



# EASTERN CRANE BULLETIN

**June 2023**

*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.*

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## **Celebrating 50 years of crane conservation worldwide!**

In 1973, two graduate students at Cornell University, Dr. George Archibald, and Dr. Ronald Sauey established the International Crane Foundation.

Since that time, the International Crane Foundation (ICF) has worked worldwide to conserve cranes and the ecosystems, watersheds, and flyways on which they depend. ICF provides knowledge, leadership, and inspiration to engage people in resolving threats to cranes and their diverse landscapes. From its nearly 300-acre headquarters in Baraboo, Wisconsin, the ICF reach extends across the globe, with offices and staff in China, Uganda, Kenya, Zambia, and South Africa, as well as Texas. It works through strong partnerships with local organizations, governments, universities, businesses, and others in these regions. More than 125 ICF staff and associates work with a network of hundreds of specialists in 50 countries on five continents.

The Foundation is committed to a future where all 15 of the world's crane species are secure. Through the charisma of cranes, ICF envisions a future where people work together for wild crane populations and the landscapes they depend on – and by doing so, find new pathways to sustain our water, land, and livelihoods.

Through the following video, visit some of the beautiful locations around the world that 15 crane species call home. Meet those working for the cranes they love – through education and preserving crucial ecosystems and waterways. To watch, “Where Cranes Dance, go here: <https://youtu.be/qQ6yejsXkew>

And, if you aren't already a member, please consider becoming one! Visit [savingcranes.org](https://savingcranes.org) for more information and to support the work of ICF.



*“Crossing continents. Spanning generations. Cranes know no boundaries, and neither do we.*

*For 50 years, we’ve made it our mission to save cranes and their habitats while improving the lives of the people who consider these birds neighbors worldwide.*

*Cranes aren’t just any bird – they’re an eco-diplomat that connects us all to each other and the places we call home.*

*A neighbor like that is worth fighting for.*

*We’ve made great progress in the past 50 years, but we’re just getting started. The work we do today impacts the world we leave to the next generation.*

*Fly with us for the next 50 as we work to keep cranes as the cornerstone of our lives.” Learn more at [savingcranes.org](https://savingcranes.org)*

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## "From the Field" Webinar – Celebrating 50 Years

15 June 2023 at 12:00 p.m. Central Time

Register now for the webinar and join the International Crane Foundation President and CEO, Rich Beilfuss, as he and the CEO of the Endangered Wildlife Trust, Yolan Friedmann, celebrate the organization's joint 50th anniversaries. *For details and to register, go here:*

[https://savingcranes.zoom.us/webinar/register/1516841753383/WN\\_mubJ3dvlQKye6VqllQGTgw#/registration](https://savingcranes.zoom.us/webinar/register/1516841753383/WN_mubJ3dvlQKye6VqllQGTgw#/registration)

The webinar is co-sponsored by Maggie and Bob Honig and Tom and Karen Scheidt, longtime supporters of the International Crane Foundation, who have seen every From the Field Webinar. *To access earlier webinars, go here:* <https://savingcranes.org/webinars/webinar-library/>

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## Endangered Species Act (ESA) Celebrates 50 Years

Conservation and wildlife advocacy groups are celebrating the 50th anniversary of the passage of the Endangered Species Act this year, commemorating five decades of effective and crucial protection for imperiled animals and plants.

Passed nearly unanimously by Congress and signed into law by President Richard Nixon on 28 December 1973, the Endangered Species Act continues to be a bedrock environmental law for the United States. The Act has been tremendously successful at preventing species that are protected under it from going extinct. The Act has saved countless imperiled species, and 90% of the plants and wildlife [listed](#) under the law are recovering on schedule to meet the timetables in their recovery plans.



In celebration of this milestone, the [American Bird Conservancy Action Fund](#), the 501(c)(4) affiliate of American Bird Conservancy (ABC), produced the "[Celebrating 50 Years of the Endangered Species Act](#)" report, which details the ESA's legacy, successes, and future. The report underscores the importance of upholding the ESA to protect birds facing unprecedented threats.

"The [Bald Eagle](#), [Peregrine Falcon](#), [Kirtland's Warbler](#), [Hawaiian Hawk](#) ('Io) and Interior [Least Tern](#) have all been delisted due to successful recovery efforts," said Steve Holmer, Vice President of Policy for American Bird Conservancy (ABC). "As ABC's [2016 ESA Recovery report](#) found, once listed, birds usually start back on the roads towards recovery with most populations increasing or at least stable."

The report explains how over the past half-century, the ESA has served as a vital tool for conserving avian species in the United States, including birds such as the [Whooping Crane](#) and [California Condor](#), which would likely have gone extinct without actions taken under the ESA.

However, the report also outlines cases in which the ESA has fallen short for certain bird species. More than two dozen listed avian species are still in decline today, including the [Gunnison Sage-Grouse](#), [Marbled Murrelet](#), [Red Knot](#), and several [Hawaiian forest birds](#). And not all U.S. species in decline have been granted ESA protections, such as the [Greater Sage-Grouse](#).

There are also threats to birds and other wildlife that the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) could take stronger action on, such as [insecticides and rodenticides](#). Ninety-five percent of chemical pesticides have not undergone legally required ESA consultations, even though insecticides like neonicotinoids are known to be deadly to birds, and rodenticides can be harmful to Endangered species like the California Condor. Hearteningly, the report outlines how the EPA has begun working to address these threats.

“The ESA has been critical to protecting birds and their habitats and is needed more than ever as Threatened and Endangered species are increasingly exposed to toxic pesticides,” said Hardy Kern, ABC Director of Government Relations, Birds, and Pesticides Campaign. “Further loss of irreplaceable species and their habitat can be avoided by thoroughly evaluating toxic chemicals and limiting the application of those found to pose a threat to endangered species.”

The 50th anniversary of this landmark act is a time for reflection, celebration, and renewed advocacy on behalf of the ESA. With continued dedication, ABC will work to conserve birds and their habitats, helping to ensure that the ESA can stand up to emerging threats and protect species at risk of being lost forever.

For a copy of the Department of the Interior/USFWS Endangered Species Act of 1973, go here: <https://www.fws.gov/sites/default/files/documents/endangered-species-act-accessible.pdf>

To read the Center for Biological Diversity’s press release, “Celebrating 50 Years of Endangered Species Act Success/ Landmark Law Continues to Save Wildlife from Extinction,” go here: <https://biologicaldiversity.org/w/news/press-releases/celebrating-50-years-of-endangered-species-act-success-2023-02-02/>

Published by [surfbirds](#) on May 23, 2023 courtesy of [American Bird Conservancy](#), [surfbirds archive](#)

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## Aransas-Wood Buffalo Population of Whooping Cranes



### **New solar-powered water well secures fresh water for endangered Whooping Cranes in the Coastal Bend**

With a \$20,000 donation through Phillips 66’s philanthropic giving program, a newly installed solar-powered water well 10 miles north of Rockport, Texas, now provides a source of freshwater to the area for the endangered cranes as well as other critical birds and animals. “The timing for this project was great because we’ve been in such a big drought,” said Jake Herring, Director of Land Conservation at the Coastal Bend Bays & Estuaries Program (CBBEP). “Being able to provide a freshwater source for our wildlife is already proving to be very beneficial for this area.”

Phillips 66 partnered with the Coastal Bend Bays & Estuaries Program (CBBEP) and the Aransas First Land Trust to set up the solar-powered water well on the 105 acres of wetlands of the [Lamar-Burton Sanctuary](#) on the Lamar Peninsula. The solar-powered water well has a pumping capacity of 10-12 gallons per minute, operating four to six hours a day, with partial sun.

### **Coastal Bend Bays & Estuaries Program**

The Coastal Bend Bays & Estuaries Program (CBBEP) is a local non-profit 501(c)(3) organization dedicated to researching, restoring, and protecting the bays and estuaries of the Texas Coastal Bend.



The Program area encompasses 75 miles of estuarine environment along the south-central Texas coastline and includes 12 counties of the region known as the Coastal Bend, extending from the land-cut in the Laguna Madre, through the Corpus Christi Bay system, and north to the Aransas National Wildlife Refuge.

### **Aransas First Land Trust**

Aransas First is a 501(c)(3) organization whose mission is to identify, acquire and protect sensitive Coastal Bend habitats essential to the nurture of birds, wildlife, and people; to increase public awareness of ecosystems unique to the area through education, access, and participation. Aransas First has been in the forefront of conservation, preservation, and acquisition efforts in Aransas County since its founding in 2002 by visionaries who recognized the unique ecosystem that our Coastal Bend environment offers.



*Aerial showing footprint of the Lamar-Burton Sanctuary, Lamar Peninsula*

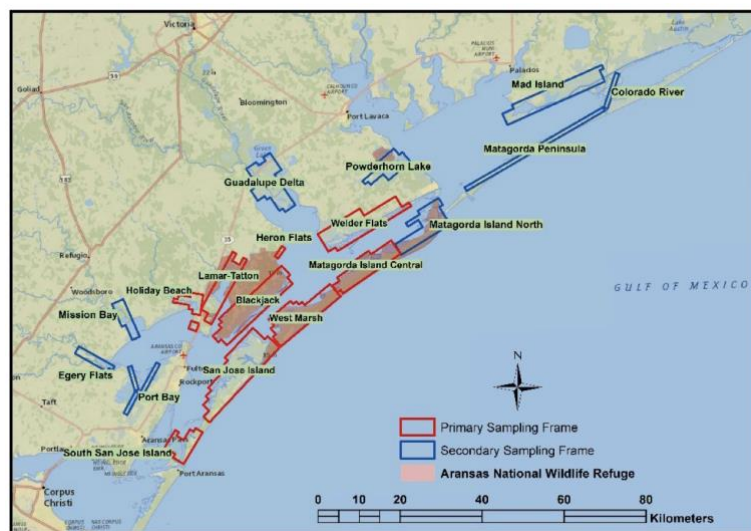
*To read the full news release, go here:*

[https://bwtterminal.com/wp-content/uploads/Media-RELEASE\\_P66-Donation-CBBEP\\_v3-.pdf](https://bwtterminal.com/wp-content/uploads/Media-RELEASE_P66-Donation-CBBEP_v3-.pdf)

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## **Estimated 536 Whooping Cranes wintered in Texas in 2022-2023**

Preliminary data analysis of aerial surveys of the Aransas-Wood Buffalo Whooping Crane population conducted in January 2023 indicated 536 Whooping Cranes, including 88 juveniles, in the primary survey area (approximately 170,500 acres) centered on Aransas National Wildlife Refuge. The last survey from winter 2021-2022 estimated 543 Whooping Cranes, indicating the population has remained stable over the last two years.



An additional 14 birds were recorded outside the primary survey area during the survey, based on data from Texas Whooper Watch, eBird reports, iNaturalist reports, a Whooping Crane GPS tracking study, and aerial surveys conducted in the secondary survey areas. This marks the sixth year that the population has topped 500 individuals, although a survey was not conducted during winter 2020-2021 due to COVID-19 concerns.

Due to extensive conservation efforts of federal, state, and private landowners, Whooping Crane populations have increased significantly. When the bird was listed under the Endangered

Species Act in 1967, only 50 of the birds existed – with 43 wintering at Aransas National Wildlife Refuge and seven in captivity. The long-term annual population growth rate for Whooping Cranes has averaged 4.34 percent. Biologists plan to conduct the next survey in January 2024.

