



EASTERN CRANE BULLETIN

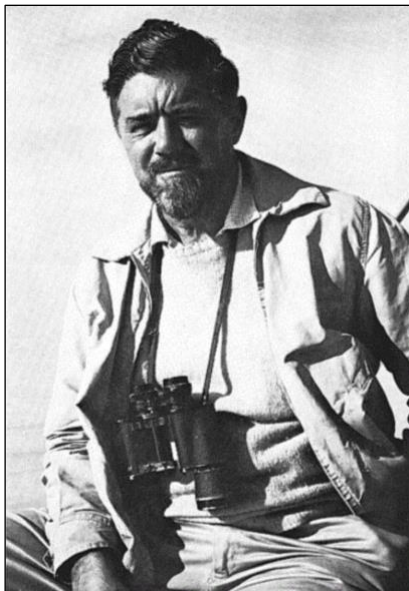
June 2021

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.

Editor: *Robert Porter Allen, ornithologist and conservation activist was with the National Audubon Society for thirty years, dedicating his life to documenting and working on behalf of rare and threatened bird species. His efforts to document the Whooping Crane nesting sites in North America generated national media coverage and aided in the creation of the Endangered Species Act in 1973.*

Robert Porter Allen (1905-1963) Research biologist extraordinaire

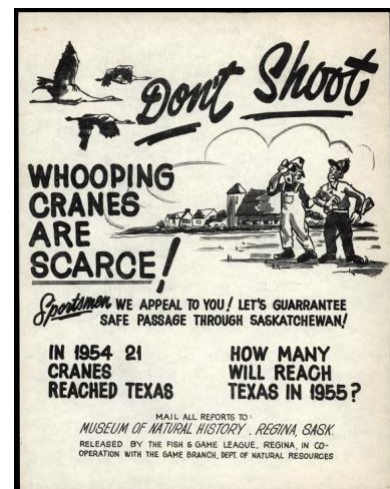
Born on 24 April 1905 in South Williamsport, Pennsylvania, Robert Porter Allen's love of birds began in high school when he was a member of the junior Audubon club. Fast forward through a series of life adventures that eventually lead Allen to get a job at the National Audubon Society (NAS) in 1930 – on a trial basis – as a book sorter, in their basement. Over the course of the next 10 years the society expanded and began a program of research and field studies, and Allen was promoted from book sorter to full-time ornithologist. His first study was of gulls on the Maine coast. When the Society set up a department of sanctuaries, Allen became a sanctuary director in 1934. In 1939 with the feather trade threatening the Roseate Spoonbill colonies in Florida and Texas, Allen was assigned to a full-scale study of the species. The following year he was able to make recommendations that undoubtedly helped save the colony of birds. His *Spoonbill* monograph, published in 1942, is considered a “classic life history.”



Robert Porter Allen in Florida Bay, 1958

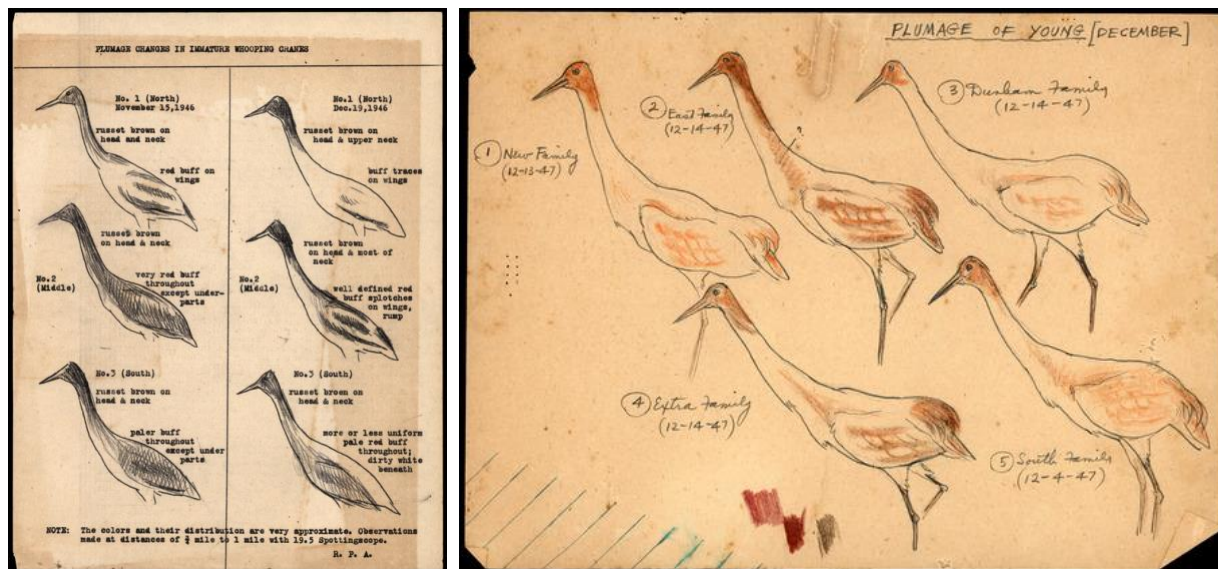
During the 1930's the National Audubon Society also funded extensive biological studies of the Ivory-billed Woodpecker and the California Condor. In 1945, NAS offered to underwrite a study of the dwindling population of Whooping Cranes. That support led John Baker, Director of the National Audubon Society, Dr. Ira N. Gabrielson of the Department of the Interior and Dr. Clarence Cottam, chief of research for the Fish and Wildlife Service, to form an alliance called the “Cooperative Whooping Crane Project.” Its purpose was to determine the next steps needed to protect and oversee the restoration of the Whooping Crane population. At that time there was no reliable information on basic day-to-day details of the life cycle of the Whooping Crane – their diet, nesting habits, rearing of young and behavior during

From the University of South Florida Special Collections/Robert Porter Allen Archives

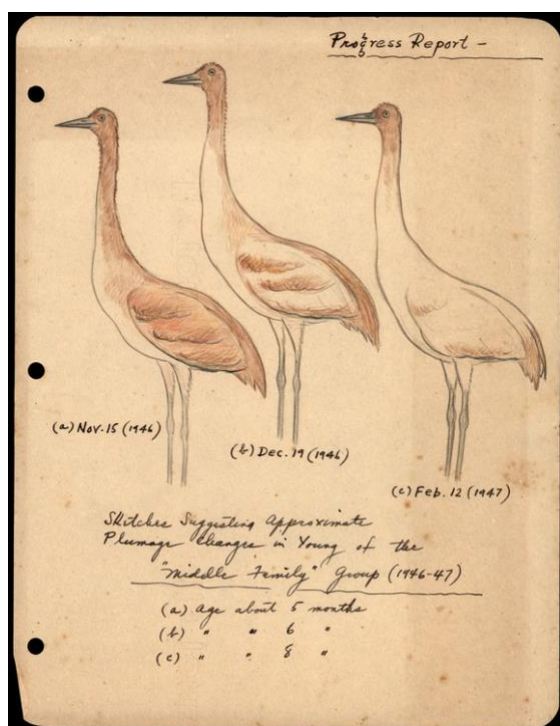


migrations. The project would involve not only a study of Whooping Cranes at Aransas but also a search for their elusive breeding grounds, the location of which was considered a crucial piece in the puzzle of how to preserve the species. The last known nest had been seen in Saskatchewan in 1926. So, at the time, every spring the Whooping Cranes flew north from southern Texas and seemingly disappeared.

In early 1945, Allen, Audubon's research director and preferred candidate to head the project, was still in the army. Fred Bard, Curator of the Provincial Museum in Regina, Saskatchewan, offered to search for nests during the summer of 1945, but despite two months of aerial surveys over central Saskatchewan, came away empty-handed. In autumn 1945, ornithologist Dr. Olin Sewall Pettingill, Jr., spent several months studying the cranes at Aransas. Then in summer 1946 Terris Moore, President of the New England Museum of Natural History, offered the Whooping Crane project use of a plane and his services as a pilot, and he, together with Pettingill, flew over several thousand miles of promising habitat in Alberta and Saskatchewan in search of nests. Once again, none was located.



(Above and below) Field sketches of young Whooping Crane plumage by Robert Porter Allen, during observations at Aransas National Wildlife Refuge. University of South Florida Special Collections/Robert Porter Allen Archives



Upon his return from military service, in November 1946, John Baker told Allen that the Whooping Cranes were now his problem. Allen had some idea of what the project might hold for him as six years earlier, when the Spoonbill research took him to Texas, he saw his first Whooping Crane. "I wondered idly," he later wrote, "what poor, unsuspecting soul would someday be assigned the rugged task of making a full-scale study of them." That autumn, when he arrived at the [Aransas National Wildlife Refuge](#) in Texas to begin work on the Whooping Crane Project, the world's population of Whooping Cranes totaled a mere twenty-five birds.

At the project's outset there was no clear understanding of what exactly was needed for Canada and the USFWS to eventually help the species. In 1952 when Robert Allen's monograph *A Complete Report of the Whooping Crane* was published by the National Audubon Society, Allen would have spent 39 months in intensive study, 27 of them in fieldwork to answer those questions. He would have travelled more than twenty thousand miles by plane and six thousand by jeep, searching the Canadian wilderness for the cranes' breeding grounds. During this time, he also wrote a

number of articles to educate the public on the plight of the cranes, a book – *On the Trail of Vanishing Birds* (1957) as well as the monograph and the *Supplement, A Report on the Whooping Cranes' Breeding Grounds*, (NAS 1956).

The information USFWS needed in order to work effectively on behalf of the Whooping Cranes was spelled out in the sections of the monograph labeled "Survival: Protection and Conservation." Vigilant oversight was crucial on the Aransas wintering grounds, because shootings and disturbance from close passing boats continued. Workers tending cattle on the refuge; expansion of oil installations that brought the constant threat of oil spills; poachers; and harassment from low-flying aircraft were some of the threats to the cranes. And, while Whooping Cranes had long used the Platte River for stopovers during migration, there was no designated protected area for them. Allen recommended that a federal refuge for waterfowl and Whooping Cranes be established along at least 50 miles of the Platte River in Nebraska.

"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." – Robert Porter Allen

On 30 June 1954 in a routine fire-fighting operation response to a forest fire burning in the remote northern reaches of Wood Buffalo National Park, a Canadian Forest Service helicopter was underway carrying pilot Don Landells and Superintendent of Forestry, George M. Wilson. On the way there, the men happened to look down and observed 4-6 Whooping Cranes including a pair with one young bird. They reported their observation in time for the region's biologist, Dr. William (Bill) Fuller, to catch the next helicopter flight out that evening to the scene of the fire. He was able to confirm the earlier sighting as indeed that of Whooping Cranes.

