Ellis) will be joining us both days.
- Photography workshop by photographer Paul Bannick
- Educational displays, hands on children activities and of course, the Cranes!
- Auburn University Southeastern Raptor Center's birds of prey presentations will take place at the historic Princess Theater in downtown Decatur. Shuttles to be available.

2020 Wings Over Willcox

Dates: January 17-20, 2020

Location: Willcox, Arizona

The "Wings Over Willcox" (WOW) festival is the perfect opportunity to see winter migrants and other wildlife of southeastern Arizona. The festival includes tours for photography, geology, history, botany, agriculture and, of course, thousands of Sandhill Cranes. Free admission.

A complete list of tours and free seminars, as well as online registration, can be found at www.wingsoverwillcox.com. Call 520-384-2874 for more information.

29th Tennessee Sandhill Crane Festival / Hiwassee Wildlife Refuge

Dates: January 18-19, 2020

8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. daily

Location: Hiwassee Wildlife Refuge and the Birchwood Community Center
Birchwood, Tennessee

Along with the star of the weekend, the Sandhill Crane, many types of waterfowl, Bald Eagles, a possible Golden Eagle, White Pelicans and even Whooping Cranes may be spotted. Free buses run the short distance from the Birchwood Community Center to the Hiwassee Refuge and Cherokee Removal Memorial. Both the memorial and refuge provide great birding opportunities, with views of the Hiwassee. Volunteers from the Chattanooga Chapter of the Tennessee Ornithological Society join TWRA each year, setting up scopes for visitors to see close-up views of not only Sandhill Cranes, but also endangered whooping cranes, bald eagles and many kinds of duck. Volunteers help provide visitors with a unique educational experience by sharing information and viewing scopes.

For more information, go here: <https://www.tn.gov/twra/wildlife/birds/sandhill-crane-festival.html>

Kentucky Nature Watch Weekends

Dates: January 17-19, 2020, and January 24-26, 2020

Tour options: Sunset: Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday

Sunrise: Saturday and Sunday

Location: Barren River Lake State Resort Park

1149 State Park Road

Lucas, KY 42156

Limited space available and tour times vary, so registration is required. There is a registration fee that includes all educational sessions, a box lunch, a long sleeve t-shirt, and your choice of a morning or afternoon tour by van.

Each year thousands of Sandhill Cranes make Barren River Lake a stop on their journey back home. Tours last approximately 3-3.5 hours each and include a guided van trip to potential roosting sites (sunset tours) and area cornfields where the cranes feed (sunrise tours).

For more information, package options, or to register, call Brenna Karcher at (270) 646-2151 or Email: brenna.karcher@ky.gov, or <https://parks.ky.gov/parks/resortparks/barren-river/events.aspx>

2020 Winter Wings Festival

Dates: February 13-16, 2020

Location: Klamath Falls, Oregon

The festival is held annually over Presidents Day weekend in February. The 40th Winter Wings Festival is produced by the [Klamath Basin Audubon Society](http://KlamathBasinAudubonSociety.org) volunteers.

Online registration begins on December 7th this year at 9:00 a.m. PST.

For more information, visit: winterwingsfest.org; (877) 541-BIRD (2473); info@winterwingsfest.org

24th Annual Whooping Crane Festival - 2020 / Port Aransas

Dates: Thursday, February 20 – Sunday, 23, 2020

Location: Port Aransas and Mustang Island, TX

The Whooping Crane Festival celebrates the annual return of the cranes to their wintering habitat at the Aransas National Wildlife Refuge. The Texas Coastal Bend is the only place where you can see the world's last wild population of Whooping Cranes.

World renowned crane expert, Dr. George Archibald, Co-Founder of the International Crane Foundation, will be one of the featured speakers, along with representatives from Wood Buffalo National Park, the Aransas National Wildlife Refuge, and more.

For more information and to register, go here: <http://www.whoopingcranefestival.org/>

Or, call 800-45-COAST, or 361-749-5919

2020 Marsh Madness Sandhill Crane Festival

Dates: February 28-29, 2020

Location: Goose Pond Fish and Wildlife Area

Greene Co. Indiana, near Linton

Join Friends of Goose Pond for its annual Sandhill Crane Festival with special presentations about Indiana raptors, snakes and bats; bus tours of the amazing wildlife management area and arts, crafts and kid activities, there is something for everyone interested in our natural world. *Festival admission tickets are required for some of the cabin presentations and activities.*

For a map of Goose Pond FWA, go here:

https://www.in.gov/dnr/fishwild/files/fw-gpfwa_waterfowl_draw_map.pdf

Learn more about the conservation, restoration and education work by Friends of Goose Pond group here: <http://www.friendsofgoosepond.org/>

2020 Annual Monte Vista Crane Festival

Dates: March 6-8, 2020

Location: San Luis Valley

Monte Vista, Colorado

The annual Monte Vista Crane Festival celebrates the spring arrival of some 25,000 Sandhill Cranes to the San Luis Valley. Registration will open on January 2, 2020.

For schedule information and tickets, visit mvcranefest.org or call 720-940-7561.

Go [HERE](#) for the last festival schedule, tickets and more information.

50th Annual Audubon's Nebraska Crane Festival

Dates: Friday March 20-Saturday March 21, 2020

Location: Kearney, Nebraska

For festival information, go here: <https://ne.audubon.org/crane-festival>

Audubon's Nebraska Crane Festival brings together hundreds of crane lovers from around the country to Kearney, Nebraska, to interact with a wide range of environmental speakers, take part in incredible birding trips, and experience the world's largest gathering of Sandhill Cranes.

2020 Othello Sandhill Crane Festival

Dates: Friday March 20 - Sunday March 22, 2020

Location: Columbia National Wildlife Refuge, Othello, Washington

The 2020 schedule will be available in January at the festival website:

othellosandhillcranefestival.org

The Eastern Crane Bulletin is issued quarterly (March, June, September and December).
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For archived issues of the *Eastern Crane Bulletin* click here:
<http://kyc4sandhillcranes.com/eastern-crane-bulletin/>

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"For the Whooping crane there is no freedom but that of unbounded wilderness, no life except its own. Without meekness, without a sign of humility, it has refused to accept our idea of what the world should be like. If we succeed in preserving the wild remnant that still survives, it will be no credit to us; the glory will rest on this bird whose stubborn vigor has kept it alive in the face of increasing and seemingly hopeless odds."

– Robert Porter Allen