*To read or download WHCR Update Winter 2022-2023.pdf, go here:*

<https://www.fws.gov/sites/default/files/documents/WHCR%20Update%20Winter%202022-2023.pdf>

*More information about the survey and Whooping Cranes can also be found on the Aransas National Wildlife Refuge website: <https://www.fws.gov/refuge/aransas>, or by calling the Aransas National Wildlife Refuge Visitor Contact Station at: 361-349-1181.*

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## Report a Banded Sandhill Crane

Observations of banded cranes are especially critical to the understanding of cranes habits and movements throughout their lives. If you see a crane but did not see its bands or even if it didn't have any bands, you may still help by submitting your sighting via eBird. *Go to the following to submit your Sandhill Crane Finder report:* <https://sandhillfinder.savingcranes.org/resighting>

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## Eastern Migratory Population of Whooping Cranes

### Eastern Migratory Population WHCR Update – June 1, 2023

Below is the most recent update for the Eastern Migratory Population of Whooping Cranes. Nesting season is now in full swing! A huge thank-you to the staff of the Fish and Wildlife Service, the Departments of Natural Resources of flyway states, the International Crane Foundation, and all the volunteers who help us keep track of the cranes throughout the year. We appreciate your contribution to the recovery of the Whooping Crane Eastern Migratory Population. This report was produced by the International Crane Foundation. Near real-time locations of Whooping Cranes in this population is at <https://whoopermap.savingcranes.org/>

### Population Estimate

The current estimated population size is 71 (36 F, 34 M, 1 U). 15 of these 71 individuals are wild-hatched and the rest are captive-reared. This does not yet include 2023 wild-hatched chicks. To the best of our knowledge, as of 1 June, there are at least 60 in Wisconsin, and 2 in Michigan. The remaining birds' locations have not been confirmed in the last month.

### 2021 and 2022 Cohorts

- W2-21 (M) is still in Green Lake County, Wisconsin with W3-17.
- W14-21 (M) has not yet been seen in Wisconsin this spring.
- 84-21 (F) and 85-21 (M) are still together and are now in Green Lake County, WI.
- W1-22 (U) is still in Adams County, sometimes with W3-20 (F).

### Reproduction

So far this spring we have had 22 pairs and 25 nests (22 first nests, 3 renests). Nine nests have hatched and produced at least 10 chicks, 9 of which are still alive. There are currently 7 active nests.

Nests that were completed by 1 June: 3 failed (1 in Green Lake, 2 in Juneau County), 9 hatched (2 in Green Lake, 2 in Dodge, 1 in Portage, 1 in Sauk, 1 in St. Croix, and 2 in Juneau Counties)

Active nests: 4 first nests and 3 renests in Juneau County

Wild-hatched chicks (chicks listed in bold are currently alive):

- **W1-23** hatched to parents 10-15 and 4-13 in Green Lake County in early May.
- **W2-23** hatched to parents 38-17 and 63-15 in Dodge County in early May.
- **W3-23** hatched to parents 1-17 and W1-19 in Portage County in early May.
- **W4-23** hatched to parents 24-17 and 4-17 in Sauk County in mid-May.
- **W5-23** and W6-23 hatched to parents 4-12 and 3-14 in Green Lake County in mid-May. W6-23 disappeared during May, but W5-23 is still with their parents.
- **W7-23** hatched to parents 1-11 and 59-13 in St. Croix County in late May.
- **W8-23** hatched to parents 79-19 and W13-20 in Dodge County in late May.
- **W9-23** hatched to parents 15-11 and 29-08 in Juneau County in late May.
- **W10-23** hatched to parents W1-18 and W6-18 in Juneau County in late May.

### Mortality and Long-term Missing

W10-18 (F) was last seen in June 2022 and is now considered long-term missing and is removed from the population totals above.

30-16 (M) has not been seen since November 2022 and is now considered long-term missing and has been removed from the population totals. His mate W3-17 showed up on the wintering grounds without 30-16 and has not returned to Wisconsin and appears to be re-pairing with another male. [April 2023 report]

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/>

**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/>

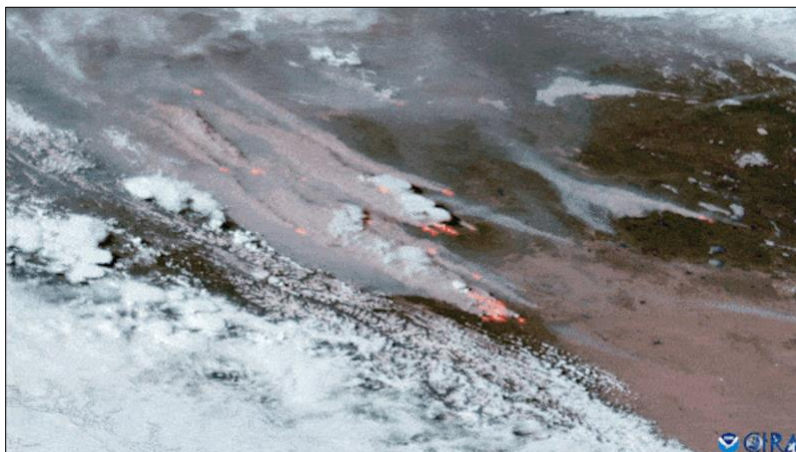
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## General News

### Canada:

#### Alberta wildfires

Wildfire season in Alberta, Canada, typically begins in May. But this year has had an explosive beginning. This forest-covered province has endured a hot, dry spring. And, by last week, wildfires billowing up from the forests led to evacuations of more than 29,000 people, and a state of emergency beginning for Alberta on May 6, 2023. NASA Earth Observatory reported that the fires have been so intense that they've produced towering chimneys of smoke in the form of pyrocumulonimbus clouds.



*[Satellite image of Alberta wildfires; map of smoke drift] NASA's GOES-18 satellite captured this image of fires raging out of control in Alberta, Canada, on May 6, 2023. On the same day, the Canadian government declared a state of emergency for Alberta. Plus, thousands of people have faced evacuation while the wildfires have burned approximately 1 million acres. Also, smoke from the Alberta wildfires has swirled all the way into the northeastern United States. Image via the Cooperative Institute for Research in the Atmosphere at Colorado State and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (CIRA/ CSU & NOAA).*

The smoke from all these fires has swirled through the atmosphere and across the northeastern United States, resulting in some colorful sunrises and sunsets.

You can follow along with the progress of the fires and suppression efforts at the Alberta Wildfire Status Dashboard. Neighboring provinces of British Columbia and Saskatchewan are also experiencing some wildfires. As of May 21, British Columbia had reported [89 active wildfires](#), Alberta had [86](#), and Saskatchewan had [27](#). Active area burned is ~1 million acres. In the past 5 years the average burned area to date only +1000 acres.

For updated information, go here: [https://earthsky.org/earth/canada-alberta-wildfires-smoke-northeastern-us-siberia/?mc\\_cid=600909d44e&mc\\_eid=fd48077cf6](https://earthsky.org/earth/canada-alberta-wildfires-smoke-northeastern-us-siberia/?mc_cid=600909d44e&mc_eid=fd48077cf6)



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## Louisiana:

Recent Facebook posts by [Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries - Whooping Cranes](#)

*May 26, 2023*

Last week we shared news and photos of our youngest chick, LW9-23, and today we share a photo of one of our oldest! Last Wednesday, we checked on 69-day old LW4-23 (now 78 days old) and parents L11-11 and L1-19 in Jefferson Davis Parish and they all looked great! The chick is pretty much fully grown and should be capable of flying any day now, which is a significant and important milestone since flight is a crane's best means of protection and escape from a predator. And while we don't count our crane chicks before they can fly, we expect to soon be adding LW4-23 and two others into the official population count!



*69-day old LW4-23 (now 78 days old) and parents L11-11 and L1-19 in Jefferson Davis Parish. Photo by LDWF*

*May 13, 2023*

The first Whooping Crane chicks have hatched in the eastern migratory population! The EMP and our Louisiana flock are both reintroduction projects that supplement the naturally occurring wild population that summers in Canada and winters on the Gulf Coast of Texas! Even with these three separate populations, there are still less than 1000 Whooping Cranes in the world.

*April 28, 2023*

After a somewhat slow beginning to nesting season, we may have reached a turning point! Today we confirmed 5 new nests during our tracking flight, and two additional pairs have platforms! Of the 5 new confirmed nests, two are by first time nesting pairs and the remaining 3 are re-nesting attempts.

So far this year there have been 26 nests by 19 pairs. Five nests have hatched out 7 chicks (4 are still alive), 3 have sat past to to full term with no hatch, 8 failed prior to full term and 10 are currently active.

*April 5, 2023*

And then there were two! Hello and welcome to the world LW7-23!!

Thank you again, so, so much, to Danny Womack for capturing this first photo of the new family of four and sharing it with us and all of you!

*April 4, 2023*

Introducing LW6-23, our newest chick, who was confirmed yesterday and is the offspring of female L10-15 and male L19-16! The pair has a second egg that they are still incubating so hopefully this little guy will have a sibling in another day or two. Thanks so much to Danny Womack for always capturing such great photos and letting us share them here!



*Female L10-15 and male L19-16 with LW6-23 and LW7-23, 5 April 2023. Photo by Danny Womack*

*March 23, 2023*

Last Tuesday we caught female, L14-17 in Jefferson County, TX and brought her back to Louisiana, where she was released on White Lake WCA property. Sadly, she had lost her mate last summer but never made an attempt to return to LA, instead remaining on and near the territory she had occupied with her mate. Unfortunately, there were no other Whooping Cranes in the area so she had no chance of finding a new mate. The capture, transport, and release all went well, and we are thrilled that on Tuesday, just a week after releasing her back in LA, she was found with LW5-21, a two-year old male that was hatched and reared in Acadia Parish. He is still young, but they did unison call together and she was quite fired up and displaying some reproductive, breeding season behavior when we caught her so we're hopeful this will be a good match and this new pair will remain together.

A HUGE thank you goes out to the landowners and farmers in Jefferson County, TX who 'hosted' her and her previous mate for the last several years and for allowing us access to their properties so that we could catch her and give her this new opportunity. They were sad to see her go but understood it was the best option for her and we are grateful for their cooperation and support!

To watch as LDWF biologists release L14-17 at White Lake WCA, go here:

<https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=5866091260155273>

*March 6, 2023*

Happy Mother's Day to all the moms out there! [LDWF post on May 14, 2023]

Photo: Female L16-17 with LW1-23 & LW2-23 in Calcasieu Parish.



March 16, 2023

It's Trail Camera Thursday!

Earlier this week we swapped out the card from the camera that is set up on L6-16 and L16-17's nest and were excited to see that it had captured a lot of really great photos, including these first photos of our first chick of the year, LW1-23 [hatched 4 March 2023]! The chick is difficult to see in the first two photos, so we added an arrow to indicate the darker area that is the newly hatched chick. Later in the morning when the light is better, and the chick is able to sit up it's much easier to see. And in the last photo, check out L6-16 being a good dad and bringing something, maybe a dragonfly, for the new chick to eat. [Photo not shown]



*L16-17 with LW1-23 and LW2-23, Calcasieu Parish. Photo taken on 6 March 2023 by LDWF trail cam.*

## **The Louisiana Whooping Crane Reintroduction – Conservation Meets Culture**

In this webinar by the International Crane Foundation (ICF), Irvin Loque and Madi Radford discuss the Louisiana Non-migratory Population's history and present status, issues with illegal shootings, and what ICF is doing to learn more about and address these issues through social science surveys and outreach strategies. The webinar was sponsored by Sandy and Steve Becker.

To view the webinar, go here: <https://savingcranes.org/webinars/>

Or go here: <https://youtu.be/EsDAoptzftU?t=3>

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## **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/>*

If you see a Whooping Crane in the western United States, please report it here:

<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/>

For more general information about the cranes, go here:

<https://www.wlf.louisiana.gov/subhome/whooping-crane>

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## Nebraska:

### **Drone operators must adhere to wildlife laws**

Drone operators are required to know wildlife laws pertaining to use of drones in Nebraska, including restrictions on Nebraska Game and Parks' properties.