This was exciting news for the Canadian and American team involved in Whooping Crane conservation, but final confirmation of the discovery of the nesting area didn't occur until a ground survey was able to be undertaken the next year. Far from being an ordinary ground survey, it consisted of two brutal and physically taxing expeditions, with a team led by Robert (Bob) Porter Allen, Ray Stewart of the Canadian Wildlife Service and Bob Stewart of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, paddling and portaging on foot through and around a network of shallow ponds potholes, bogs, brush-covered ridges and thickly grown dwarf birch, willows, tamaracks and scraggly black spruce.

The first two ground attempts were unsuccessful in reaching any cranes. Just when they were on the verge of giving up for the year, Allen and Ray Stewart were given a chance for another drop-off by helicopter at a different location, and this time – success! Allen wrote in his notes, "It has taken 31 days and a lot of grief, but let it be known that at 2 p.m. on this day 23rd of June, we are on the ground with the Whooping Cranes! We have finally made it!" The next day they encountered two adult Whooping Cranes that immediately moved in different directions along the shore of a small pond, one keeping an eye on the men as it strode along before issuing a series of alarm notes as it flew off.

THE RECORD (5)

[Wood Buffalo Park Crane Area - 1954-1955]

1954 - June (27-30?)	Sass R. - 2 ad. 1 yg.
	Klein R. - 2 ad. -
	(near) Noyah R. - 1 ad.
July 13	Between Klein + Noyah - 1 ad.
	6 ad. 1 yg.
1955 - Apr. 30	Sass R. - 2 ad.
May 3-4	
May 10-11	Hay camp - 3 ad.
May 15	Sass R. - (1 ad.)
May 16	" - (1 ad.)
May 18	" - (2 ad + nest)
"	Upper Klein R. - 2 ad + nest
"	Mid. Klein R. - 1 ad + nest with egg
"	Lower M. Klein R. - 2 ad
June 6-7	Lower M. Klein R. - 4 ad. (flying S.W.)
June 13	Place here - 4 ad. (flying S.W.)
June 24	Sass R. - (2 ad. + 4 yg.) 5-30 pm
July 6	Sass R. - (2 ad) + 2 yg.
"	Klein area - (2 ad) + 2 yg.
"	" " - (1 ad.)
11-16	18

First aerial counts of Whooping Cranes in Wood Buffalo National Park. Page from Sass River, N.W.T. Canada 1955 [No.2]; R.P. Allen notebook July 1 (1955) - July. From the University of South Florida Special Collections/Robert Porter Allen Archives

Wood Buffalo National Park covers 17,300 square-miles. Once considered economically valueless and all but inaccessible, it was set aside in 1922 as a preserve to protect the last of Canada's herds of Wood Bison – with no inkling of the Whooping Cranes nesting in a remote northeast corner of the park. This amazing stroke of good luck undoubtedly contributed to the Whooping Cranes' survival.

Allen was awarded the [Brewster Memorial Award of the American Ornithologists Union](#) in 1957, one of the highest honors for an ornithologist, and [The John Burroughs Award](#) in 1958 for his book on *On the Trail of Vanishing Birds*. He was a Fellow of the American Ornithologists Union, and very active in the Linnaean and Wilson Ornithological Societies. In 1964 a posthumous honor was given him when three Keys in Florida Bay were named the "Bob Allen Keys" by the National Park Service. In the 1970's the Society renamed its Second Chain of Islands Sanctuary on the Texas coast the "Robert Porter Allen Memorial Sanctuary."

Robert Porter Allen archives: University of South Florida

Editor: *Robert Porter Allen founded the Audubon Research Center in Tavernier, Florida. The Robert Porter Allen collection features digitized items from the University of South Florida Libraries (USF) Special Collections holdings. In the collection is a field notebook, "Sass River, N.W.T. Canada 1955 [No.2] July 1 (1955) – July," which suggests that there was another notebook from the same location containing notes of the discovery of the Wood Buffalo National Park breeding ground for Whooping Cranes? Unfortunately, it does not seem to be in the collection.*

To access the South Florida Libraries (USF) Special Collections/Robert Porter Allen collection, go here: <https://digital.lib.usf.edu/results/?t=Whooping%20Crane,rpallen&f=ZZ,ZX&o=0>

The following are samples from the collection.

Whooping Crane Investigation - Texas - August 29th, 1947 - October 13, 1947
<https://digital.lib.usf.edu/SFS0077064/00001?search=Whooping+=Crane+=rpallen>

Whooping Crane Notes - Canada - June 15th, 1948 - July 7th, 1948
<https://digital.lib.usf.edu/SFS0077071/00001/37j?search=Whooping+%3dCrane+%3drpallen>

Sass River - N.W.T. - Canada 1955 - No. 2 - July 1st, 1955
<https://digital.lib.usf.edu/SFS0077100/00001/1j?search=Whooping+%3dCrane+%3drpallen>

"Help Wanted for the Whooping Crane," article by Robert P Allen (follow-up to "The Whooping Crane," Research Report No. 3, National Audubon Society, 1952)
<https://digital.lib.usf.edu/SFS0060919/00001/5j?search=Whooping+%3dCrane+%3drpallen>

Aransas-Wood Buffalo Whooping Cranes

Canada:

Egg collection from Wood Buffalo NP aided captive breeding

By the early 1940's there were only 22 wild Whooping Cranes left in the world. With the discovery of the nesting area in Wood Buffalo National Park in 1954, a source of wild eggs became available for use in the captive breeding program at the [Patuxent Wildlife Research Center](#) near Laurel, Maryland. The first wild egg collection occurred in 1966 under the direction of Canadian Wildlife Service biologist Ernie Kuyt. Flown in by helicopter, Kuyt and his team waded through the wetlands to collect the eggs, carrying them in a sock and never taking more than one from a nest. The collected eggs were placed in a portable incubator which was kept warm with hot water bottles and flown to Patuxent.

The egg collections continued until 1998. During this period, a total of 242 eggs were sent to the various captive breeding facilities (including 4 eggs to the Calgary Zoo in 1994 and another 2 eggs in 1998, as well as one live chick to the Calgary Zoo in 1999). An additional 215 eggs were sent to Grey's Lake in Idaho for use in a cross-fostering experiment with wild Sandhill Cranes.

In the ensuing years, monitoring and research continued with the wild population. One initiative that occurred in the park was a color-banding project, led by Ernie Kuyt from 1977-1988. A radio-tracking project also occurred from 1981-1983.

Thanks to the International Whooping Crane Recovery Program's many decades of research, captive breeding, reintroduction efforts in the United States, and ongoing protection of the wild Wood Buffalo-Aransas flock, the North American Whooping Crane population exceeds 800* as of 2018. To learn more about [Canada's Whooping Crane Recovery Strategy](#), [click here](#).

**This number includes birds in captivity, reintroduced birds in the United States (both migratory and non-migratory), and the 505 birds in the natural wild migratory Wood Buffalo-Aransas flock.*



Whooping Crane pair on their breeding grounds in Wood Buffalo National Park. Photo: Parks Canada/Klaus Nigge

Eastern Migratory Population of WHOOPERS



Gee Whiz at home in his Crane City quarters at the International Crane Foundation, Baraboo WI. Photo courtesy of ICF.

First Whooping Crane – Gee Whiz – hatched at ICF dies

Gee Whiz, a Whooping Crane extremely important to crane reintroduction, died on 24 February 2021 of natural causes in Crane City, the International Crane Foundation's (ICF) breeding facility. He lived for 38 years and nine months. While the average life expectancy of a Whooping Crane in captivity is about 25 years there is a case of a captive crane living until the age 46.

A miracle from inception, Gee Whiz was the first Whooping Crane to hatch at ICF and only the fifth Whooping Crane at its headquarters. He also was the only living son of Tex, a legendary Whooping Crane made famous by her closest friend, International Crane Foundation Co-founder Dr. George Archibald. The world learned about Tex when George appeared on The Tonight Show Starring Johnny Carson in 1982 to tell their inspiring story of Whooping Crane reintroduction perseverance. George Archibald danced with Tex to induce her to lay eggs.

"I worked with Tex for seven years before a successful hatch of Gee Whiz in 1982," recalled International Crane Foundation Co-founder George Archibald. "I was 36 when Gee Whiz hatched

and 74 when he died. During those intervening years, Gee Whiz, with the assistance of the International Crane Foundation's excellent staff, produced many offspring.

Gee Whiz hatched June of 1982 at ICF through an artificial insemination (AI) process from semen sent to the International Crane Foundation from the USGS Patuxent Wildlife Research Center in Maryland. He was named after Dr. George Gee, who worked at Patuxent and collected the semen used for AI.

A resident of the International Crane Foundation his whole life, Gee Whiz is best known for being the father of Whooping Crane conservation, having been the patriarch of a family of 178 genetically diverse Whooping Cranes through four decades. For many years, Gee Whiz shared his pen with his mate Oobleck. Gee Whiz's paternal efforts helped bring back one of the most endangered bird families on the planet, from numbers as low as 14 in the 1940s to more than 800 birds today.

Eastern Migratory Population WHCR Update – June 1, 2021

Below is the most recent update for the Eastern Migratory Population of Whooping Cranes. In the last month, many chicks have hatched! A huge thank-you to the staff of the U.S. 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. This report is produced by the International Crane Foundation for the Whooping Crane Eastern Partnership. Near real-time locations of Whooping Cranes in this population can be seen at <https://whoopermap.savingcranes.org/>

Population Estimate

The current estimated population size is 76 (38 F, 36 M, 2 U). 16 of these 76 individuals are wild-hatched and the rest are captive-reared. [*In the May update: one crane who had originally tested as male, re-tested as female and is paired with a male. Additionally, a crane of unknown sex has paired and nested with a female and is assumed to be male.*] To the best of our knowledge, as of 1 June, there are at least 68 Whooping Cranes in Wisconsin, 2 in Michigan, and 2 in Minnesota. The remaining birds' locations have not been confirmed in the last month.

Reproduction

- As of 1 June: we have had at least 21 first nests and 2 renests. Additionally, we have 1 hybrid nest (Sandhill x Whooping Crane) in Lenawee Co., Michigan still sitting on dummy eggs.
- Failed nests since last report: 2 in Juneau Co. (predation), 1 in St. Croix Co. (predation), and 1 hybrid nest in Dodge Co. (eggs removed), 1 in Juneau Co. (full term)
- In total, 7 eggs were removed from 6 nests to be raised in captivity.
- Active nests: 1 nest in Juneau Co. and 1 in Marquette Co. which is past due, but the pair is still incubating.

- As of 1 May: there have been at least 21 first nests and 1 reneest so far this spring. Additionally, we have 1 hybrid nest (Sandhill x Whooping Crane) in Lenawee County, Michigan.
- Failed nests since last report: 1 in Sauk Co. (abandoned and 1 egg was infertile and the other was fertile and will be raised in captivity), 5 in Juneau Co. (3 nests likely abandoned due to black flies, one egg was salvaged, and 2 failed from unknown causes) and 1 hybrid nest in Dodge Co. (abandoned).
- Eggs were removed from 1 nest in Marquette Co. to be raised in captivity.
- Active nests: 2 in Marquette Co., 1 in Green Lake Co., 1 in Adams Co., 1 in Dodge Co., 1 in St. Croix Co., and 8 in Juneau Co., Wisconsin.
- Chicks: W1-21, the first chick of the season, hatched to parents W3-17 and 30-16 in Green Lake County!

- As of 1 April: there were 4-5 nests so far this spring. Additionally, there is 1 hybrid nest (Sandhill x Whooping Crane) in Lenawee County, Michigan.
- Active nests: 1 in Sauk County, 1 possible nest in Marquette County, 2 in Green Lake County, and 1 in Juneau County.

2021 Wild-hatched Cohort

Chicks listed below in bold are currently alive, as far as we know. So far at least 13 chicks have hatched and up to 8 are still alive. [U=sex unknown]

- W1-21 (U) hatched to parents W3-17 and 30-16 in Green Lake Co. in April but disappeared by the end of May.
- **W2-21** (U) and W3-21 (U) hatched to parents 3-14 and 4-12 in Green Lake Co. at the beginning of May. W3-21 has disappeared, but W2-21 is still alive as of the end of May.
- W4-21 (U) and W5-21 (U) hatched to parents 42-09 and 11-15 in Adams Co. in the beginning of May and disappeared at the end of May, when the carcass of male 11-15 was found.
- **W6-21** (U) and **W7-21** (U) hatched to parents 27-14 and 10-11 in Marquette Co. and are both alive as of the end of May.
- **W8-21** (U) and W9-21 (U) hatched to parents 38-17 and 63-15 at Horicon National Wildlife Refuge in Dodge Co. W9-21 didn't live very long, but W8-21 is still alive as of the end of May.
- **W10-21** (U) hatched to parents 12-03 and 12-05 at Necedah National Wildlife Refuge in Juneau County.
- **W11-21** (U) hatched to parents 36-09 and 18-03 at Necedah National Wildlife Refuge in Juneau County at the end of May.

Two additional chicks hatched at the end of May to parents 24-08/13-02 and 69-16/W10-15, both at Necedah National Wildlife Refuge. They will be given ID numbers once we check the nest cameras to see which chick hatched first.

2020 Wild-hatched Cohort

- W3-20 (F) was last seen in Taylor Co., WI in late May.
- W13-20 (M) once again returned to Dodge Co., WI by the end of May.
- W14-20 (M) and W1-18 (F) moved to Sherburne Co., MN during May.
- W18-20 (F) and 80-19 (F) were last reported in Lee Co., IL during April.

2019 Cohort

- W1-19 (F) is in Wood Co., WI with another Whooping Crane, we believe is 1-17 (M).
- W14-19 (F) was last seen by herself in Isanti Co., MN during April.
- W19-19 (U) is in Juneau Co., WI, with W10-18 (U).
- 79-19 (F) is in Dodge Co., WI with 16-11 (M).
- 80-19 (F) and W18-20 (F) were last reported in Lee Co, IL during April.

Mortality, Long-term missing

11-15 (M) was found dead in Adams Co., Wisconsin on the 26th of May. Likely cause of death was predation. 11-15 and his mate 42-09 had at least one chick around the time of his death that also is now missing and presumed dead.

From the April 2021 report:

- 72-17 (M) was found dead in Michigan during March, although he likely died sometime last fall. The suspected cause of death is powerline collision, although there were not enough remains to confirm.
- 23-10 (F) and W7-17 (F) have not been seen in the past year and are now considered long-term missing and have been removed from the population size estimate.
- 16-12 (M) was captured and removed from the population due to his presence at the airport at Volk Field and his lack of response to hazing efforts.

To follow the reintroduced eastern population, go here: <https://whoopermap.savingcranes.org/>
Within map locations is a list of WHCR, click on links to individual cranes for its biographical information.

For biographies of the reintroduced eastern migratory population of Whooping Crane, go here:
<https://www.savingcranes.org/whooping-crane-biographies/>

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

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/>



Wild chicks join Wisconsin flock

In a 18 May 2021 post by the [International Crane Foundation](#):
Pictured (at left are chicks W4-21 and W5-21 with adults 42-09 and 11-15 in Adams County, WI

Other pairs with chicks include:

- 31-14/4-12 with W2-21 in Green Lake County, WI
- 27-14/10-11 with W6 and W7-21 in Green Lake County
- 38-17/63-15 with W8-21 in Dodge County, WI

Up to nine additional pairs may still be on active nests in the state.

Photo by Bev Paulan

General News

Alaska:

Summering Sandhill Cranes now coupled with citizen science

While April is designated “Citizen Science” month, in Alaska there are opportunities to take part in citizen science pretty much year-round. [Kachemak Crane Watch \(KCW\)](#) has been handling citizen science Sandhill Crane reporting every summer for over 20 years. The organization keeps track of crane arrival dates, nesting dates, hatching of colts, colt fledging, colt and crane mortality, and all manner of crane observations throughout the summer. KCW reports its citizen science information in annual [Kachemak Bay Sandhill Crane summaries](#) that are shared online and with the North American Crane Working Group.

The group also hosts “count days” at the end of August and early September as the cranes are gathering for migration. For three consecutive Saturdays, residents are asked to report daily crane sightings and then visit Beluga Slough in the evening to count the cranes as they fly in to roost. This additional time provides residents and visitors the opportunity to help count cranes with local birders and resident “craniacs.”

Nina Faust, a co-founder and lead educator of Kachemak Crane Watch, encourages anyone interested to get involved in a citizen science project. If Sandhill Cranes excite you, submit your citizen science report to Kachemak Crane Watch by calling (907) 235-6262 – (907) 235-MAMA – or email reports to reports@cranewatch.org. Details of your observation are helpful. Leave your name and contact information, time, location, how many cranes, behavior, and other useful and helpful details. Help Kachemak Crane Watch make this another successful citizen science Sandhill Crane summer.

Canada:

Calgary Zoo – three Whooping Crane chicks hatched

The Calgary Zoo and its Wildlife Conservation Center has been involved with Whooping Crane conservation since 1992. Its Whooping Crane recovery program is funded by ConocoPhillips Canada.



In a press release 28 May 2021, the Calgary Zoo announced the successful hatching of three Whooping Crane chicks. "Breeding endangered Whooping Cranes and hatching chicks successfully is always challenging, even more so during a global pandemic, but we did it," a spokesperson for the zoo said.

The chicks were hatched at the zoo's Wildlife Conservation Center to three different sets of parents.

Whooping Crane eggs range in color, with spots/speckles on them for camouflage. These eggs are decoys. Experts make sure to have a good match when they replace a real egg that is removed from the nest. Photo by Mark Nipper/Operation Migration

Illinois:

Sandhill Crane shot in Lake County, later dies

A \$2,500 reward has been posted by an anonymous donor for information leading to the arrest and conviction of the person who shot a Sandhill Crane on 15 May 2021 in Lake Villa (50 miles north of Chicago in Lake County).

Dawn Keller, the founder and director of [Flint Creek Wildlife Center](#), rescued the crane after receiving a call from Lake Villa police. This is the first time Keller has dealt with the shooting of a Sandhill Crane since founding the center in 2003. Keller drove the injured crane to Niles Animal Hospital for surgery to remove the bullets. Unfortunately, despite efforts, the Sandhill Crane died three days later.

In Illinois, Sandhill Cranes are protected by the federal [Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918](#) and the [Illinois Wildlife Code](#). They cannot be captured, harassed or killed without a permit from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, according to the Wildlife Illinois website.

About 20,000 Greater Sandhill Cranes – in the Midwest but technically considered part of the Eastern population, migrate through Illinois between February and April and again between September and November. Small numbers breed in northern Illinois, particularly in wetlands in McHenry and Lake counties.

If convicted, the shooter could face a fine of up to \$100,000 and a year in jail, according to the federal Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918. Anyone with information is asked to call the Illinois Department of Natural Resources tip line at 877-2DNRLAW (877-236-7529).

Louisiana:

How a pandemic and hurricane season threatened Whooping Cranes

In normal years, the seven captive breeding centers in North America can be expected to hatch approximately 30 Whooping Cranes. However, in 2020, only one was hatched. And for the first time since the Louisiana Whooping Crane reintroduction effort began in 2011, no new cranes were introduced into the state's wetlands.

With centers unable to breed or release more Whooping Cranes, the survival of the wild population in southwest Louisiana became more critical. To make matters worse, that survival was threatened by a hurricane season that saw not just one, but five storms make landfall in Louisiana. Two of the more devastating ones, hurricanes Laura and Delta, wreaked havoc on southwest Louisiana where the Whooping Cranes are known to nest.

And yet, Sara Zimorski, biologist with the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, and her team found that they did not lose a single bird. Transmitter data showed the Whooping Cranes did not move at all before or during the storms. True to 2020, they survived by sheltering in place.

"It seems they probably hunkered down, lowered themselves, faced into the wind and rode it out," Zimorski said. "Although those storms were devastating, the Whooping Cranes came through just fine, which is pretty amazing."

From recent posts by Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries - Whooping Cranes

(18 May 2021) Whooping Cranes have begun hatching in captivity for release into the wild this fall! After the COVID-19 pandemic and related restrictions prevented normal captive breeding activities last year, both the eastern migratory population based in Wisconsin and the Louisiana non-migratory population will receive captive hatched cranes for release in 2021!

(28 April 2021) We are pleased to introduce wild-hatched LW12-21 – our FIRST second-generation wild-hatched chick!! Male LW1-18 was hatched and reared in the wild in 2018 and grew up less than four miles from where he and female L12-17 hatched LW12-21 last week!

In other chick news, we unfortunately lost LW10-21 & LW11-21, but the following chicks are still doing well:

LW1-21 in Cameron Parish
LW3-21 & LW4-21 in Vermilion Parish (siblings)
LW5-21 in Acadia Parish
LW6-21 & LW7-21 in Avoyelles Parish (siblings)
LW9-21 in Cameron Parish

(16 April 2021) Two pairs of Louisiana Whooping Cranes have set up their breeding territories in SE Texas! Pair L8-16 & L22-17 met and paired in Chambers County in March 2019 and have not returned to Louisiana since.

Pair L24-16 & L14-17 met and paired at the Rockefeller WR in Cameron Parish, Louisiana in December 2018 and made seasonal trips back and forth from Cameron Parish to Jefferson County, Texas before nesting this spring! <https://bit.ly/3skoDBL>

To read the press release by the USFWS, go here:

<https://www.fws.gov/news/ShowNews.cfm?ref=historic-first-as-whooping-cranes-found-nesting-in-texas&ID=36885&Source=iframe>

(31 March 2021). It's L4-17 update time! This 4-year-old female routinely summers in Oklahoma and winters at the [Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge Complex](#) in northern Alabama. On 5 March, she left the

Wheeler NWR and stopped at the following locations before arriving in Ashley County, Arkansas on 26 March - after traveling almost 1,400 miles!