- State law and the federal Airborne Hunting Act prohibit the use of aircraft, including drones — or recreational unmanned aircraft — to harass birds, fish, or any other animal. Drones never should be used to flush, chase, or harass any wildlife, including large flocks of migrating birds, such as Sandhill and Whooping Cranes, and Canada or Snow Geese.
- State and federal endangered species laws also prohibit the harassment of listed species, including the Whooping Crane, Least Tern, Piping Plover, Mountain Plover, and Red Knot in Nebraska.
- The Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act protects these species by prohibiting their disturbance. Drones should not be flown to observe eagles or near their nests. Eagles may attack drones, especially if flown near active nests or near large congregations of over-wintering or migrating eagles.
- Game and Parks does not permit drones to be flown in state parks, state historical parks, state recreation areas or wildlife management areas, unless a special occasion permit has been approved. Contact the nearest Commission district office for an application.
- Drone operators should check the Federal Aviation Administration regulations for recreation or commercial-use training requirements and aircraft registration; they should also be aware of other laws and city ordinances governing their use.

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### **Historical Marker**

Located at: 2000-2026 W Platte River Dr, Doniphan, Hall County, Nebraska there is a historical marker celebrating the existence of Sandhill Cranes in the region. The marker is sponsored by: Hall County Historical Society, Platte River Trust, Nebraska State Historical Society, and the Nebraska Department of Roads.

*"The Big Bend of the Platte River in central Nebraska is one of the most important staging areas for the spring migration of the world's largest population of sandhill cranes. Throughout history the Platte has also been a corridor of migration for native peoples and Euroamericans."*

*For both cranes and humans, the river has provided water, food, and shelter in a sometimes harsh environment.*

*No one knows when sandhill cranes appeared on the Nebraska landscape. Their remains have been found in nine-million-year-old deposits in western Nebraska and in prehistoric and historic Native American sites throughout the central plains. The journals of explorers and fur traders such as Edwin James (1820), John Townsend (1834), Rufus Sage (1841), and John J. Audubon (1843) mention sandhill cranes they observed while traveling up the Missouri River or along the Platte.*

*Settlement of the Great Plains brought many changes to the Platte. Irrigation reduced its volume, and its shorelines and islands became overgrown when prairie fires and floods were controlled. Only the Big Bend region still provides prime habitat to sustain the annual migration of sandhill cranes.”*

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## New Mexico:

### **Proposed changes to New Mexico migratory bird hunting rules**

The public is invited to join the conversation on proposed changes to the state's Migratory Game Bird Rule. The changes could include season date changes and permit limits. Among the proposed changes to the 2023 to 2024 season are adjustments to regular waterfowl season dates. USFWS is also considering a decrease in the number of Sandhill Crane permits. The state's Department of Game and Fish works with the federal government to balance the interests of hunters with conservation efforts. Part of that work includes setting the dates during which hunters can bag birds.

Comments on the proposal can also be mailed to the Department of Game and Fish at New Mexico Department of Game and Fish; Attn: Migratory Game Bird Rule Development, 1 Wildlife Way, Santa Fe, NM 87507. Comments can also be emailed to [DGF-Waterfowl@dgf.nm.gov](mailto:DGF-Waterfowl@dgf.nm.gov). A summary of the proposed changes can be found [on the department's website](#).

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## Tennessee:

### **2022-2023 report**

The Tennessee Sandhill Crane (*Antigone canadensis*) season was established in 2013. The 2022-23 season marked its ninth season, and the fifth for permitted statewide hunting of the species. Applications were received from 4,676 hunters and tags were issued through a computerized application and lottery system. All 1,250 selected hunters were awarded two tags each for use statewide (STW), including use in the southeast crane hunt zone (SCZ). Hunters were required to submit a post-season survey by 10 February 2023. Post-season diaries were submitted by 970 individuals. The result of the 2022-23 season was 640 Sandhill Cranes killed in 23 different counties; 23 cranes were reported as wounded but not retrieved. More cranes were killed in the SCZ (499) than STW (141). Rhea County was the top county for cranes killed (n =256). More cranes were shot on private land than on public land.

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## Wisconsin:

### **Helicopters used to locate Sandhill Crane nests**

The International Crane Foundation (ICF) conducted a helicopter survey to locate Sandhill Crane nests near Briggsville, Wisconsin on April 24 and April 25. The survey is part of ICF's long-term effort to monitor the local Sandhill Crane population. This region hosts one of the densest nesting populations of Sandhill Cranes known anywhere in the world. The most recent study was done in 2003. ICF will use this information to determine how local crane breeding density has changed over 20 years, and the impact it might have had on overall reproductive success and survival.



Searching by helicopter is considered the most efficient and least disruptive method of locating crane nests. Helicopter surveys allow the ICF to find the maximum number of nests in the shortest time by flying low over the major wetlands in the area and observing incubating birds on their nests. This survey technique does not harm the cranes. Although the birds may initially flush from nests, they quickly return as soon as the helicopter leaves the area.

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## **“Memorandum of Understanding” – use of non-lead ammo saves cranes**

The International Crane Foundation (ICF) near Baraboo, and the Wisconsin Wildlife Federation (WWF) – a group composed of hunters, anglers, and trappers – have signed a memorandum of understanding to further educate the public on the voluntary use of non-lead ammunition and fishing tackle.

Millions of birds each year are poisoned by lead after ingesting lead pellets or fragments thinking they are seeds. Diving species such as loons, may ingest lead sinkers or jigs while scouring lake bottoms for fish and crayfish while others, such as eagles, hawks and owls, eat meat contaminated with lead.

Currently there are non-lead alternatives available that include shot and fishing tackle made with copper, tin, and tungsten but production of these tend to be more expensive than traditional lead options.

Both the ICF and WWF say they both “strongly support” outdoor education and science-based conservation policies and practices.

“Communication is the key,” said Mark Kakatsch, chair of the WWF’s waterfowl committee. “We want to model behavior that seeks common ground on the issues where we can agree, even when we agree to strongly disagree on other issues.” The organizations disagree, for example, on whether a hunting season for Sandhill Cranes should be allowed.

As part of the memorandum, both organizations will also seek ways to collaborate on protecting the environment from contaminants, publicize the ICF and WWF relationship and facts about cranes, and educate waterfowl hunters about crane identification. They also plan to engage with private landowners and maintain communication and seek opportunities to collaborate. The ICF will also become a statewide affiliate of WWF, founded in 1949, to provide opportunities for youth in the Conservation Leadership Corp.

“I am hopeful this collaboration will help us assist farmers who support wildlife,” said Rich Beilfuss, President and CEO of the International Crane Foundation. “I am confident we can work together to resolve crop damage issues and focus on crane conservation on farms and private lands.”

Whooping Cranes are federally protected. While there are now hunting seasons for Sandhill Cranes in several eastern states, the birds have not been legally hunted in Wisconsin for over 100 years, thanks in part to the Migratory Bird Act.

*To read more in a 10 April 2023 article by Barry Adams/Wisconsin State Journal, go here:*

[https://madison.com/news/local/environment/whooping-sandhill-cranes-in-danger-from-lead-ammunition-and-fishing-tackle/article\\_6529a0a4-12a0-522c-8c4d-779fc4127d98.html](https://madison.com/news/local/environment/whooping-sandhill-cranes-in-danger-from-lead-ammunition-and-fishing-tackle/article_6529a0a4-12a0-522c-8c4d-779fc4127d98.html)

*And for additional information and a Bass Pro Shop “Non-Toxic Shot Buyer’s Guide,” go here:*

<https://1source.basspro.com/news-tips/waterfowl-gear-technique/27344/non-toxic-shot-buyers-guide>

*“Ultimately, as responsible hunters and citizens, we can acknowledge the need for the non-toxic alternatives to lead. And as intelligent humans, we have designed new types of ammunition that address the environmental concerns while maintaining the effectiveness of the shot. It was just a matter of time before we got used to the new ammunition and began to adjust our ways. Hunting has evolved, it will continue to evolve and our choices in ammunition can evolve right alongside.” – Bass Pro*

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## Habitat Matters!



*Trout Lake in the Shasta Valley Wildlife Area, Siskiyou County, California, 2023*

### California:

#### **Partnership aids in Shasta Valley Wildlife Area water management**

According to a recent Ducks Unlimited (DU) press release, the group will soon begin work on a joint project with The California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) to help the Shasta Valley Wildlife Area better manage its water supply – which has become increasingly unreliable in recent years. DU recently signed an agreement with the CDFW to replace the water-control structure that releases water from Bass Lake into seasonally managed wetlands in the area. Bass Lake is one of three shallow reservoirs that supply wetlands on the 4,700-acre wildlife area east of Yreka in Siskiyou County.

When it has water, Shasta Valley Wildlife Area provides habitat for local and migratory waterfowl as well as Sandhill Cranes, Bald Eagles, Peregrine Falcons, and Swainson's Hawks. The wildlife area is also frequented by Tri-colored Blackbirds, which are listed as threatened under the California Endangered Species Act and is an important recreational area in Siskiyou County – popular with horseback riders, birders, anglers, and upland and waterfowl hunters.

With an extreme drought in the region limiting the amount of water released to wildlife areas that usually receive water from the Little Shasta River, the last few years has been difficult. As a result, Steamboat and Bass Lakes have gone completely dry. In 2022, Trout Lake dropped to 25 percent of its capacity. With so little habitat available for birds, the Department of Fish and Wildlife closed the area to waterfowl hunting last season as it did for the 2021-22 waterfowl season.

Nearby, the much larger Lower Klamath and Tule Lake National Wildlife Refuges have also had their water supplies curtailed over the years. All 90,000 acres of Tule Lake and Lower Klamath were

completely dry last year, depriving migratory birds of one of the Pacific Flyway's most important staging areas. Only small sections of Lower Klamath and Tule Lake refuges are receiving water this year making wildlife areas such as Shasta Valley in the high deserts of Southern Oregon and Northeastern California increasingly important to the millions of birds of the Pacific Flyway.

Ducks Unlimited continues to work with regulators, first nations, farmers, and wildlife agencies to find common ground centered around bringing water back to wetlands in the Klamath Basin.

*Ducks Unlimited Inc. is the world's largest nonprofit organization dedicated to conserving North America's continually disappearing wetlands. Established in 1937, Ducks Unlimited has conserved 16 million acres in the U.S. and more than 808,000 acres in California. For more information, visit [www.ducks.org](http://www.ducks.org)*

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## Kansas:

### **Protecting endangered species and ecosystems on federal lands**

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineer (USACE) has one of the largest environmental missions in the federal government. Therefore, Kansas City District's conservation biologists, environmental specialists, natural resource specialists, natural resource managers and park rangers view the Endangered Species Day (third Friday in May) as a chance to educate others on the efforts they are making to protect endangered species on federal land.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Marine Fisheries Service share the responsibility of administering the Endangered Species Act, which includes maintaining the federal endangered species list. Within the Kansas City District, there are a number of endangered species including bats and Whooping Cranes. The common denominator among those on the list is loss of habitat.

The lakes found in the western part of the district – Kanopolis, Wilson, Harlan County and Milford – are a few examples of the habitat USACE manages for endangered species. Located in areas with limited water resources, these lakes offer critical stopover habitat to migrating Whooping Cranes along the 2,500-mile route between their breeding grounds in Wood Buffalo National Park, Canada and the wintering grounds in Aransas NWR and areas along the Gulf coast. The lakes and surrounding areas provide shelter, overnight roosting sites, and a place to forage on the long journey.

According to Ryan Williams, a natural resource manager at Kanopolis Lake, migration stopovers can range anywhere from overnight to 18 days or more during April - May, and then again during October - November. On 3 April 2023, Kanopolis Lake near Kanopolis, Kansas hosted at least 12 Whooping Cranes during a stopover there.

USACE's conservation work includes control of invasive species affecting the stopover habitat and overseeing prescribed burns in areas that are dependent on natural disturbances. The USACE works to stop the spread of a common grass known as *Phragmites australis*, that if not addressed will overrun shorelines of lakes, blocking visibility and deterring Whooping Cranes from roosting. Integrated management practices like prescribed fire help sustain natural ecosystems and require conservation workers to look at the problem set from multiple angles and with multiple considerations.

### **Friends of the Wild Whoopers**

In 2015, Friends of the Wild Whoopers (FOTWW) initiated a "stopover" habitat project to help the wild Aransas-Wood Buffalo population. Whooping Cranes have been documented on private lands, wildlife areas, lakes, and some military bases during migration. As private lands face increasing development, and wetlands are lost to agriculture and degraded by global warming, FOTWW has advocated for stopovers on military bases, Indian Reservations and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) developments. Managed properly, these sites would mitigate the





loss of habitat, not only for the endangered Whooping Crane, but also for other wildlife and fish species.

Partnering since 2017, the USACE and FOTWW signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on 8 July 2018, to work together in the recovery of endangered Whooping Cranes.

Per the MOU, USACE and FOTWW jointly assessed migration stopover habitat at USACE water resource developments. These assessments are then used by USACE to develop work plans that maintain and improve existing habitat and create additional habitat for the critically endangered cranes as part of USACE Environmental Stewardship Program. This partnership is consistent with USACE's responsibilities under the Endangered Species Act, which allows federal agencies to use their existing authorities to assist in the recovery of listed species.

FOTWW continued its partnership with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in assessing possible stopover habitat in the 7-state migration corridor that includes Texas, Oklahoma, Kansas, Nebraska, South Dakota, North Dakota and Montana. FOTWW is confident that the USACE can do much to protect and manage many "stopover habitats" within the migration corridor wetland habitats while other areas can be enhanced with minor, low-cost work.

*To learn more read "Conservation on behalf of Aransas-Wood Buffalo Whoopers," Eastern Crane Bulletin/Sept. 2020, Phase III U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, go here:*

[https://kyc4sandhillcranes.files.wordpress.com/2020/09/eastern-crane-bulletin\\_september-2020.pdf](https://kyc4sandhillcranes.files.wordpress.com/2020/09/eastern-crane-bulletin_september-2020.pdf)

*Or, in the Eastern Crane Bulletin/Dec. 2017, p.12 "Whooping Cranes welcome at Kanopolis Lake":*

<https://kyc4sandhillcranes.files.wordpress.com/2017/12/the-eastern-crane-bulletin-e28093-december-2017.pdf>

*"A good indication that the U.S. Army Corps habitat and wildlife management program is working was the recent sighting of 8 Whooping Cranes (5 adults and 3 juveniles) as they used Kanopolis Lake for a migration stopover on November 18-19, 2017."*

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## Michigan:

### **Arcadia Marsh & Stutsmanville Bog Nature Preserve home to nesting Sandhills**

Sandhill Cranes are currently nesting in northern Michigan. For those interested in viewing the Sandhills and their young – known as "colts" – go to Arcadia Marsh with a spotting scope and look in the fields on the southeast side.



*Sandhill Crane adult and colt in Arcadia Marsh. Photo by Bill Erickson.*

Cranes can also be seen or heard at Stutsmanville Bog Nature Preserve in Harbor Springs. 65-acres in size, Stutsmanville Bog is one of the best examples of a fen or peatland in northern Michigan. A bog is a unique type of wetland dominated by organic soil known as peat; bogs are known for unusual plants such as the carnivorous pitcher plant and sundew. This area has been the subject of many ecological studies. A 1/4-mile trail leads from the parking lot to the bog overlook and interpretive signs. It is asked that

visitors please be sensitive to the fragile nature of this ecosystem while there; even sporadic foot traffic off the trails can permanently damage the vegetation. The parking lot is on State Road (S. State St.) about five miles north of Harbor Springs.

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## Montana:

### **Grosswiler and Marvin families receive [Montana Wetland Stewardship Award](#)**

In 2017 and 2018, the Grosswiler and Marvin families made the commitment to preserving their family legacy and bird habitat when they placed an “ecological gem” west of Kalispell under a conservation easement with Flathead Land Trust. The Grosswiler and Marvin families placed 396 acres under conservation easement, protecting agricultural lands, open space, wetlands, and habitat critical for migratory birds. Their easement is located within a complex of unique intermontane pothole wetlands, known as the “West Valley Wetlands,” part of agricultural fields that support some of the highest numbers and diversity of wetland birds in the rapidly growing Flathead Valley, and the only known staging area for Sandhill Cranes in the Flathead Valley.

The family’s legacy will also live on in another way. They generously allowed a public bird and wildlife viewing area to be constructed within the easement, which has become a community and educational treasure. Inspiring future generations to care about conserving wetlands is a major goal of the bird viewing area. Through educational programs developed and implemented by Flathead Land Trust and Flathead Audubon, local 7th-grade students gain an appreciation of wetlands and the wildlife that they support, furthering their understanding of and compassion for wetlands, and for future conservation. In recognition of their commitment to protecting wildlife and wetland habitat and benefiting the people of the Flathead Valley by providing a public bird and wildlife viewing area, the [Montana Wetland Council \(MWC\)](#) selected the Grosswiler and Marvin families as 2023 Wetland Stewardship Award recipients. The biennial [Wetland and Watershed Stewardship Awards](#) are a joint project of the [Montana Watershed Coordination Council \(MWCC\)](#) and the MWC to honor individuals and groups providing innovative, locally-led approaches to conserving, protecting, restoring, and enhancing wetlands and watersheds in Montana. Award recipients were honored at a ceremony co-hosted by MWCC and MWC on Wednesday, 26 April 2023 at the Holter Art Museum in Helena. The ceremony was part of the 2023 MWCC Annual Meeting.

*For more about the project, visit: [mtwatersheds.org/grosswiler-and-marvin-families-receive-montana-wetland-stewardship-award/](https://mtwatersheds.org/grosswiler-and-marvin-families-receive-montana-wetland-stewardship-award/)*

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## Ohio:

### **Sandhills return to Ohio**

While the International Crane Foundation has hosted the Annual Midwest Crane Count for 47 years to monitor and track Sandhill Cranes across the upper Midwest, Ohio has only participated in the count since 2020. Sandhill Cranes are native to the state but were extirpated in the 1930s, largely due to unregulated hunting and increased agriculture pressure that resulted in the draining of wetlands.

According to Laura Kearns, a wildlife biologist with the Ohio Department of Natural Resources, the first Sandhill Crane nest was found in the 1980s and by the mid-1990s there were a recorded 10 breeding pairs. Today there is an estimated 60 breeding pairs. They inhabit wetlands across the state, from Pickaway County south of Columbus to Williams County in the far northwest corner. Last year, more than 300 cranes were counted across the state. Kearns attributes their resurgence both to international protections for migratory birds and to the successful restoration of wetlands in Ohio. “The protection, restoration and management of wetland habitats has been a key part of them coming back into the state,” she said. They are still listed as [a threatened species](#) in Ohio.

An example of this is Battelle Darby Creek Metro Park which stretches along 13 miles of the Big and Little Darby creeks – both State and National Scenic Rivers, and features over 7,000 acres of forest, prairies, and wetlands. A century ago, this area was converted to farmland with drainage tiles placed to drain the

existing wetlands. When the Metro Parks acquired the land, the tiles were removed eventually resulting in over 1,600 acres of restored wetlands and prairies. The restoration efforts have led to dozens of species of birds coming back to the area.

Wildlife enthusiasts can support Sandhill Cranes by purchasing an [Ohio Wildlife Legacy Stamp](#). Fourteen dollars of every \$15 Ohio Wildlife Legacy Stamp sold are invested in the state's Wildlife Diversity Fund. This fund supports habitat restoration, wildlife and habitat research projects, creation of free wildlife educational materials, as well as efforts to restore and conserve endangered and threatened species. The legacy stamp can be purchased online through Ohio's Wildlife Licensing System and at any location that sells hunting and fishing licenses. Learn more about Sandhill Cranes and the Division of Wildlife's research at [wildohio.gov](http://wildohio.gov).

*Approximately 90 threatened or endangered species in Ohio live in or depend on wetlands.*



*Jen Moore, a naturalist at Battelle Darby Metro Park, looks for a Sandhill Crane in a restored wetlands area. A pair of cranes was spotted flying over the area just two weeks earlier. Photo by Erin Gottsacker/The Ohio Newsroom*

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## Wyoming:

### **Yellowstone's allure for cranes**

At 3,437.5 square miles (8,903 km<sup>2</sup>), Yellowstone National Park forms the core of the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem – one of the largest nearly intact temperate-zone ecosystems on Earth. Greater Yellowstone's diversity of natural wealth includes the hydrothermal features, wildlife, vegetation, lakes, and geologic wonders like the Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone River.

*The following are excerpts from a piece written by [Earle Layser](#) about Sandhills for the Mountain Journal.*

Whenever the subject of Greater Yellowstone wildlife comes up, Bison, wolves, and bears are more likely to top the list before there is mention of cranes. But the Greater Sandhill Crane (*Grus canadensis tabida*) calls the area home for at least part of the year. The Rocky Mountain Population (RMP) is part of a breeding population occupying the western edge of North America's migratory bird Central Flyway. Their spring-summer range occurs across



contiguous north-south portions of Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Utah, and Wyoming, roughly encompassing Greater Yellowstone.

The Rocky Mountain Population is a larger subspecies than the more abundant Lesser Sandhill, which migrate a half-million strong across the prairie lands east of the Yellowstone region. Annual aerial survey counts of RMP beginning in 1984 to date have determined a relatively stable population of around 20,000 birds.

Spring-summer habitats utilized by the cranes include large wetland complexes, smaller scattered wetlands, floodplains, moist meadows, riparian areas, willow flats, beaver ponds, and forest edges. Those habitats are associated with places within Greater Yellowstone – e.g., the Bechler Meadows, Hayden Valley, Heart Lake, Fountain Flats, Teton Valley wetlands, the National Elk Refuge, Teton National Park's Willow Flats, Grassy Lake, the Yellowstone River Thorofare, Gallatin Valley, Henry Lake Flats, Gardiner's Hole, Harriman State Park, Island Park Reservoir, Red Rock Lakes, the Beaverhead and Big Hole River's streamside's, Reed Point Islands, and elsewhere. Those places provide nesting sites, food and forage areas, escape and concealment cover, and "roost" sites (shallow standing water).



*Sandhill Cranes return to breeding grounds in Greater Yellowstone. Photograph by Moose Henderson-Shutterstock*

Fall habitat in the area generally consists of networks of natural wetland features surrounded by small grain agricultural lands, such as the areas mentioned below. Even though cranes have the lowest recruitment of any avian species (about 8 percent), regulated hunting is allowed at places within the Greater Yellowstone around agricultural areas, e.g.– portions of Teton Valley, Ashton-St Anthony, Dillion-Twin Bridges, Three Forks, Paradise Valley, Star Valley, Farson, and others. Hunting is the primary method for reducing crop damage. Generally, for example, 50 crane permits are available for Teton Valley, Idaho.

Telemetry and banding studies determined that the Greater Yellowstone cranes mostly winter in south-central New Mexico, in the general area of the Rio Grande Valley and Bosque del Apache Wildlife Refuge; also, possibly some from the Yellowstone area in the southeast Arizona playas near Wilcox.

While cranes appear reasonably adaptable to the rapidly changing wildland-urban interface, they are known to abandon nests or territories because of human disturbance. In Greater Yellowstone, the latter might involve: the extensive exurban developments and subdivisions occurring in our eco-region's larger valleys, which until recently, were open space or agricultural lands; draining of wetlands and irrigated areas and exporting the water; climate change as it may affect migration aridity and drying out of wetland habitats; the advent of more people, and particularly off-leash dogs, occurring across the landscape.

For cranes to continue to flourish in Greater Yellowstone, there is a need for a "whole landscape view" that provides sustainable habitat for people, birds, and other wildlife, as well as landscape function. Crane habitat conservation can translate into protection for a whole suite of other wetland-wildland dependent species. Protection of crane habitat features and needs can be the drivers for conservation programs and serve to assist prioritization of landscape conservation. The Greater Sandhill Crane is an "umbrella species," meaning its habitat conservation can result in many other species ultimately being protected.