5 March: Sunflower Co, MS
6 March: Rapides Parish, LA
7 March: Miller Co, AR
8 March: Rogers Co, OK
9-12 March: Wagoner Co, OK
13-14 March: Okfuskee Co, OK
15-17 March: Lonoke Co, AR
18-25 March: Washington Co, MS



(24 March 2021)

In February 2019, two adult females were transferred from a failed whooping crane reintroduction project in Florida to Vermilion Parish. Both females have since paired with Louisiana released males, and last week, we confirmed that the younger of the two (LFW12-15) has a nest in Cameron Parish with her mate, L5-18! We are excited that she has adjusted so well and is becoming a contributing member to the Louisiana flock!

(15 March 2021) Following up on our post from the end of last week; after a little digging (thanks ICF!) we were able to figure out that there are 16 descendants of Gee Whiz in the Louisiana population! Of these 16, 8 are 'grandchicks,' and 8 are 'great-grandchicks,' 7 are female, 9 are male, and they range in age from 3-10 years old. Many of the older ones are part of a breeding pair so Gee Whiz's legacy and genetics will live on!



It may seem like this crane is just preening but he's actually doing a threat display. A couple of clues that indicate this crane is not happy are the raised tertial feathers and the bright red skin on his face and on top of his head!

Help LDWF by reporting all Whooping Crane sightings and violations

If you are lucky enough to see a Whooping Crane, please do not approach it, even in a vehicle, to avoid habituating the birds to human activity. If you share the sighting on social media, bird listservs, or other public sites, please do not share location information more specific than county or parish level.

<https://www.wlf.louisiana.gov/page/report-a-whooping-crane-sighting-or-violation>

If you see a Whooping Crane elsewhere in the eastern United States (besides Louisiana), please report it [here](https://www.savingcranes.org/report-whooping-crane/); <https://www.savingcranes.org/report-whooping-crane/>

If you see a Whooping Crane in the western United States, please report it [here](https://whoopingcrane.com/report-a-sighting/):
<https://whoopingcrane.com/report-a-sighting/>

Note: Whooping Cranes in the Louisiana population have been known to travel into surrounding states.

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/>

Michigan:

Resolution seeks to make Sandhill Cranes a game species

[Senate resolution 20](#) sponsored by Sen. Ed McBroom (R-Bulcan), asks the Michigan Natural Resources Committee (of which McBroom is Chair) to add the Eastern Sandhill crane to the state's list of game species. *"A resolution to encourage the Natural Resources Commission to add Eastern sandhill cranes to the game species list and seek U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service approval to establish an Eastern sandhill crane hunting season."*

During the Senate Natural Resources meeting in March, Senators Broom and Jon Bumstead, also of the Senate Natural Resources Committee, focused on the fact that all cranes killed with depredation permits issued by USFWS to farmers, must be left in the field and not consumed. Over the course of the 3 March 2021 NRC meeting both senators brought up multiple times that this was wasteful and unless the status of Sandhill Cranes was changed to a game species the waste would continue.

Individuals testifying against the resolution addressed a number of points, including the availability and overall success of Avipel, a non-lethal product that discourages Sandhill Cranes from eating kernels and young plants; the "genetic bottleneck" of the Greater Sandhill Cranes that breed in Michigan; the fact that Sandhills are currently hunted only in "migratory" states, not "breeding" states such as Michigan or Wisconsin, and the inaccurate, alleged Sandhill "population explosion" – actual survey numbers indicate continued instability of the population, with numbers dropping from 21,339 cranes in 2010 to 18,874 in 2020.

To watch the 3 March 2021 Senate Natural Resources Committee meeting (Sandhill Crane discussion begins at 00:12:28), go here:
https://storage033-vod.viebit.com/vb_misenate/mp4:MISSenate2_210303-082936.mp4/playlist.m3u8?wowzaplaystart=495000&wowzaplayduration=4154000&src=9678

Mississippi:

Grus canadensis pulla

Of the 15 species of cranes worldwide there are two species of cranes in North America – the Whooping and Sandhill Cranes. The Whooping Crane is the largest, but the Sandhill is the most numerous. Of the six subspecies of Sandhill Cranes, the Cuban, Florida, and Mississippi are non-migratory so stay in one



place. The Mississippi Sandhill Crane is listed as critically endangered with only 129 birds counted in 2019, up from 30 in the 1960s. By contrast there are 450-500,000 Lesser Sandhill Cranes.

Despite its rarity, the Mississippi Sandhill Crane (*Grus canadensis pulla*), pictured at left, can be found in the open pine savanna of the [Mississippi Sandhill Crane National Wildlife Refuge](#) about 20 miles east of Biloxi, Miss., and just off I-10. The Mississippi subspecies was the first species listed as “endangered” under the Endangered Species Act of 1973, and the National Wildlife Refuge near the Gulf Coast was the first sanctuary authorized by the law.

The visitor center north of Gautier, Mississippi, currently closed to visitors because of the pandemic, has an excellent museum about the cranes and hiking trails. And while refuge staff can’t guarantee that you’ll see the cranes, if persistent there is a good chance you will. Mississippi Sandhill Crane National Wildlife Refuge, Gautier, MS, 228/497-6322, fws.gov

One of the Mississippi Sandhill Cranes at the Mississippi Sandhill Crane National Wildlife Refuge, Gautier MS

North Dakota:

Sandhills once again breeding in state

In a recent piece about Sandhill Cranes that aired on National Public Radio on 15 May 2021, it was mentioned that maps of the cranes’ breeding range often cover much of Canada and perhaps portions of the states to the east and west of North Dakota. Historically however, Sandhill Cranes had a larger breeding range that included North Dakota. In Robert Earl Stewart Sr.’s *Breeding Birds of North Dakota* (1975) records of both Whooping Cranes and Sandhill Cranes nesting in the state are included. Stewart noted observations of Sandhill Crane nests, eggs, young, or adults present during the breeding season had been documented in several locations north and east of the Missouri River from the 1840’s to the 1970’s. They were absent from the state for a while after that, but over the past few years breeding pairs have been observed in at least one of the state’s National Wildlife Refuges and perhaps other areas as well.

The following is an excerpt by ROBERT C. FIELDS, ALAN K. TROUT, and DAROLD T. WALLS, published in [The Wilson Bulletin, September 1974, General Notes, Vol.86 No.3: pp.285-286](#)

Recent breeding of the Sandhill Crane in North Dakota. Before the present century, Sandhill Cranes (*Grus canadensis*) bred fairly commonly in North Dakota, but local breeding populations rapidly declined during the late 1800’s and early 1900’s (Stewart, *Birds of North Dakota*). By the early 1920’s this species had apparently been extirpated from the state as a breeding bird. On 22 June 1973 we obtained evidence of breeding in the state for the first time in recent decades. On that date we sighted a downy young crane accompanied by two adults. They were in a 130-hectare hay meadow, adjacent to the Souris River, on J. Clark Salyer National Wildlife Refuge, McHenry County. The area, interspersed with wetlands and subject to spring flooding in some years, is primarily vegetated with western wheatgrass (*Agropyron smithii*) and quackgrass (*A. repens*)....

Chandler S. Robbins and M. Brooke Meanley, colleagues of Stewart at the Patuxent Wildlife Research Center, paid tribute to Stewart in [The Auk 113\(3\):680-682, 1996, In Memoriam: Robert Earl Stewart, Sr., 1913-1993.](#)

“...Worth mentioning is that while most of his early work was in Maryland and adjacent states, in 1955 Stewart joined Robert P. Allen of the National Audubon Society in a search for the nesting grounds of the Whooping Crane in Wood Buffalo Park.

Breeding Birds of North Dakota (1975) is considered to be the forerunner of modern breeding bird atlases. Stewart received the Department of the Interior's Meritorious Service Award in 1976 and the North Dakota Award of the North Dakota Chapter of The Wildlife Society in 1977. Died 15 July 1993. In November 1995, one of his primary study sites, a square mile of native prairie near Jamestown, was dedicated as the Robert E. Stewart Waterfowl Production Area.”

Texas:

Endangered Whooping Cranes nest in Texas for the first time since 1800's

Whooping Cranes in the non-migratory population (different from the migratory wild population that breeds in Canada and winters at Aransas NWR, TX) have [had a rough time](#) on the Gulf Coast since the mid-1800s. Never as common as the Sandhill Crane, they have a low recruitment rate. “They don't reproduce until they're five to seven years old, and they only have one or two eggs that make it every couple of years,” said Liz Smith, North America program director at the [International Crane Foundation](#). “So, it takes a long time for them to increase their numbers.”

While that might sound like a glacially slow pace, it's actually fairly normal according to Smith. Inexperience probably has something to do with this as the cranes don't start laying eggs and successfully raising young until they're five to six years old – it takes time to learn.



*One of two pair of Whooping Cranes from the reintroduced Louisiana population, recorded nesting in Texas this year.
Photo courtesy of the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries.*

Over the past few years, several mated pairs have visited private land in Jefferson and Chambers counties. This year marks the first time any of the cranes attempted to nest — made from a mound of trampled reeds and sedges – and laid eggs, which take thirty days to hatch. Of the two nests announced by U.S. Fish and Wildlife, one chick hatched but didn't survive.

According to Sara Zimorski, biologist with the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, cranes in the Louisiana flock will often nest twice in a season, but even that's not a guarantee of success. Unfortunately, although the pairs in Texas both nested twice this year, neither was successful in raising a chick.

James Gentz leases farmland in Jefferson County, where he grows rice and raises crawfish on shallow wetlands. Two years ago, a pair of Whooping Cranes started hanging out in his fields. "They're beautiful to look at," he said. "You'd just be sitting there watching them, while you were crawfishing." Gentz said he feels lucky to have the endangered birds on his land.

After a storm dumped more than 7 inches of rain on his fields Gentz looked for the cranes, but they were gone. "It was very disappointing to me. I mean I just almost was in tears," he said. "I was just so excited for them to nest." But Zimorski said that they'll try again next year. "Every little bit of experience they gain helps them in the future."

Read more of the background story behind the Louisiana birds in Texas in "Ruffled Feathers" by Sonia Smith for Texas Monthly, September 2016, go here:

<https://www.texasmonthly.com/articles/whooping-cranes-texas/>

16 April 2021 USFWS Press Release

Historic First as Whooping Cranes Found Nesting in Texas

Citizens urged to give endangered birds plenty of space

For the first time in recent history, two pairs of endangered Whooping Cranes have been found nesting in Texas. The [Whooping Cranes](#), part of a non-migratory population originally introduced in Louisiana, are currently found on private land in Jefferson and Chambers counties.