*To read the article by Layser, "Homing Instinct: Sandhills' Return a Marvel to Behold," go here:*  
<https://mountainjournal.org/sandhill-cranes-another-expression-of-greater-yellowstone-biodiversity>

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## Environmental Issues:



*Prairie pothole wetlands in South Dakota. Photo by Jim Brandenburg/Minden Pictures*

**Editor:** *Most of what is covered in this bulletin concerns species that rely on wetlands for all or a good part of their life cycle. Many of the species are already endangered, or threatened, so their survival depends on the continued protection of that habitat. The recent ruling is a disappointing step backwards.*

### **Ruling limits the Clean Water Act leaving wetlands unprotected**

The majority of the nation's wetlands where many birds raise their young, congregate in winter, and rest during migration – and which filter out pollutants and buffer communities from flooding and storm surges – lost legal protections on 25 May 2023 in a Supreme Court ruling that significantly curtails the reach of the [Clean Water Act](#).

That 1972 law made it illegal to drain, fill, or pollute “waters of the United States” without a permit. The case, *Sackett v. Environmental Protection Agency*, involved defining which water bodies that phrase applies to. Disagreement has prevailed for decades, with environmentalists arguing for broad protections to safeguard water quality and ecosystems, while builders, manufacturers, and others contend that including more streams and wetlands drives up project costs and infringes on property rights.

In [the 5-4 majority opinion](#), conservative Justice Samuel Alito wrote that wetlands are covered by the law only if they have a “continuous surface connection” to larger water bodies that are clearly regulated by the Clean Water Act. It doesn't matter how connected the wetland is, if it doesn't stay wet on the surface it is no longer protected by the Clean Water Act.

Many wetlands that are now exempt from the Clean Water Act are protected only by state law, if they're protected at all, according to University of Virginia water law expert Leon Szeptycki. “The geographic footprint of the Clean Water Act, as it applies to wetlands, has been dramatically shrunk in a way that,

if you care at all about hydrology and aquatic ecology, is deeply troubling,” he says. “All these waters are profoundly connected, biologically and hydrologically.”

More than half of the original wetlands in the contiguous United States have been filled for development, drained for farming, or otherwise destroyed. Wetlands remove pollution from drinking water sources and act as sponges for water and carbon, increasingly important functions as climate change causes worsening floods in many communities. Swamps, marshes, prairie potholes, and other wetland types also are among the most important habitats for many species of birds and other wildlife. “This decision undermines Clean Water Act protections for many types of waterways that birds and people need, all while birds are telling us that more action is needed to protect their future,” said Julie Hill-Gabriel, Audubon’s vice president for water conservation. *To read the press release by Audubon go here:* <https://www.audubon.org/news/supreme-court-decision-threatens-waterways-birds-and-people-need>

“The Supreme Court’s disappointing decision in Sackett v. EPA will take our country backwards. It puts our Nation’s wetlands – and the rivers, streams, lakes, and ponds connected to them – at risk of pollution and destruction, jeopardizing the sources of clean water that millions of American families, farmers, and businesses rely on,” President Biden said in a statement.

*For those interested in reading the Supreme Court decision, go here:*

Supreme Court of the United States

SACKETT ET UX. v. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY ET AL.

No. 21–454. Argued October 3, 2022—Decided May 25, 2023

[https://www.supremecourt.gov/opinions/22pdf/21-454\\_4g15.pdf](https://www.supremecourt.gov/opinions/22pdf/21-454_4g15.pdf)

*And, to read more in the Audubon article ‘Devastating’ Supreme Court Decision Leaves Wetlands Unprotected, go here:*

<https://www.audubon.org/news/devastating-supreme-court-decision-leaves-wetlands-unprotected#:~:text=In%20the%205%2D4%20majority,by%20the%20Clean%20Water%20Act>

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## Canada:

### **Contested oilsands project on northern Alberta wetland reconsidered**

In September 2022 the Alberta Energy Regulator approved plans to mine a portion of the McClelland Lake Wetland Complex — a large and intact wetland once considered for environmental protection that lies partly within the company’s lease. The approval came after a two-decade regulatory history and the submission by Fort Hills of plans saying it could mine about half the wetland without affecting the



*Patterned fen, McClelland Lake Wetland Complex in the Fort Hills area, Alberta Canada. Photo by Jiri Rezac*

remainder. But in April 2023, just months after approval the regulator is now reconsidering the project after receiving a critical report presented by the Alberta Wilderness Association – an independent scientific analysis citing significant shortfalls in Fort Hills Energy’s plan to mine oilsands from the unique carbon-storing wetland.

The [McClelland Lake](#) watershed lies just east of the Athabasca River in northeastern Alberta about 90 km north of Fort McMurray in an area known as the Fort Hills. The McClelland Lake complex comprises two large, patterned fens — peat-producing wetlands featuring long strings of trees and shrubs



separated by narrow pools. Its 60 square kilometers host 12 sinkhole lakes, a rare landform created by the collapse of lower rock layers. Twenty rare or endangered plant species and communities live there. More than 200 migratory bird species, including the endangered Whooping Crane, use it as a stopover. It contains 11,000 years' worth of accumulated carbon-rich peat. First Nations have used it for centuries.

The [Alberta Wilderness Association](#) wants the entire area protected, noting it represents a tiny fraction of Alberta's 4,750 square kilometers of mineable oilsands.

The complex was excluded from development in 1996. That exclusion was lifted in 2002 for the part of the wetland within an oilsands lease then owned by True North Energy. The regulator approved True North's application to develop the site, despite warnings from an environmental impact assessment that mine dewatering and other disturbances would likely kill the fen's distinctive peat-forming mosses. The approval came with conditions that included developing a plan to protect the unmined portion of the wetland.

That plan, finally submitted in 2021, is what is now being reconsidered, although the project now belongs to Fort Hills Energy, majority-owned by Suncor Energy Inc. The plan proposes a complicated set of wells and pumps to control and monitor water levels and chemistry. But its centerpiece is a wall, nearly 14 km long and between 20 and 70 meters deep, which is intended to protect the unmined wetland while the rest is drained and excavated.

The company acknowledges plans for the wall are incomplete. "The water management design features are currently at a conceptual stage and engineering work to advance the features is ongoing," the plan says. "It is untested," said Lorna Harris, an ecologist specializing in peat with the Wildlife Conservation Society, who has worked at universities in Canada and England. "We do not have any certainty that it will work."



*Alberta's energy regulator is reconsidering Fort Hills Energy's plans to mine oilsands from a unique carbon-storing wetland after approving it last September. Photo by Joyce Hildebrand/Alberta Wilderness Association*

Harris, who wrote the report with Kelly Biagi of Brock University, said the plan from Fort Hills also threatens the wetland's delicate water chemistry. "The species in that fen on which the entire ecosystem depends, they depend on that chemistry. As soon as you change that, you will likely lose those species." Attempts by other oilsands producers to rebuild fens have evolved into different types of wetlands, Harris said, and it's not clear if those fens will produce peat and store carbon over the long term.

Currently McClelland Lake does both. The site is underlain by peat between two and eight metres deep. "That is deep peat," Harris said. "That is a lot of carbon." She said she has calculated that the entire McClelland complex stores the equivalent of between eight million and 35 million tons of carbon dioxide. The total amount of carbon dioxide sequestered in Alberta's carbon capture and storage programs since 2015 is 10.5 million tons.

She said in places such as Europe, fens are heavily protected for their uniqueness and carbon-storage ability. Mining even part of the McClelland Lake complex wouldn't be considered there. "I don't think this would be acceptable elsewhere."

*Conservation group opposes oilsands mining project on northern Alberta wetland:*

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/edmonton/alberta-fort-mcmurray-mcclelland-wetland-suncor-1.6711313>

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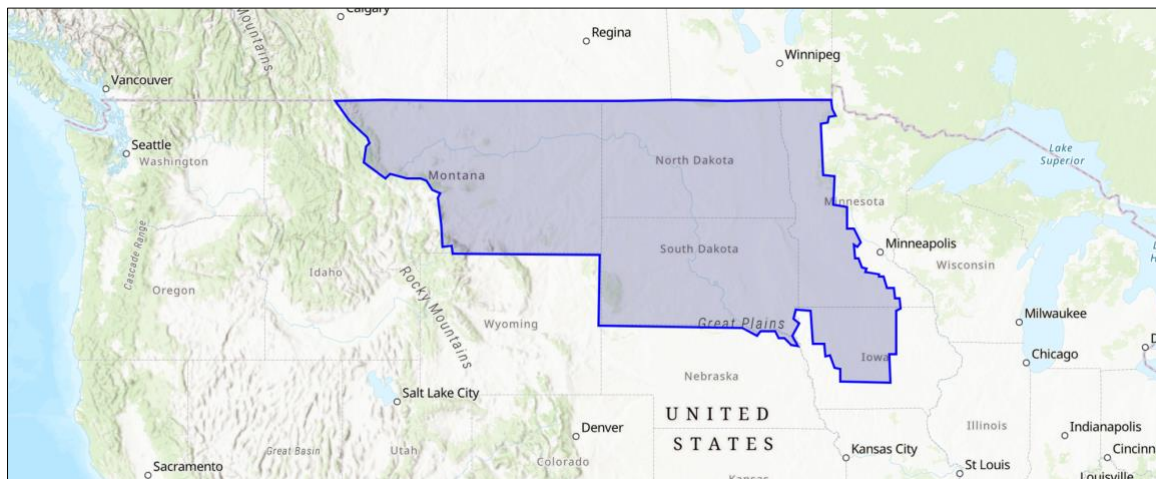
## Finding areas of compatibility between renewable energy development and wildlife habitat requirements

*Energy development and resource conservation can seem at odds with one another, but a recent study highlight how to minimize conflict and evaluate tradeoffs.*

Transitioning from reliance on carbon-based energy sources to renewable-energy sources as a means of mitigating climate change will require greater development of renewable energy facilities. Development of renewable energy is a priority for the Department of the Interior, but so is land and water conservation that ensures that natural resources are sustained for future generations. Some of the unintended consequences of energy facilities include wildlife habitat degradation leading to displacement of bird species and mortality to birds and bats.

A USGS-led study asked whether compatibility can be found between the two priorities of increasing renewable-energy capacity and conserving the Nation's lands and waters. Specifically, the study asked: "What is the amount of land available for building renewable-energy infrastructure while also considering the habitat requirements of bird species and protecting the best habitat for them?" This framework, a model developed in collaboration with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and WEST, Inc., allows the user to evaluate tradeoffs in the face of potential land scarcity owing to increased build-out of energy infrastructure and other human developments, against the need and desire to protect the Nation's resources.

"In summary, this USGS-led study illustrated how interested parties can quantify the land base available for development while also maximizing the protection of a natural resource by identifying those areas of overlap of focal species' highest-quality habitat. In this way, the total land base "removed" for species' protection is minimized. This exercise could be emulated for other species or other focal taxa. In addition, the model could be applied to the interests of different subsets of societal interest groups (for example, agricultural producers who want to identify the highest-producing cropland) so that one can demonstrate how much land base is available for future renewable energy development versus available for other societal land uses. This exercise illustrates tradeoffs and increasingly difficult decisions that society will have to make regarding how to use a shrinking land base."



Above graphic is the USGS study area. To read more about the USGS study, go here:

<https://www.usgs.gov/centers/northern-prairie-wildlife-research-center/news/finding-areas-compatibility-between>

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## Lawsuit launched to protect Gulf of Mexico wildlife from offshore drilling

The Center for Biological Diversity filed a formal notice on 11 May 2023 of its intent to sue the U.S. Interior Department for failing to adequately protect endangered Whooping Cranes, Kemp's Ridley Sea

Turtles, Manatees and other imperiled species from the dangers of offshore oil and gas extraction in the Gulf of Mexico.

The notice says the agency's Endangered Species Act analysis fails to properly consider or mitigate the risk of oil spills, bird collisions with offshore platforms, Manatee vessel strikes and climate change, among other things. It was sent to the Fish and Wildlife Service, the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, and the Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement.

"The Biden administration can't keep approving more drilling and ignoring offshore oil extraction's huge threats to these endangered animals," said Kristen Monsell, oceans legal director at the Center. "Birds, sea turtles, manatees and many other species shouldn't have to suffer and die because the oil industry is fouling the Gulf of Mexico. A full science-based analysis will show that offshore drilling is just too risky to wildlife and our climate and should be phased out."

*To read the full 11 May 2023 press release, go here:*

<https://biologicaldiversity.org/w/news/press-releases/lawsuit-launched-to-protect-gulf-of-mexico-wildlife-from-offshore-drilling-2023-05-11/>

**Contact:** Kristen Monsell, (914) 806-3467, [kmonsell@biologicaldiversity.org](mailto:kmonsell@biologicaldiversity.org)

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## Recovering America's Wildlife Act

On 30 March 2023, U.S. senators reintroduced the Recovering America's Wildlife Act (RAWA) that had failed in the final days of the 117<sup>th</sup> Congress in December 2022 despite strong bipartisan support.

According to the Cornell Lab of Ornithology Center for Avian Population Studies Senior Director Amanda Rodewald if passed into law, that dedicated funding to boost the State and Tribal Wildlife Grants program would be the biggest federal investment in wildlife habitat in over a century. More than 1,600 species are already listed under the Endangered Species Act (ESA), another 150 are presumed extinct and state fish and wildlife agencies have identified more than 12,000 that need conservation help now.

State wildlife agencies are in a unique position to help avert this trend and protect America's biodiversity. Every 10 years, state wildlife agencies collaboratively assess how wildlife in their respective states are doing. They then make lists of species that are in decline and in need of proactive conservation attention.

The \$1.397 billion bill would fund local and state efforts to help wildlife at risk and to prevent wildlife from becoming endangered. It will also help towards recovery of species that are already endangered. The money will be used for on-the-ground conservation efforts such as conserving and restoring habitats, fighting invasive species, reintroducing native species, and tackling emerging diseases.

Approximately \$1.3 billion from the bill would be spent by state fish and wildlife agencies, in partnership with state-based conservation entities. The state agencies will use the money to implement their congressionally mandated state wildlife action plans. These detailed plans incorporate science and public input and are approved by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

The remaining \$97.5 million will go toward tribal wildlife conservation efforts.

"Our grandparents' generation knew that wildlife conservation is a long game, and they established the Duck Stamp and the Pittman-Robertson Act to create a lasting legacy," wrote Amanda Rodewald [in an op-ed coauthored with Ducks Unlimited Chief Conservation Officer Karen Waldrop](#) that was published in *The Hill* newspaper in early December 2022. "The opportunity to safeguard ducks and all wildlife is tremendous – to pass RAWA and carry forward that deep and abiding commitment to abundant wildlife as an American birthright, held in the public trust, that should be sustained forever."

*Recovering America's Wildlife, The Nature Conservancy, 22 February 2021/Updated 31 April 2023*  
<https://www.nature.org/en-us/about-us/who-we-are/how-we-work/policy/recovering-americas-wildlife/>



*"Recovering America's Wildlife Act Fails in Final Days Of 117th Congress" By Gustave Axelson  
April 5, 2023 The Cornell Lab, [allaboutbirds.org](http://allaboutbirds.org), go here:  
<https://www.allaboutbirds.org/news/recovering-americas-wildlife-act-fails-in-final-days-of-117th-congress/#>*

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## Science News:



### Registration, Student Travel Awards, and Call for Abstracts **OPEN** – 16th North American Crane Workshop

Join us for the [16th North American Crane Workshop](#) to be held in Baraboo, Wisconsin 23-26 October 2023. The theme of this year's workshop will be "50 Years of Crane Conservation: Challenges and Opportunities." We look forward to hearing from you about all aspects of crane conservation and research.

Register for the meeting [HERE](#). Full standard registration is \$300; student and spouse discounted registration is \$150. This is the same great price – and excellent value – for our 2017 and 2020 workshops! Registration entitles you to our welcome icebreaker event, two days of scientific sessions with lunch and snacks included access to our silent auction, and a ticket and transportation to the field trip day (lunch included) and banquet. Lodging information for several nearby hotels, motels, and B&Bs is available on the [workshop page](#). Make your discounted reservations early!

The North American Crane Working Group is happy to provide funding for several student travel awards: up to four \$500 awards are available. These awards aim to support and encourage the participation of students conducting crane research, whether at the graduate or undergraduate level.

To be eligible, the student must:

1. Be enrolled full-time in a BS, MS, or PhD program.
2. Presenting at the workshop. The presenter need not be the lead author of the work, but priority will be given to those presenting their own research.
3. Submit a cover letter and a personal statement. The cover letter must include full name, institutional affiliation, current academic standing, contact information, major advisor's name, and title of the work being presented. The statement should indicate the student's professional goals and interests in crane research.

Please submit a (1) copy of your abstract, (2) cover letter, and (3) personal statement as a single PDF file (maximum length of 3 pages) to Barry Hartup ([hartup@savingcranes.org](mailto:hartup@savingcranes.org)). The **application deadline is August 1, 2023**. Applicants do not need to be current members of NACWG. Award winners will be notified by September 1, 2023.

The abstract submission portal **REMAINS OPEN until 1 July, 2023** (*submit abstracts [HERE](#)*). Please provide a concise statement of the topic or issue to be discussed and a summary of the major findings and conclusions. Abstracts are limited to 250 words or less. Your abstract will be reproduced in the Workshop program; poorly written abstracts may be rejected. Proceedings, composed of abstracts and papers, will be published following the Workshop. To view abstracts of recent Proceedings, click [here](#). Please contact NACW16 coordinator Barry Hartup with questions or difficulties with submissions ([hartup@savingcranes.org](mailto:hartup@savingcranes.org)). Full oral presentations will be an opportunity to provide greater detail about your work, with time to describe the research process, your findings, and their implications. They will be 12-15 minutes long with 3-5 minutes for questions. The final time allotted for full presentations will be finalized after abstract submission and will be communicated to presenters.

*Please spread the word – and we look forward to seeing you in Baraboo soon!*

**Barry Hartup, D.V.M., M.Sc., Ph.D.**, NACW16 Conference Coordinator, NACWG Treasurer  
International Crane Foundation / E11376 Shady Lane Rd. Baraboo, WI 53913 USA

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## **Proceedings of the North American Crane Workshop – Articles Available for Download**

The North American Crane Working Group provides free and open access to articles in Proceedings of the North American Crane Workshop. No additional permission is required for unrestricted use, distribution, or reproduction in any medium, provided that the original work here is properly cited.

Proceedings may include articles in addition to those presented at a Workshop. [Complete Proceedings](#) are also available for download or purchase.

[Click here to download individual articles in recent Proceedings.](#)

*A searchable collection of the Proceedings including individual articles and abstracts for downloading is also available at: [DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln](#)*

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## **EPA cancels Avipel® registration – limiting effective deterrents to crop damage**

In early May 2023 Arkion Life Science announced it would cancel the registration for their dry corn seed treatment, Avipel®, upon a request from the Environmental Protection Agency.

The product was promoted as the first scientifically-proven seed treatment to stop birds, including blackbirds, crows, pheasants, and most notably – Sandhill Cranes – from eating just-planted corn seed. Made from an organic chemical found in plants, Avipel®, is promoted as a nonlethal, nontoxic and non-systemic corn seed treatment available in liquid or dry form. According to Arkion, Avipel's® active ingredient, 9, 10-anthraquinone (AQ), is an organic chemical found in multiple plant species, including aloe vera, rhubarb, greater plantains and sennas. While being a particularly effective agent for repelling birds, AQ is non-lethal to birds.

According to Theresa Sisung, industry relations specialist for Michigan Farm Bureau, the dry formula served as one of the only options to stop Sandhill Cranes from picking seed corn out of the ground. Avipel® dry treatment was labeled for 2 ounces per 25 pounds of seed and could easily be applied and mixed with the seed at the planter hopper. “Unfortunately, losing the dry formulation of Avipel® really limits farmers’ ability to protect their corn crop from Sandhill-Crane damage. They can attempt to scare the birds away from their fields, but that is not overly effective, or if they can prove damage, they can apply for depredation permits from U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services.”

“EPA has concerns about applicator risk,” Sisung added. “Arkion plans to submit data to EPA within the next 3 to 4 months and then restart the registration process. They anticipate that the earliest EPA would decide on a new registration would be late 2024.”

### **Laser repellants?**

With the current absence of Avipel® as a crane deterrent, farmers must look for other options. An option may be the [AVIX Autonomic Mark II](#) (through Bird Control Group/[birdcontrolgroup.org](#)) – a laser “repellant” that can be mounted on a pole or pedestal. It is used to deter birds in vineyards, berry farms, apple orchards, etc. and could be used to deter cranes from corn seed. A single unit can move in 16 different patterns (not predictable to birds), 150 waypoints and cover up to 40 acres of a field. Two lasers on the same field could increase that coverage to about 100 acres. A single laser unit costs around \$16,000 to \$18,000, which includes installation and program training. Currently, the technology is used in 90 countries around the world. Birds affected include Sandhill Cranes, Crows, Ravens, and Osprey.

*To read more about the [AVIX Autonomic Mark II](#), go here:*

<https://www.michiganfarmnews.com/life-after-avipel-new-equipment-another-option-for-crop-growers>

*To read the 5 May 2023 about the EPA and Avipel®, go here:*

<https://www.michiganfarmnews.com/epa-cancels-avipel-registration-options-limited-to-stop-sandhill-crane-damage>

To read the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Avipel® Liquid Corn Seed Treatment registration / EPA Reg. Number: 69969-6 ; Date of Issuance: 3/19/21, go here:

[https://www3.epa.gov/pesticides/chem\\_search/ppls/069969-00006-20210319.pdf](https://www3.epa.gov/pesticides/chem_search/ppls/069969-00006-20210319.pdf)

On the basis of information furnished by the registrant, the above named pesticide is hereby registered under the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide and Rodenticide Act.



**Editor:** From 2001-2016, [Operation Migration \(OM\)](#) a member of the then Whooping Crane Eastern Partnership (WCEP), used ultralights to lead cohorts of captive-reared juvenile Whooping Cranes from Wisconsin to their wintering grounds in Florida to teach them the migration route. The program's end goal was to establish an experimental Eastern Migratory Population of Whooping Cranes as a backup to the wild Aransas-Wood Buffalo Population. The ultralights, fitted with a megaphone sound system, broadcast the "purr" call (thanks in part to Dr. Bernhard Wessling's recordings) adults use to encourage young and keep contact with others in the flock. Used during training – an ultralight taxied with the recording playing to teach the colts to follow it – then when the juveniles fledged, they continued to follow the ultralights and the contact call while in flight along the migration route.

## Bioacoustic crane research aids in eastern Whooping Crane reintroduction

Trained as a chemist, Dr Bernhard Wessling's worked on chemical product and process development, research in colloid chemistry and physics as well as non-equilibrium thermodynamics. For decades, he has been actively involved in environmental, nature and species protection on a voluntary basis and conducted behavioral research on wild cranes for many years. In 1996, Wessling's focus changed to crane vocalization research – monitoring Eurasian cranes and then Whooping Cranes by "voiceprinting." With this new bioacoustic method, the author contributed decisively to one of the world's largest and most complex species recovery projects – Whooping Cranes (the world's most endangered crane species). Considered as a personal achievement was his contribution of clean and clear recordings of wild Whooping Cranes which proved useful for the raising and flight training of Whooping Crane chicks hatched in captivity as they learned to follow ultralight airplanes from Wisconsin to Florida.