The newcomers are part of a reintroduction the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF) and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) began in 2011. This designated non-essential population was introduced into historically occupied wetland habitats at the [White Lake Wetlands Conservation Area](#) in southwest Louisiana. Since then, the current population of around 73 birds has nested and successfully hatched and reared chicks in a variety of wetland habitats throughout Louisiana, on both private and public lands.

"We are excited to see this reintroduction effort show continued signs of success, with nesting now occurring in Texas," said Amy Lueders, the Service's Southwest Regional Director. "It's a true reflection of the power of partnerships. We would also like to thank the private landowners who have been incredibly supportive of these efforts."

"Conservation cannot happen in Texas and beyond without the support and dedication of our private landowners," said Carter Smith, Executive Director of the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD). "We look forward to our continued efforts with our vast network of partners, especially private landowners, to ensure whooping cranes, and all of our wildlife in Texas, thrive in the future."

"We appreciate the cooperation and assistance of our Texas partners, including the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and especially the private landowners whose properties are supporting the survival of the Louisiana cranes," LDWF Secretary Jack Montoucet said. "Of course, wildlife does not respect state boundaries, so our Louisiana cranes sought out suitable habitats in southeast Texas to establish territories and nests."

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service recently completed an agreement with the Natural Resources Conservation Service that provides private landowners in southeast Texas similar regulatory protections that landowners hosting whooping cranes in Louisiana receive and also provides technical assistance to plan conservation actions that enhance wetland habitats for a variety of wildlife species.

“Conservation plans developed by the NRCS are voluntary and available upon producer request at no cost. These plans specify options for practices and management to meet the conservation measures for this population of whooping crane,” said Frank Baca, USDA NRCS Wildlife Biologist. “Additionally, farm bill programs such as the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) are available to provide cost assistance to producers that may want to maintain or enhance habitat for these birds or other wildlife on their working lands.”

The public is reminded to keep a distance from the birds and to not trespass on private property to observe them. “These birds are particularly sensitive to human disturbance while they are nesting, so please stay at least 1,000 feet away when viewing whooping cranes,” said Wade Harrell, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Whooping Crane Coordinator. “This will ensure that the birds have a chance to hatch and rear their chicks successfully.”

Whooping Cranes are one of the rarest birds in North America. Cranes have been documented to live more than 30 years in the wild. Adults generally reach reproductive age at four or five years, and then lay two eggs, usually rearing only one chick during the breeding season.

The non-migratory population now found nesting in Louisiana and Texas is different from the self-sustaining wild Aransas-Wood Buffalo Population. This population of more than 500 Whooping Cranes breeds in the wetlands of Wood Buffalo National Park in northern Canada and spends the winter on the Texas coast at Aransas National Wildlife Refuge near Rockport.

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TPWD Press Office, (512) 389-8030, news@tpwd.texas.gov

More information about the Whooping Crane reintroduction effort can be found on the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries at <https://www.wlf.louisiana.gov/subhome/whooping-crane>.



An aerial image of one Whooping Crane pair (look for the birds in the center and center-left of the photo) in Chambers County, Texas. Photo courtesy of the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries.

Wisconsin:

15 species of cranes highlighted as ICF's new headquarters takes flight

[The International Crane Foundation \(ICF\)](#) closed its Baraboo headquarters in November 2018 to undergo a \$10.4 million renovation. Initially the plan was to reopen to visitors during summer 2020, but, with the onslaught of COVID-19 plans had to be changed to the phased reopening that began 1 May 2021.

ICF's headquarters is the only place in the world where visitors can see all 15 of the world's [crane species](#), many of which are endangered or considered vulnerable. The nonprofit also works across the world to conserve cranes and their habitats. ICF's mission is not only to protect cranes, but to support education and conservation by working with experts in each species' habitat. Aside from the Baraboo headquarters, ICF maintains a regional base in China, as well as shared program offices with partner organizations in Cambodia, India, South Africa, Texas, Vietnam, and Zambia. Its staff of nearly 90 works with hundreds of specialists in 55 countries on five continents.

Cranes, like all creatures, rely on a healthy ecosystem to thrive. The International Crane Foundation has not only been protecting and breeding cranes, but also protecting ecosystems, watersheds, and flyways since 1973 – in Wisconsin and around the world. [Advancing conservation](#) and training the next generation of leaders is part of ICF's mission.



*Red-crowned Cranes, dance in the new courtyard fountain, by sculptor Richard Van Heuvelen.
“I will write peace on your wings. and you will fly all over the world.” – Sadako Sasaki*

The International Crane Foundation is taking [reservations for visits in May and June](#). There are three slots every 15 minutes for groups of up to 10 people each, at a total capacity of 960 people per day. ICF is open from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. daily through October 31, 2021.

10 acres of new exhibits can be seen during a visit to the renovated headquarters. The new Cranes of the World exhibition space features the 15 crane species in expanded habitats with natural ponds and interior space for them, paved pathways for visitors to walk, as well as 2 miles of nature trails and new fence-free

viewing areas for photographers. Displays of art and cultural features can be viewed, and include beautiful murals depicting each species' homeland habitats painted by Wisconsin artist Jay Jocham. Sandhill Cranes and Whooping Cranes bookend a visit to the ICF. As Sandhills are the crane most people are familiar with and is the species tied to a conservation success story for Wisconsin, they are the first cranes visitors see from inside the new, George Archibald welcome center. The center also includes a theater that plays videos about the ICF's work around the world.

"The whole purpose of the site is to serve as a gateway to our mission worldwide," said Pamela Seelman, the ICF's director of marketing communications. She said about 90% of the foundation's work is outside its headquarters, but the Baraboo site is important because "this serves as a living example of how we are working across the planet to save cranes and their habitat."

To read more about the opening in the article by [Chelsey Lewis](https://www.jsonline.com/story/travel/wisconsin/2021/05/06/international-crane-foundation-reopens-after-10-million-renovation/4923118001/)/Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, go here: <https://www.jsonline.com/story/travel/wisconsin/2021/05/06/international-crane-foundation-reopens-after-10-million-renovation/4923118001/>



One of the two species of cranes that breed and nest in Wisconsin. A determined Sandhill Crane on its nest – ignoring the cold and snow of February in Wisconsin. Photograph by Ted Thousand

Habitat Matters!

Wind turbines deter Whooping Cranes from stopover sites, study confirms

According to a recent article by the [American Bird Conservancy](#), a new [study](#) published in March 2021 in the journal Ecological Applications (see abstract in ECB Science News) reveals that migratory habitat for the [Whooping Crane](#) is gradually being reduced by wind energy development. Researchers have found that this Endangered bird avoids turbines to a distance of 3.1 miles (5 kilometers), eliminating otherwise usable stopover sites if turbines are placed too close to them. Five percent of the best stopover habitat

has already been functionally lost the authors found. Many more wind facilities are being planned, indicating that unless steps are taken to distance turbines from stopover sites, this situation could grow even more dire.

“The results of this ground-breaking study are really eye-opening — the buildout of wind energy is already having a negative cumulative impact,” says [Joel Merriman](#), Director of the [Bird-Smart Wind Energy Campaign](#) at [American Bird Conservancy](#). “There are more than 10,000 wind turbines scattered throughout the Whooping Crane’s migratory pathway. We now know that too many of these turbines are eliminating important migratory stopover habitat for this Endangered species.”

“There is good news here as well,” says Merriman. “The study also provides a clear blueprint for preventing additional migratory habitat loss from wind energy development: Avoid placing turbines in the species’ migratory pathway and absolutely stop putting them within 5 kilometers of stopover sites.”

Wind turbines are, unfortunately, just one part of the issue for Whooping Cranes. For some wind energy facilities, and particularly those in more rural locations, new powerlines must be constructed to connect the new facility to the energy grid. Powerlines are a primary source of mortality for Whooping Cranes due to collisions while in flight. This is one of the reasons [a permit was canceled](#) in June of this year for the “R-Project,” a proposed 200-mile transmission line that would have crossed an ecologically sensitive part of southeastern Nebraska.

American Bird Conservancy thanks the Leon [Levy Foundation](#) for its support of ABC's Bird-Smart Wind Energy Campaign.

Expert Contact: Joel Merriman, Bird-Smart Wind Energy Campaign Director | jmerriman@abcbirds.org

USDA hits conservation easements milestone of 5-million-acres

Since October 2020, the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) [Natural Resources Conservation Service \(NRCS\)](#) has enrolled 110,000 acres in new conservation easements by partnering with private landowners – bringing USDA to the conservation milestone of protecting more than 5 million acres of wetlands, grasslands and prime farmland. Roughly an area the size of New Jersey.

NRCS has offered conservation easements through the Farm Bill for 28 years, through programs like the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program, which helps landowners, land trusts and other entities protect, restore and enhance wetlands, grasslands and working farms and ranches through conservation easements. These programs benefit participants and others by creating cleaner air, water and open spaces.

Alaska:

Sandhill Cranes return to Saunders Sanctuary

For residents of Trapper Creek, Alaska nothing signals spring like the sound of Sandhill Cranes. Twice a year Sandhill Cranes visit the Dale Saunders Crane Sanctuary, and in early April they began to announce their arrival.

Dale Saunders was a barley farmer who homesteaded in Trapper Creek. In the 1950’s Saunders noticed a few cranes would show up in the spring to feed off leftover barley from the previous year. Then the birds would migrate farther north. In the fall, they returned and feasted again before continuing their southbound journey. The first pair of Sandhill Cranes appeared on his 80-acre barley farm in the Susitna Valley in 1959.

Since that time crane numbers have grown, until now, each spring, over a hundred cranes stage at the farm during migration. As a tribute to his beloved cranes and to protect the stopover habitat, in 2003 he bequeathed his homestead to the [Great Land Trust](#). The Alaskan-based non-profit continues to plant barley and other crops each year in the field for the cranes.

Directions to the Saunders Sanctuary can be found on the Great Land Trust's sanctuary website:
<http://greatlandtrust.org/projects/diy-spring-field-trip-dale-saunders-crane-sanctuary/>

To learn more about Saunders and his love of cranes and for the “story map” of the sanctuary, go here:
<https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/f46efa3d8adc48cf9c5bc480a9923678>

Colorado:



Sandhill Cranes west of dunes, San Luis Valley. Photo by NPS/Patrick Myers. San Luis Valley Ecosystem Council

San Luis Valley Wetlands: Critical stopover habitat for bird migration

Jenny Nehring and Cary Aloia, San Luis Valley (SLV) Wetlands biologists and partners who run [Wetland Dynamics](#), a small business committed to the conservation of critical SLV ecosystems, explain that many people “overemphasize the importance of wintering and breeding grounds,” when, in fact, a successful migration requires the presence of intact, resource-rich habitats along the way. High-quality habitat in the SLV provides optimal conditions for many of the 400 bird species that travel the Central Flyway. This is especially true for Central Flyway ducks, waterbirds, shorebirds, and the iconic Sandhill Crane.