Wessling worked together with Operation Migration (OM) founders, Bill Lishman and Joe Duff (CEO), starting with a U.S. conference in 1998, where he presented his first sonographical work. Following that he was invited to join the Whooping Crane Recovery project. In 1999 he made his first expedition to Aransas and recorded wild Whooping Crane calls and other vocalizations: a) beginning the monitoring program; b) for use in the WCEP ultralight reintroduction project.

To learn more and listen to recordings of a variety of Whooping Crane vocalizations, and other crane species, go here:

<https://www.bernhard-wessling.com/crane-research-and-whooping-crane-reintroduction>

For photos of the hardware installation on the ultralights, go here:

2000-04-21&22: Besuch bei Bill Lishman, "Vater der Gänse": Montage und Test eines Megaphons an ULF für Operation Migration (Schreikraniche von Wisconsin nach Florida führen)

<https://photos.google.com/share/AF1QipPm3K2JvXNNABDqlde8kfyjoemGK9w73UHJzf2SsljzeHVUJ4e4343kbtwyvErr-A?pli=1&key=YWhBYWlkZTkYMVVvZTZfRTIMSTd2d004aG9wQmRn>





Above left: In April 2000, Wessling helped install the first set of hardware on an ultralight airplane. Operation Migration's Bill Lishman (left) and Joe Duff (right) tested the functions which would be used in the September 2000 inaugural project of leading Sandhill Cranes in migration. Above right: Colts learn to follow an ultralight broadcasting contact vocalizations. Above: Now flighted, juvenile Whooping Cranes follow an ultralight in preparation for their first migration south.

## Individual recognition of cranes, monitoring and vocal communication analysis by sonagraphy: Development and broad application of a powerful bioacoustics technique

Bernhard Wessling

Presentation at the European Crane Conference, 3-7 December 2018 (Arjuzanx, France)

**Abstract:** A sonagraphical method for individual recognition of crane pairs and crane individuals for long-term monitoring and gathering of individual life history facts without the need to capture and band them will be described. Results in various regions (for *grus grus* over a period of 10 years) and with other crane (in Asia and North America) species will be shown. In addition to the monitoring capability, the method opens the possibility of analysis cranes' vocal communication and regionally specific "language" structures. The method was practically applied also in projects for the protection of endangered crane species, predominantly the Whooping Crane, and here in the raising and training of captive reared cranes for release into the wild and ultralight airplane-led migration.

"...On behalf of the Whooping Crane Recovery Team (WCRT, USA / Canada), I have taken recordings of calls of wild *grus americana* pairs in 2 winters in the wintering area; later, with the help of recordings made by 3 WCRT members in the breeding and in the wintering area of the last wild and self-reproducing population of the very endangered Whooping Crane (*grus americana*), in total 9 seasons (5 spring/summer and 4 winter seasons) had been analyzed. Both areas are vast and hard to access, especially the breeding grounds in WBNP, where each crane

territory has to be accessed by helicopter. The Whooping Crane territories are about 4 times larger than a Common Cranes' territory, and WC [Whooping Crane] defend territories also while hibernating [on their wintering grounds].

In my first expedition to the wintering grounds in the Aransas National Wildlife refuge in Texas in 1999, 27 pairs have been characterised with the "vocal fingerprint" (voiceprint). During the 2nd expedition to Aransas, I recorded 250 calls, identified 32 pairs, 21 of which I had known from the previous winter....

During in total 9 seasons, partially with the help of other people, 918 calls had been recorded and analyzed, belonging to 80 different pairs. These were 85% of all breeding pairs which had been identified. 11 of the pairs found in WBNP have been identified in ANWR as well...."

*To read the full text article, or to download a full-text PDF, go here:*

[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/328676275\\_Individual\\_recognition\\_of\\_cranes\\_monitoring\\_and\\_vocal\\_communication\\_analysis\\_by\\_sonagraphy\\_Development\\_and\\_broad\\_application\\_of\\_a\\_powerful\\_bi\\_oacoustic\\_technique](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/328676275_Individual_recognition_of_cranes_monitoring_and_vocal_communication_analysis_by_sonagraphy_Development_and_broad_application_of_a_powerful_bi_oacoustic_technique)

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## **Whooping Crane Recovery Activities / October 2004-March 2005**

Tom **Stehn**  
USFWS Whooping Crane Coordinator  
(361) 286-3559, Ext. 221  
Tom\_Stehn@fws.gov

### **CRANE VOCALIZATIONS**

Dr. Bernhard Wessling reported to the Recovery Team on his analysis of whooping crane vocalizations recorded in recent years by Brian Johns and Lea Craig-Moore in Wood Buffalo and by Colleen Satyshur and Nick Anich at Aransas. Dr. Wessling has matched the summer and winter calls of 21 pairs. He is continuing to work on possible genetic relationships of vocalizations, comparing genetic kinship with similarity of voice prints.

*To read the full-text report, or download a full-text PDF, go here:*

<https://ecos.fws.gov/ServCat/DownloadFile/100074?Reference=60070>

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## **Whooping Crane Recovery Activities / March-August 2001**

Tom **Stehn**  
USFWS Whooping Crane Coordinator

### **HIGHLIGHTS**

The return of a migratory flock of Whooping Cranes to eastern North America took a major step forward with the publication of the final rule allowing for establishment of an experimental nonessential population of Whooping Cranes in 20 eastern states. Ten birds were shipped to Wisconsin in July to begin ultralight training for a migration to Florida.

In Wood Buffalo National Park, a record 52 nesting pairs hatched 44 chicks, but only 14 fledged. In captivity, production totaled 29 chicks at four breeding centers....

...“German crane vocalization expert Dr. Bernhard Wessling completed analysis of calls he recorded at Aransas last winter and will compare them with calls from 12 pairs recorded by Brian Johns in Wood Buffalo in August. Dr. Wessling has recorded about 40 different pairs at Aransas. Results look promising to match pairs on their summer and winter territories without having to capture and band the birds. Observations in the fall in Saskatchewan and at Aransas indicated the "Lobstick" male had lost a metal band, leaving this 23-year-old crane unbanded. Dr. Wessling's recorded calls from the Lobstick pair the past two winters proved that the Lobstick male was still present.”...

To read the full-text article, or to download a full-text PDF, go here:  
[https://www.nacwg.org/wcra\\_mar\\_aug\\_2001.pdf](https://www.nacwg.org/wcra_mar_aug_2001.pdf)

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## Whooping Crane Monitoring ANWR WBNP 99-04

Bernhard Wessling

July 2013, BWITB, Ormecon Pvt. Ltd.

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

[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/247471788\\_Whooping\\_Crane\\_monitoring\\_ANWR\\_WBNP\\_99-04](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/247471788_Whooping_Crane_monitoring_ANWR_WBNP_99-04)

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## Whooping Cranes; Acoustic (Voiceprint) Monitoring of the wild WBNP/ANWR population

Dr. Bernhard Wessling, Germany

July 2013, BWITB, Ormecon Pvt. Ltd.

“...Some individual stories

- Lobstick: 1999 my first recording of the pair (banded male); 21 years old; summer 2000: a male with no band; unknown whether he was still alive (and lost the band) or new male in the territory
- my second recording in winter 00/01 it was THE LOBSTICK MALE (lost band) and his mate!
- Lea's/Colleen's recs in summer 03 + winter 03/04 – male is now 26 years old, the most successful male of all the Whoopers

We can follow individuals and pairs over the years and learn about their life history.”

*“My thanks go to Brian Johns, Colleen Satyshur, and Lea Craig-Moore for recording in WBNP (since 2000) and ANWR (since 2002-03).” – Bernhard Wessling*

*“Thanks to George Archibald, who dragged me into the Whooping Crane Recovery Project. Thanks to ICF, Tom Stehn, Brian Johns, Operation Migration (Joe Duff) and many others.” – Bernhard Wessling*

Material from a presentation given in a Whooping Crane recovery program conference in summer 2004; To read and for additional data tables, go here: [Whooping Crane pair recognition overview 1999 – 2004](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/247491415_Whooping_Crane_pair_recognition_overview_1999-2004)  
[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/247491415\\_Whooping\\_Crane\\_pair\\_recognition\\_overview\\_1999-2004](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/247491415_Whooping_Crane_pair_recognition_overview_1999-2004)

Or here:

[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/247471788\\_Whooping\\_Crane\\_monitoring\\_ANWR\\_WBNP\\_99-04](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/247471788_Whooping_Crane_monitoring_ANWR_WBNP_99-04)



Left: The far-left image shows the physical attributes that allow Whooping Cranes to produce their impressive vocalizations. The zoological taxidermist Andreas Vollprecht sent Wessling these two photos: on the left the prepared sternum of an adult crane with the voice-producing trachea – more precisely, as he wrote Wessling: “intrasternal tracheal loop” – and, on the right a model-like replica as a trumpet. The trumpet, he wrote, “cannot please the cranes, but one can produce natural tones on it as with the hunting or post horn.”



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### [The Call of the Cranes – Expeditions into a mysterious world](#)

A narrative popular science book about Dr. Bernhard Wessling's crane research using a new bioacoustic method – with extremely surprising results about the cranes' dynamic relationships, intelligence, migration culture and more. *The Call of the Cranes* highlights his fieldwork in Europe, Asia and North America. For an introduction to the book video, go here: <https://youtu.be/0gMmcjPfwBw>

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## **The International Crane Foundation's Webinars**

You are invited to our monthly From the Field Webinar series on Thursdays beginning at 11 a.m. Central Time. [Click here](#) to view the library of past webinars.

### *Gulf Coast Whooping Cranes – A Conservation Story That Is Still Being Written.*

Carter Crouch, Ph.D., the Director of Gulf Coast Programs, shared updates in his May 4 presentation on Whooping Cranes along the Gulf Coast and the International Crane Foundation's work in Texas and Louisiana to protect this endangered species. The webinar was sponsored by Taddy McAllister.

To learn more about sponsoring a webinar, please contact [Kate Fitzwilliams](#) at 608-617-6002. <https://savingcranes.org/webinars/>

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## **EASTERN CRANE BULLETIN**

### **Celebrating our 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary!**

In 2013, while Tennessee was going through the Federal process of initiating a state hunting season on Sandhill Cranes, the idea of a newsletter with a focus on information pertaining to both Sandhills and Whooping Cranes in the eastern U.S. was bandied about by opponents of the proposed season.

From those early conversations came the *Eastern Crane Bulletin*. Ten years later, the scope of the bulletin has grown to cover all North America and Canada – for cranes know no boundaries, and what impacts one can potentially impact all. We hope that readers have found the *Eastern Crane Bulletin* a source of information from ecosystems to environmental issues affecting cranes, to the incredibly vast body of scientific research that has been done and continues to be done in the study of cranes. If the bulletin has been a steppingstone in learning more about cranes, then we have done well. What one knows and cares about is worth protecting. Thanks to all!

To take a look back to where we began, the inaugural *Eastern Crane Bulletin* / June 2013, go here: <https://kyc4sandhillcranes.files.wordpress.com/2014/02/eastern-crane-bulletin-june-2013.pdf>

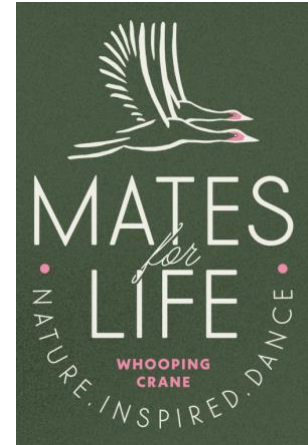
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## The Art of Cranes

### "Mates for Life" dance

ICF is thrilled to share the new trailer for the performing arts series 'Mates for Life' created by the talented Chicago-based team at Big Foot Media. The series' debut film highlights the Whooping Crane, featuring dance performances by The Joffrey Ballet while promoting a powerful message of conservation that beautifully blends art with nature. 'Mates for Life' aims to create a unique performing arts film series motivated by the natural phenomenon of species that mate for life, in this first film, the Whooping Crane. This intimate interpretation inspired by avian movement aims to engage both supporters of conservation and the arts, resulting in support to further their causes. This project benefits the International Crane Foundation.

To view the "Mates for Life" trailer, go here: <https://vimeo.com/827701989>  
To learn more about the series, go here: <https://www.matesforlife.co>



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### Fine-Feathered Etchings

Surrounded by ink-soaked sponges spilling from a tower of tin pails, scraps of paper smudged with color tests, and scribbled notes tacked to the walls, [John Costin](#) runs his thumb over a thin sheet of copper. Measuring thirty-one and a half by forty-six inches, the sheet serves as the key plate for "Verdant Landscape," an etching of Sandhill Cranes he's worked on for more than six months in his Tampa studio, formerly an early-1900s dry goods store.



*Costin "pulling" a print of "Verdant Landscape" from its copper plate to check details during the printing process.*

Trained as an electrical engineer but always fascinated by art – especially drawings and paintings, he enrolled in classes at the University of South Florida in 1979. There, he learned about printmaking, a medium that traces its roots to about the second century in China, and the basics of etchings, first produced in Germany around 1500.

"This is a plate that I generally do first, and it has all the detail on it," Costin explains. "I've etched these plates I don't know how many times, and I still haven't finished. I dream about this bird."

Turning back to the Sandhill Cranes, Costin explains his process: After choosing a subject, he sketches the bird –first in pencil, then in watercolor – and from that creates a small, detailed drawing. Once satisfied with the depiction, he turns it into a life-size version, and then redraws the detailed rendering onto a copper key plate using a pencil. Next, he etches the rendering into the surface using ferric chloride acid.

Once Costin finishes the detailing on the key plate, he transfers the image to another clean plate and begins applying color by etching areas such as the sky or trees with their respective hues. He applies these pigments *à la poupée* – by adding more than one color to the same plate for printing traditionally using

ball-shaped wads of cloth. Because copper oxidizes and muddies colors, he achieves his vibrant hues by facing his plates with a sheet of paper-thin steel.

Problem-solving like that also comes into play during the color printing process. When paper goes through the press, it stretches. Costin takes that stretching into account by working with multiple plates of different sizes to ensure everything aligns on its way to a final image. Florida's humidity can also impact the prints' registrations.

Brad Massey, the curator of public history at the Tampa Bay History Center, built a new exhibition there inspired by Costin's work. "Etched Feathers: A History of the Printed Bird" that runs through October 15, 2023. <https://gardenandgun.com/articles/fine-feathered-etchings/>



Above left: Heather Henson with puppets in workshop; Center: Henson with Whooping Crane puppet and "Hope" the International Crane Foundation's Whooping Crane mascot; Right: A scene from *Ajijaak on Turtle Island*

## Puppet Makers turn to creating Whooping Cranes

Heather Henson is a former board member of the [International Crane Foundation](#), whose mission is to conserve cranes and the flyways and watersheds they depend on. She discovered Whooping Cranes when she had an intern-level job at a zoo in Providence, R.I.

She is also the daughter of Jim and Jane Henson – best known for their muppets that brought the popular educational children's show, *Sesame Street*, to life. At Jim Henson's Creature Shop in Queens, New York with her guidance, puppet makers have crafted characters including Whooping Cranes, a bison and coyote for the musical *Ajijaak on Turtle Island*. The world premiere presentation of *Ajijaak on Turtle Island* was hosted at La MaMa in NYC, February 8-18, 2018.

The musical features 17 puppets, five of them Whooping Cranes, and an ensemble of Native American performers from seven tribes or nations – including the Qawalangin Tribe, Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe, Kiowa, Osage Nation, Haliwa-Saponi Nation, Acoma Pueblo and Lakota. Henson co-directed the show with the Grammy-winning composer Ty Defoe, a member of the Oneida/Ojibwe.



*Ajijaak on Turtle Island* tells the story of Ajijaak, a young Whooping Crane.

Separated from her family in a Tar Sands fire that awakened the monstrous Mishibizhiw, Ajijaak must make her first migration from Wood Buffalo, Canada, down to the Gulf Coast on her own, finding her voice and a family through the interconnectedness of all of creation.

*Ajijaak on Turtle Island* brings communities together through puppetry, music, traditional dances, animations, and kites. Ajijaak's story puts forward visions from Indigenous communities, celebrating the symbiotic relationship between cranes and Native American/Indigenous peoples, and inspiring the next generation of storytellers, change-makers, and eco-champions. To learn more about *Ajijaak on Turtle Island*, for 2023 tour dates and cities, and tickets, go here: <https://ajijaak.com/about-the-show> Or for information about IBEX Puppetry, go here: <https://www.ibexpuppetry.com>



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## Yampa Valley Crane Festival poster contest

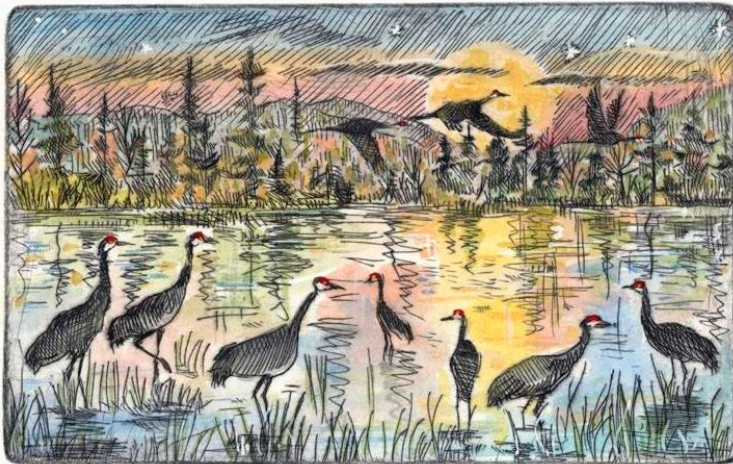
Children ages 10-15 are invited to submit posters for the annual Yampa Valley Crane Festival Poster Contest sponsored by the [Colorado Crane Conservation Coalition](https://coloradocranes.org/). Submissions must be original works and accurately reflect the physical characteristics, behavior and habitat of the Rocky Mountain Greater Sandhill Cranes. Submissions can be a painting, photo, digital artwork, drawing or any medium that can be scanned into a computer and emailed as an attachment.

Those interested can visit [ColoradoCranes.org](https://coloradocranes.org/) for information about Rocky Mountain Greater Sandhill Cranes, crane FAQs, the poster contest, and details about the Yampa Valley Crane Festival. The poster entry deadline is July 15. The Colorado Crane Conservation Coalition will announce the winner on its website and Facebook page by August 1, 2023.

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## Musician finds inspiration in sedge of Sandhill Cranes

Fingerstyle acoustic guitarist, composer, recording artist, and Traverse City, Michigan local James Filkins has recently completed his third album after a 10-year recording hiatus. Having signed on with [Sardinian-based label Raighes Factory](https://raighesfactory.com/), he's excited to share "Cranes in the Moonlight" with listeners.



When home, Filkins is known to paddleboard out on Bass Lake to get as close as possible to groups of cranes. On one evening after observing the socializing and mating rituals of Sandhill Cranes by the light of a full moon he was inspired to write the tune "Cranes in the Moonlight." It is included on his new album.

To listen to the tune, go here:  
<https://youtu.be/-jWEsBV9dHY>

*"Cranes in the Moonlight" album cover art – a drypoint engraving with watercolor – by Lower Michigan artist Glenn Wolff*

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## "Whooping Cranes over salt marshes" jigsaw puzzle

Billy Hassell is a Texas based artist with a focus on nature, conservation, and the environment. He produces oil paintings, color lithographs and watercolors and exhibits in galleries in Texas, Missouri, and Colorado.

To try your hand at working the puzzle, go here:  
<https://www.jigidi.com/solve/r4mh770i/whooping-cranes-over-salt-marshes/>



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## Upcoming Events:

### **An Evening with the Cranes**

Date: Saturday June 24, 2023

Time: 5:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.

Location: International Crane Foundation / E11376 Shady Lane Road / Baraboo, WI 53913

You are invited to *An Evening with the Cranes*! Delight in the beauty of cranes after hours and support the International Crane Foundation! Enjoy delicious food and sample craft beer and wine while strolling the grounds at our headquarters. Meet our international program leaders that work to save cranes in North America, Africa and Asia! [Purchase tickets here](#).

For details about the celebration, go here: <https://savingcranes.org/ewtc>

### **Annual Tanana Valley Sandhill Crane Festival**

Tanana Valley Alaska

Dates: August 18 –August 20, 2023

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

Celebrate the fall migration as thousands of Sandhill Cranes begin their journey south for the winter. The Tanana Valley Sandhill Crane Festival is held the 3rd weekend of August, and features internationally renowned speakers, artists, and guides. Activities and workshops are offered for all ages, which include guided walks, birdwatching, photography, falconry, crane calling, and many other related activities with ample opportunities for observing cranes and other fall migrants.

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

<https://friendsofcreamersfield.org> or Friends of Creamer's Field: 907-978-8457

*Or here:* <https://friendsofcreamersfield.org/tanana-valley-sandhill-crane-festival/>

### **Yampa Valley Crane Festival**

Dates: Thursday, August 31 – Sunday, September 3, 2023

Location: Steamboat Springs, Hayden, and Craig 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.

Colorado Crane Conservation Coalition, Inc. presents the annual Yampa Valley Crane Festival every fall. The festival occurs during fall staging – when cranes gather in large numbers to feed and gain energy for their migration south. The festival is held in beautiful Northwest Colorado with events in Steamboat Springs, Hayden, and Craig. The festival features guided crane-viewings, bird and nature walks, expert speakers, films, crane and bird art, children and family activities, and more!

This year's keynote speaker is Rich Beilfuss, President and CEO of the International Crane Foundation.

*Stay tuned for more information about our 2023 festival. The full schedule will be posted on the website by July 1<sup>st</sup>, and registration begins July 15th. [coloradocranes.org](http://coloradocranes.org)*

### **International Crane Foundation Member Appreciation Day and 50th Anniversary Celebration**

Date: Saturday September 16, 2023

Time: 9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

Location: International Crane Foundation / E11376 Shady Lane Road / Baraboo, WI 53913

Come home to the International Crane Foundation in Baraboo, Wisconsin, to celebrate 50 years of saving cranes! Begin the celebration with [Member Appreciation Day](#) at our headquarters, followed by an

inspirational evening benefit hosted by our Co-founder George Archibald and President and CEO Rich Beilfuss at the Kalahari Resorts and Conventions.

Register for the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration here: <https://savingcranes.org/flytogether/#registration>

Learn more about both celebrations here: <https://savingcranes.org/flytogether/>

Not a member? It is never too late – [Join the flock today](#).

### **Annual Greater Yellowstone Crane Festival**

Dates: September 20 - September 23, 2023

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.

Protection of crane habitat features and needs can be the drivers for conservation programs and serve to assist prioritization of landscape conservation. The Greater Sandhill Crane is an “umbrella species,” meaning its habitat conservation can result in many other species ultimately being protected.

For more information go to: [www.tetonlandtrust.org](http://www.tetonlandtrust.org)

### **Great Midwest Crane Fest**

Dates: Friday November 10 - Saturday November 11, 2023

[https://savingcranes.org/event/great-midwest-crane-fest-celebrating-community-and-conservation/?utm\\_source=newsletter&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=feb\\_2023\\_contactcall](https://savingcranes.org/event/great-midwest-crane-fest-celebrating-community-and-conservation/?utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=feb_2023_contactcall)

To learn more about the 2022 first annual Great Midwest Crane Fest – a taste of what is to come this year, go here: <https://greatmidwestcranefest.org>

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The Eastern Crane Bulletin is issued quarterly (March, June, September, and December).  
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