The SLV Wetland and Wildlife Conservation Assessment identifies the Valley as being the “southernmost significant waterbird production area in the Central Flyway and the most important waterfowl production area in Colorado.”

For birds that winter in Mexico and South America, the SLV is ideal for breeding. The region is one of North America’s most critical breeding grounds for various species of duck and colonial wading birds, specifically the Cinnamon Teal. Similarly, priority duck species such as Mallard and Northern Pintail depend on the Valley’s flooded wetlands and densely vegetated habitats.

Whether nesting, breeding, feeding, or resting, all species migrating through the San Luis Valley depend on wetlands. Wetlands are highly productive ecosystems that exist in low-lying depressions in the terrain. Known as the “kidneys” of the Earth, wetlands filter pollutants, excess nutrients, and sediment from surface waters. They are also essential for groundwater recharge and flood/erosion control.

For larger migratory bird species and waterfowl, the Valley functions as a vital rest stop. Amazingly, nearly the entire Rocky Mountain Population (RMP) of Greater Sandhill Cranes stop in the SLV as they fly along the Central Flyway. Their numbers can reach upward of 20,000 during each migration through the Valley.

To read more of the work being done on behalf of SLV riparian and wetlands habitats, go here:
<https://crestoneeagle.com/san-luis-valley-wetlands-critical-stopover-habitat-for-bird-migration-and-the-kidneys-of-the-earth/>

For additional information of the importance of stopover habitats, read “The San Luis Valley as a Critical Stopover During Migration,” prepared by the San Luis Valley Ecosystem Council, by going here:
<https://www.slvec.org/post/the-san-luis-valley-as-a-critical-stopover-during-bird-migration>

Kansas:

Groups come together to restore McPherson Wildlife Area

The [McPherson Wildlife Area \(MWA\)](#) provides more than 1,700 acres of managed habitat and lies within a 50-mile radius of [Cheyenne Bottoms Wildlife Area](#) and [Quivira National Wildlife Refuge](#). The wildlife area is part of a trifecta of public waterfowl habitat that provides critical resources for migrating waterfowl and other birds and recreational use. In 1995, for the first time in 100 years, endangered [Whooping Cranes](#) visited the wetlands. And in spring 2016, 17 Whooping Cranes visited the Big Basin marshes. A handicapped accessible photo blind ensures everyone has the opportunity to enjoy these and many other birds.

Ducks Unlimited, [Williams](#), and the Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism restored 160 acres at the wildlife area’s Shirk Marsh. The project was made possible by a \$50,000 contribution by Williams to Ducks Unlimited’s Heartland Heritage and Habitat Initiative, which focuses on a major staging area for waterfowl during spring and fall migrations. The donation from Williams was used in conjunction with a North American Wetland Conservation Act (NAWCA) grant and funding from the Pittman-Robertson Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Act.

The former agricultural field was drained a decade ago and no longer provided natural wildlife conditions. The restoration project included new infrastructure to manage water levels for waterfowl and shorebirds. It also included the planting of prairie grasses for quail, pheasants, and other grassland birds and to act as pollinator habitat and increase carbon sequestration.

Nebraska:

A Rare Sight: Whooping Cranes visit central Nebraska on their way north

At 465-acres, Trumbull Basin is one of the largest, privately owned wetlands in the geographic area known as the [Rainwater Basin wetland region](#) – a 4,200 square mile loess plain located south of the Platte River in south-central Nebraska. Trumbull Basin is located in Adams County and for eleven days this spring the wetland was graced by the presence of four Whooping Cranes that stopped to rest and forage there during their migration north.

The Rainwater Basin is a complex of wetlands that covers portions of south-central Nebraska. The area is the narrowest portion of the migration route known as the Central Flyway. In the spring, birds that have wintered on the Gulf Coast and across Texas and Mexico funnel into this 150-mile-wide area over central Nebraska that contains thousands of playa wetlands.

This wetland was restored through the [Wetlands Reserve Program \(WRP\)](#). WRP is a voluntary conservation program available from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is a voluntary program offering landowners the opportunity to protect, restore, and enhance wetlands on their property. NRCS provides technical and financial support to help landowners with their wetland restoration efforts. The goal of the program is to achieve the greatest wetland functions and values, along with optimum wildlife habitat, on every acre enrolled in the program. This program offers landowners an opportunity to establish long-term conservation and wildlife practices and protection.



Four Whooping Cranes spent 11 days in Nebraska during their spring migration north. They rested, danced and foraged at Trumbull Basin, a wetlands northeast of Hastings.

US Fish and Wildlife Service plans to release water from Lake McConaughy

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), in coordination with the Platte River Recovery Implementation Program (PRRIP), plans to release water from Lake McConaughy beginning 24 May 2021 and continuing through the end of June.

The goal is to maintain a flow of at least 2,000 cubic feet per second at the Platte River Grand Island gage until June 30, while remaining below the 6.0-foot National Weather Service flood stage at North Platte. The release of water is intended to maintain and enhance the wide, open, unvegetated and braided channel of the central Platte River by inundating sandbars to prevent vegetation establishment.

The planned release will be similar to historic river rises, which resulted from spring runoff in the Platte River basin above Grand Island, Nebraska. Historic high flows helped remove vegetation from the riverbanks and kept the river wide and shallow with bare stretches of sand. This provided a safe place for Whooping Cranes and other birds to roost at night, provided nesting habitat for Least Terns and Piping Plovers, and increased the size of riverine wetlands.

Officials of USFWS, PRRIP, Central Nebraska Public Power and Irrigation District and Nebraska Public Power District staff will coordinate closely and be prepared to scale back or terminate releases if required. Weather conditions can change rapidly, so the partners will monitor weather and runoff conditions to minimize the risk of exceeding flooding stage.

ENVIRONMENTAL impact issues:

Editor: *As we emerge from the dark tunnel of the devastating COVID-19 pandemic, we find that the barrage of assaults on our environment continues – not only endangering countless species, but critical waterways, wetlands, streams and rivers, the air we breathe – our very health. Does no one remember the work of Rachael Carson and many other scientists who worked so hard then and to this day to sound the alarm(s) about the impact of toxic chemicals on the environment, humans and wildlife? Has there been a collective loss of memory? Have we learned nothing from the past? From pipelines carrying oil and gas across vast weaving distances of the country regardless of what may lie in the way, to the use of toxic pesticides in crop production – disregarding critical habitats and the wildlife refuges set aside to protect wildlife now threatened, to controlling mosquitoes without taking into consideration the pollinators caught in the line of fire. Nothing should remotely condone the annual use of 1 billion pounds of pesticide that is steadily increasing with each passing year.*

Army Corps fails to protect waterways, endangered wildlife from pipeline construction: Nationwide Permit 12 greenlights environmental destruction

Once again, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers finds itself in hot water from environmental groups over a nationwide permit that allows streamlined development of oil and gas pipelines through wetlands, streams and rivers. Sierra Club attorney Doug Hayes said the permit program has become “a tool for corporate polluters to fast-track climate-destroying oil and gas pipelines and exempt them from critical environmental reviews.”

In reissuing Nationwide Permit 12, during the final days of the Trump administration, the Corps failed to analyze the environmental impacts of pipelines, including from oil spills and the destruction of tens of thousands of acres of waterways relied on by people and endangered wildlife including Whooping Cranes. Countless communities, wildlife and waterways are at risk.

The [lawsuit](#) was filed 3 May 2021 in federal district court in Montana by the [Center for Biological Diversity](#), [Sierra Club](#), [Friends of the Earth](#), [Waterkeeper Alliance](#) and [Montana Environmental Information Center](#).

To read the Center for Biological Diversity 3 May 2021 press release, go here:

<https://biologicaldiversity.org/w/news/press-releases/army-corps-sued-for-failure-to-protect-waterways-endangered-wildlife-from-pipeline-construction-2021-05-03/>

Federal analysis finds insecticide Malathion imperils continued existence of 78 endangered plants, animals

Using Trump-era guidelines, a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) [analysis](#) released 20 April 2021 has found that the commonly used insecticide malathion jeopardizes the continued existence of 78 endangered plants and animals. The analysis is one of most extreme findings of harm ever published by the USFWS. Yet it represents a dramatic departure from the findings of an Obama administration analysis scrapped by the Trump administration that [found malathion jeopardized](#) 1,284 endangered plants and animals.

Today’s analysis deploys former Interior Secretary David Bernhardt’s methods to discount the harms of the pesticide by unlawfully relying on incomplete, unreliable estimates of its use rather than looking more broadly at the overall effects of its registration by the Environmental Protection Agency, as required by the Endangered Species Act. Malathion is used on a wide variety of crops, including corn, wheat, vegetables and fruits and is sprayed for mosquito control.

“This deep bow to the Trump administration’s reckless disregard for science imperils the survival of over a thousand of our most endangered plants and animals,” said Lori Ann Burd, environmental health director at the Center for Biological Diversity. “The Fish and Wildlife Service’s disappointing decision to embrace the junk science policies of the previous administration risks the extinction of animals like rusty patched bumblebees, Indiana bats and Whooping Cranes to prop up pesticide company profits.”

To read the Center for Biological Diversity 20 April 2021 press release, go here:

<https://biologicaldiversity.org/w/news/press-releases/federal-analysis-finds-insecticide-malathion-imperils-continued-existence-of-78-endangered-plants-animals-2021-04-20/>

100 groups demand action by USFWS in addressing impact of toxic pesticides on endangered species on wildlife refuges

Conservation, environmental justice, agriculture and other groups representing tens of millions of people detailed opportunities for ramping up protections in three letters that call for the Service to:

- [Prohibit pesticide use in designated critical habitat](#) for endangered plants and animals
- [Eliminate use of harmful agricultural pesticides on national wildlife refuges](#), and
- [Complete scientific reviews scrapped by the Trump administration](#) assessing the harms that chlorpyrifos, malathion and diazinon do to protected species.

“No nation uses more pesticides more recklessly than the U.S., with some of the worst abuses in our most important wildlife habitats,” said Lori Ann Burd, environmental health director at the Center for Biological Diversity. “To stop the heartbreak of animals and plants going extinct, the Fish and Wildlife Service needs to give endangered species a respite from toxic chemicals. We’re offering common-sense measures that would go a long way toward halting extinction trends.”

More than 1 billion pounds of pesticides are used across the United States each year, causing lethal and sublethal harm to imperiled wildlife and plants that rely on fields, forests and waterways where pesticides are often used or end up.

To read the 30 April 2021 Center for Biological Diversity press release, go here:

<https://biologicaldiversity.org/w/news/press-releases/100-plus-groups-demand-actions-critical-to-protecting-endangered-species-wildlife-refuges-from-toxic-pesticides-2021-04-30/>

Science News:

Migrating Whooping Cranes avoid wind-energy infrastructure when selecting stopover habitat

Aaron T. **Pearse**, Kristine L. **Metzger**, David A. **Brandt**, Jill A. **Shaffer**, Mark T. **Bidwell**, Wade **Harrell**

First published: 07 March 2021

<https://doi.org/10.1002/eap.2324>

Abstract: Electricity generation from renewable-energy sources has increased dramatically worldwide in recent decades. Risks associated with wind-energy infrastructure are not well understood for endangered whooping cranes (*Grus americana*) or other vulnerable crane populations. From 2010 to 2016, we monitored 57 whooping cranes with remote-telemetry devices in the United States Great Plains to determine potential changes in migration distribution (i.e., avoidance) caused by presence of wind-energy infrastructure. During our study, the number of wind towers tripled in the whooping crane migration corridor and quadrupled in the corridor’s center. Median distance of whooping crane locations from nearest wind tower was 52.1 km, and 99% of locations were >4.3 km from wind towers. A habitat selection analysis revealed that whooping cranes used areas ≤5.0 km (95% Confidence Interval = 4.8–5.4) from towers less than expected (i.e., zone of influence) and that whooping cranes were 20 times (95% CI: 14–64) more likely to use areas outside compared to adjacent to towers. Eighty percent of whooping crane locations and 20% of wind towers were located in areas with the highest relative probability of whooping crane use based on our model, which comprised 20% of the study area. Whooping cranes selected for these places, whereas developers constructed wind infrastructure at random relative to desirable whooping crane habitat. As of early 2020, 4.6% of the study area and 5.0% of the highest-selected whooping crane habitat were within the collective zone of influence. The affected area equates to habitat loss ascribed to wind-energy infrastructure; losses from other disturbances have not been quantified. Continued growth of the whooping crane population during this period of wind

infrastructure construction suggests no immediate population-level consequences. Chronic or lag effects of habitat loss are unknown but possible for long-lived species. Preferentially constructing future wind infrastructure outside of the migration corridor or inside of the corridor at sites with low probability of whooping crane use would allow for continued wind-energy development in the Great Plains with minimal additional risk to highly selected habitat that supports recovery of this endangered species.

Identifying, Protecting and Managing Stopover Habitats for Wild Whooping Cranes on U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Lakes

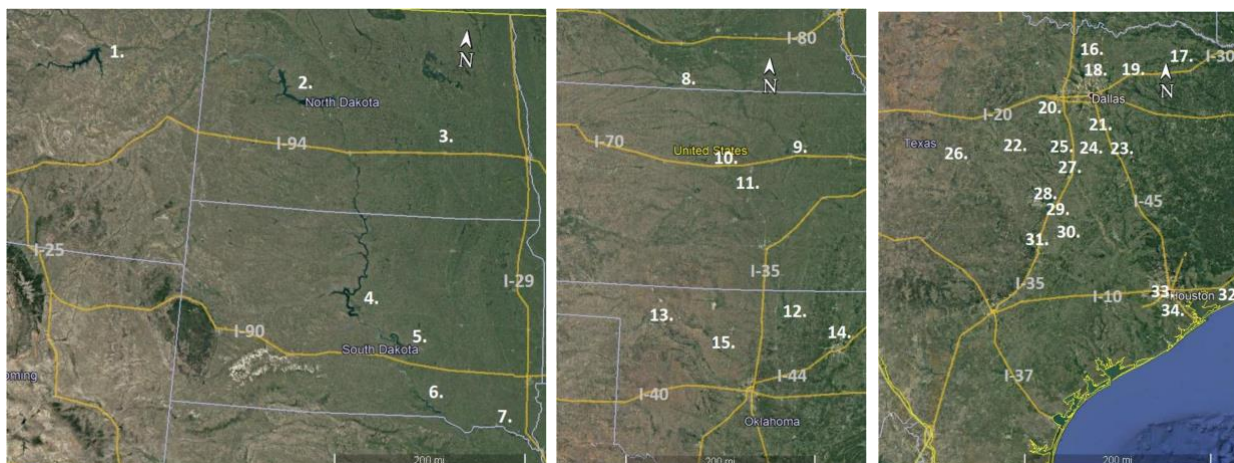
Chester **McConnell**

doi: <https://doi.org/10.1101/2020.12.30.424870>

Abstract: The Whooping Crane (*Grus americana*) is one of North America's most endangered species. There is only one wild, self-sustaining migratory population of Whooping Cranes, the Aransas-Wood Buffalo population (AWBP). The birds of the AWBP migrate 4,000 km twice each year between their nesting grounds in northern Canada and their wintering grounds on the Texas Gulf Coast. During migration, AWBP Whooping Cranes must land at suitable ponds or wetlands to forage, rest or roost. The Whooping Crane Recovery Plan, developed by federal wildlife agencies in Canada and the USA, calls for the protection and management of Whooping Crane stopover locations within the migration corridor. Although major stopover areas have been protected, many other smaller sites remain to be identified. However, the Recovery Plan offers no specific entity to identify, protect and manage the latter. To address these deficiencies in information and activity, Friends of the Wild Whoopers partnered with the United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) within the AWBP migration corridor to share information about Whooping Cranes and their habitat needs and identify potential stopover locations on USACE properties that could be protected and managed for cranes. This partnership identified 624 potential stopover sites on 34 USACE lakes, principally in North and South Dakota, Nebraska, Kansas, Oklahoma and Texas, with commitments to manage the habitats as resources allow.

To read this preliminary report, or for a full text pdf, go here:

<https://www.biorxiv.org/content/10.1101/2020.12.30.424870v1.full>



(Above, left to right) Figure 2. USACE Field visit sites 1-7 in Montana, North Dakota and South Dakota; Figure 3. Field visit sites 8-15 in Nebraska, Kansas and Oklahoma; Figure 4. Field visit sites 16-34 in Texas.

International Space Station images trace bird migrations

Editor: "Space for Birds" is a research project with the acronym AMASS (Avian Migration Aerial Surface Space), created and led by The Roberta Bondar Foundation. It applies the art of photography and science to examine the migratory pathways of threatened and endangered avian species and underscores the importance of habitat protection in these corridors. Dr. Robert Bodnar's work has been mentioned before

in the Eastern Crane Bulletin– [ECB March 2019, p.19 "Bird migration seen from space"](#) and [ECB September 2019, pp.14-15 "Interior wetlands: shrinking footholds."](#)

The [Avian Migration Aerial Surface Space project \(AMASS\)](#) takes advantage of thousands of images captured by astronauts to give people an appreciation of the migrations many birds undertake across the planet. Also called [Space for Birds](#), the project maps the routes taken by seven endangered or threatened bird species, highlighting along those routes, habitat changes caused mainly by human activities. The [seven species](#) for the project, chosen by Dr. Roberta Bondar in consultation with the United Nations Environment Program and US Fish and Wildlife Service, are the Curlew Sandpiper, Black-tailed Godwit, Lesser Flamingo, Piping Plover, Sprague's Pipit, Red Knot *Calidris canutus rufa*, Canadian subspecies, and the Whooping Crane. After more than four years, astronauts now have captured images of 50 key locations along the migratory paths of all seven species.

The [Roberta Bondar Foundation](#) sponsors AMASS in collaboration with NASA and the Canadian Space Agency (CSA). The foundation is a research and education effort started by Bondar, the first Canadian woman to fly in space.

"We look at environmental education as a way to get people to love something," says Bondar. "If they love something, they will want to protect it." She traveled to remote areas, taking photos on the ground and in the air of the birds and their environment, but knew that images from space could help people grasp the bigger picture.

The images are part of the space station's [Crew Earth Observation \(CEO\)](#) project, which supports a [wide variety](#) of research and education projects. AMASS began working with CEO in 2016, photographing locations along the North American migratory path of the Whooping Crane. The collaboration expanded in 2018 and 2019 when CSA astronaut [David Saint-Jacques](#) flew aboard the space station.



Canadian Space Agency astronaut David Saint-Jacques takes a photograph through the windows of the space station's cupola. Photo by Canadian Space Agency/NASA

The project plans to host exhibits and educational events, but during the pandemic, decided to create online story maps. These maps provide information about the biology and threats to survival for each of the species, as well as images, video, and maps of land use changes. The first completed story map covers the Lesser Flamingo.

In addition, [CSA's Exploring Earth](#), an educational project using photos from space on an interactive map, is incorporating bird migration information. The map has photographs from space, information on each species, and resources for teachers. Users can learn about a species, its breeding grounds, migratory pathways, and overwintering areas.

For a fascinating video of what is involved in capturing photos from the space station, and to hear more about the project from Dr. Bondar and David Saint-Jacques, go here:
https://www.nasa.gov/mission_pages/station/research/news/amass-ceo

For daily updates, follow @ISS_Research, Space Station Research and Technology News or our Facebook. For opportunities to see the space station pass over your town, check out Spot the Station.

Help search satellite imagery for nesting Whooping Cranes

Whooping Cranes (*Grus americana*) are one of North America's rarest birds. The only remaining wild and self-sustaining population of Whooping Cranes breeds in northern Canada and winters on the Texas Gulf Coast. Canada has monitored the population by aerial surveys since the 1960s, but the population is now



Can you spot the nesting Whooping Crane in this satellite image?

growing quickly and expanding into new breeding areas. Aerial surveys may no longer be the most effective way to monitor Whooping Cranes, so the [Calgary Zoo](#), [Canadian Wildlife Service](#), [Parks Canada](#) and [International Crane Foundation](#) are working collaboratively to investigate the use of high resolution satellite imagery to detect individual cranes and help monitor and manage this endangered species. The hope is to recruit volunteers to review over 100,000 satellite images to identify possible Whooping Crane nest locations in and near Wood Buffalo National Park in northern Canada.

New images are combined with images that are known to contain nests from previous years, and volunteers will receive feedback on whether their classification of the old images of known nests was correct. This is so we can get through the new imagery quickly and fly our field team out to confirm possible nesting cranes that have been identified by you. Thank you and happy searching!

[Zooniverse](#) is the world's largest and most popular platform for people-powered research. This research is made possible by volunteers — more than a million people around the world who come together to assist professional researchers. Our goal is to enable research that would not be possible, or practical, otherwise. Zooniverse research results in new discoveries, datasets useful to the wider research community, and [many publications](#). To learn more, go here: bit.ly/findthewhitebird

20 May 2021 was the launch date for the Whooping Crane project. To get involved and started counting nests as a citizen scientist, go here to sign up:

<https://www.zooniverse.org/projects/whcr-cr/whooping-cranes/classify>

Whooping Crane Project statistics:

<https://www.zooniverse.org/projects/whcr-cr/whooping-cranes/stats>

How researchers can keep birds safe as U.S. wind farms expand

To prevent avoidable deaths, some scientists are advocating for the use of citizen science and bird migration data when deciding where to construct wind farms. The wind energy industry could use such information to get a more comprehensive picture than traditional surveys provide and minimize harm to birds and other wildlife.

According to an article in [Science News](#), citizen science is already proving that it can fill vital information gaps. From 2007 to 2018, more than 180,000 birders uploaded observations about bald eagles (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) to the [eBird](#) database. Using that treasure trove of data, conservation scientist Viviana Ruiz-Gutierrez and colleagues estimated where in the United States the birds would be most abundant throughout the year — [and face the highest risk of colliding with wind turbines](#). Unlike traditional survey data, which cover limited time periods or locations, the citizen science data span the entire United States and reflect the entire year, the team reports March 14 in the *Journal of Applied Ecology*.

Turbines can also indirectly harm animals by altering their habitats. When researchers analyzed GPS location data tracked from 2010 through 2016 from 57 Whooping Cranes in the Aransas Wood Buffalo population, it was found that cranes [avoided resting at sites](#) along the route that were near wind turbines, wildlife biologist Aaron Pearse of the U.S. Geological Survey and colleagues report March 7 in Ecological Applications (see above abstract – *Migrating Whooping Cranes avoid wind-energy infrastructure when selecting stopover habitat*). The birds are “less likely to use stopover sites if a wind structure, or group of wind structures, are within about five kilometers,” says Pearse, who is based in Jamestown, N.D. As of early 2020, this equates to a net loss of 5 percent of the birds’ habitat.

Over the study period, the team also found that the number of turbines in the Whooping Cranes’ migration corridor more than tripled from 2,215 to 7,622. If this trend continues, then continued habitat loss could lead to population decline, Pearse says. That’s one of the reasons why Whooping Cranes became endangered in the first place.

In Memoriam:



*Dr. Paul A. Johnsgard, June 2019 at Holmes Lake, reportedly one of his favorite places to bird.
Photo by Gwyneth Roberts/Journal Star.*

Editor: *It was with sadness that I learned of Dr. Paul Johnsgard’s recent death. While I had hoped for, but was not fortunate enough to have, the opportunity to meet him, his enthusiasm and knowledge of cranes nevertheless influenced me – still influences me. A silence blankets the Nebraskan plains in the absence of such a brightly burning light – such a passionate voice for the cranes. I am confident that the memory of Dr. Johnsgard will live on in the hundreds of thousands of cranes that return each year to the Platte River – now, to dance in celebration and remembrance of their longtime friend.*

Friend of those of the grey wind

Born 28 June 1931 in Fargo, North Dakota [Dr. Paul Austin Johnsgard](#), the renowned ornithologist, scholar and crusader for the environment, authored more than 104 books and countless articles on birds, ecology and natural history during his career. Crediting [Aldo Leopold's "A Sand County Almanac"](#) as being the main influence for him to convert what he observed and learned into writing Johnsgard remained a prolific writer until his death at 89 on Friday, 28 May 2021.

After earning degrees in botany and zoology, and studying waterfowl ecology, Johnsgard completed a master's-of-science degree in wildlife management at Washington State in 1955 and then a Ph.D. at Cornell before accepting a faculty position at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln (UNL), in 1961.

Over a 40-year career, he earned each of the UNL's highest honors for distinguished teaching, outstanding research and creative activity, and was recognized by numerous scientific and conservation groups – including the National Wildlife Federation's National Conservation Achievement Award in science, the Wildlife Society's annual award for outstanding wildlife biology writing, Lifetime Achievement Award from the Nebraska Wildlife Federation and a Lifetime Achievement Award from the Center for Great Plains Studies. He was elected a fellow of the American Ornithologists' Union in 1961, was a Guggenheim Fellow and earned fellowships from the National Science Foundation and the U.S. Public Health Service.

According to his daughter, Ann Bouma, he was committed to "observing nature faithfully" – details mattered, and it was important that all observations be accurately recorded. In addition to being a prolific writer, Johnsgard was a skilled artist and photographer – the majority of his books were illustrated by him with either his ink drawings or photographs.

"He just loved sharing knowledge and his wonder of birds with others," said Bouma. "And he was always trying to expose more and more people to the idea of nature." Through his love of birds, especially Sandhill Cranes, Johnsgard became an ambassador of sorts for Nebraska, accompanying renowned nature photographers [Tom Mangelsen](#) and [Joel Sartore](#) and primatologist [Jane Goodall](#) on excursions to the Platte River to watch the annual migration.

To watch the CBS News interview with Dr. Johnsgard and their feature on the spring 2014 Sandhill Crane migration at the Platte River, go here: <http://www.cbsnews.com/news/bird-lovers-flock-to-witness-sandhill-crane-migration/>

Thanks to Digital Commons at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, full text, downloadable PDFs of many of Dr. Johnsgard's books are available at the following links:

[Paul Johnsgard Collection](#)
[DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln](#)
<https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/johnsgard/>

The following excerpts are from a lovely tribute posted by long-time student, colleague and friend of Paul Johnsgard – American nature and wildlife photographer [Thomas Mangelsen](#).

On Friday, May 28th 2021 the earth lost one of its greatest heroes. From plants, amphibians, mammals and, especially, birds, Paul Johnsgard was one of their biggest champions. He was likely the world's most prolific writer on ornithology and natural history. During his last months, he completed his 105th book, "The Crane State: A Naturalist Guide to Nebraska." He would have turned 90 on June 28th.

His first love were cranes, writing nearly a dozen books about them.

Paul was a conservationist and activist who wasn't afraid of standing up to government agencies, or whomever, when they failed in protecting wildlife and habitat...

Paul was genius in every sense. One who not only loved nature and wildlife but also loved to teach others, no matter what age, no matter who they were. If they were interested in nature, it was good

enough and within minutes one would be captivated by his stories. He often changed attitudes of his audience and, on occasion, even careers were reconsidered!

For fifty years Paul and I have made our own migration to the Platte River in south central Nebraska near Grand Island, where I grew up. We would stay at my family cabin which is located at the very heart of the migration that takes place every March and April of 650,000 strong sandhill cranes and several million waterfowl. During most of the last twenty years, Jane Goodall would also come to regenerate her heart and soul, like Paul's and my own, always restored by the ancient cranes. Paul's health had been compromised in recent years from heart attacks, a stroke, and cancer, but it didn't stop him from coming out to the cabin three more times this spring. He photographed everything that had feathers or fur in light or near darkness. We knew it would likely be his last visit with the birds and river he loved so much...

Paul gave me so much in so many ways. I will miss all of it, his sharp wit, his poking fun, his self-deprecating humor and laughter, and those bright blue eyes, looking, always searching. More than any other person, Paul A. Johnsgard showed me the way and put me on the journey I've taken. I am forever grateful and will hold all the fond memories close to my heart. I think of him every time I hear a crane call or a flock of geese overhead.

When I returned home from saying goodbye to Paul a few days ago, I found a familiar pair of cranes had nested on my pond. They had nested there last year, and I'd nearly given up hope that they were coming back. But they had also come home, and I can see them now. One sitting on the eggs and one standing guard. Thanks Paul.

Upcoming Events:

Editor: While almost half of the nation's adult population is now fully vaccinated against the COVID-19 pandemic, there are still cancellations or postponement of many scheduled events. Some festivals have chosen to modify formats and have a "virtual" platform in response to the odd times we are in. On a positive note, and while not the same as taking part in person, more people will be able to participate in the virtual festival(s) from afar – so check them out and have fun! Remember to check with coordinators as festival information changes.

21st Annual Sandhill Crane Festival

Tanana Valley Alaska

Dates: Saturday, August 21 – Sunday, August 22, 2021

Location: Creamer's Field Migratory Waterfowl Refuge, Tanana Valley,
1300 College Road, Fairbanks, Alaska 99701

Celebrate fall migration and Sandhill Cranes at Creamer's Field! There are events throughout the weekend, including two guided walks to our bird banding station.

Most events are free of charge. For the complete schedule of events go here:

<https://friendsofcreamersfield.org>

Yampa Valley Crane Festival (10th Annual)

Dates: Thursday, September 2 – Sunday, September 5, 2021

Location: Steamboat Springs and Hayden, Colorado

Greater Sandhill Cranes are an iconic species of the Yampa Valley and Northwest Colorado. In 2012, the Colorado Crane Conservation Coalition, Inc. sponsored the inaugural Yampa Valley Crane Festival. Colorado Crane Conservation Coalition is dedicated to the conservation and protection of Greater Sandhill Cranes in Colorado. The festival seeks to educate the public about cranes and to emphasize conservation of the special habitat that supports the cranes and the many other species of birds and wildlife in Northwest Colorado.

We are thrilled to announce that our 2021 keynote speaker will be Dr. Richard Beilfuss, President and CEO of the International Crane Foundation. Other featured speakers will include Steve Burrows, award-

winning Canadian mystery writer, journalist, and past recipient of a “Nature Writer of the Year” award from BBC Wildlife, and Arvind Panjabi, avian conservation scientist for Bird Conservancy of the Rockies and coauthor of the recent study published in Science magazine on the decline of North American birds. Paul Tebbel will lead guided crane viewings and present a “Cranes 101” talk. Ted Floyd, editor of Birding magazine, will lead the guided bird walks and offer a special presentation at The Nature Conservancy’s historic Carpenter Ranch.

Check back for more information about the virtual festival and educational videos at coloradocranes.org

Princeton Whooping Crane & Nature Festival

Date: Saturday September 11, 2021

Location: Princeton Public School (corner of Hwy 23/73 and Old Green Lake Road), Princeton, Wisconsin

An exciting fun-packed weekend full of festivities along with exploring nature at its finest are all part of the Whooping Crane Festival. The festival celebrates and supports the ongoing efforts to save the endangered Whooping crane from extinction. <https://princetonwi.com/whooping-crane-festival/>

Greater Yellowstone Crane Festival (4th Annual)

Dates: September 13 – September 18, 2021

Location: Driggs, Idaho/Teton Valley

The Greater Yellowstone Crane Festival is held to celebrate the annual migration of Sandhill Cranes through Teton Valley and supports the efforts of the Greater Yellowstone Sandhill Crane Initiative which works to protect crucial habitat and resources for the largest staging population of Sandhill Cranes in the Greater Yellowstone and the myriad of iconic species that call the region home.

For more information go to: www.tetonlandtrust.org

International Crane Foundation Member Appreciation Day

Date: October 17, 2020 9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Location: International Crane Foundation

E11376 Shady Lane Rd

Baraboo WI 53913

Your membership makes a difference for cranes worldwide, and we want to thank you for your support.

Please join us for this fun-filled day with behind-the-scenes tours, special programs and lectures – dedicated to you! *Updates will be posted on the ICF website: <https://www.savingcranes.org>*

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<http://kyc4sandhillcranes.com/eastern-crane-bulletin/>

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