



# EASTERN CRANE BULLETIN

## Eastern Crane Bulletin - December 2013

*The Eastern Crane E-bulletin is being distributed to those interested in cranes in general, and specifically, the Eastern Populations of Sandhill and Whooping Cranes, as well as the continuing work for the protection of these birds and their habitats.*

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### International Crane Foundation (ICF) Turns 40!

Hundreds attended the International Crane Foundation 40th birthday gala in Milwaukee. The event was both a celebration of ICF's accomplishments, and a reminder that ICF's work, both internationally and at home, on behalf of cranes and their habitats remains as vital today as it has ever been. Congratulations, ICF, on 40 years of conservation leadership!

*"Every single one of us makes a difference every single day, and we have a choice about what kind of difference we make."* – Dr. Jane Goodall, from her speech at the gala dinner

Over the past 40 years, ICF has developed unique collaborations and led effective community-based conservation programs, important research projects and innovative captive breeding and reintroduction efforts. These efforts have inspired international cooperation, helped improve livelihoods for people around the world, and led to the protection of millions of acres of wetlands and grasslands on the five continents where cranes live. (*from [savingcranes.org](http://savingcranes.org)*)

For more information about ICF – to read about its work and the difference it makes, to get involved, or just to sign up for its free email newsletter, click here:

<http://www.savingcranes.org/about-icf.html>

For an excellent, exclusive interview by *BirdWatching* magazine with Dr. George Archibald, co-founder of the International Crane Foundation (ICF), in which the effects of wind farms near Whooping Crane migration routes and roosting sites, ongoing water issues for the Aransas, TX population of Whooping Cranes and Sandhill Crane hunting in the eastern U.S. are discussed, click here:

<http://www.birdwatchingdaily.com/blog/2013/10/09/icf-co-founder-george-archibald-discusses-cranes-wind-power-hunting-and-a-bird-named-tex/>

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### Endangered Whooping Cranes migrate south

Although the young Whooping Cranes of Class of 2013 and the ultralights are currently grounded in Hardin County, TN, due to inclement weather across the southeast states, Alabama residents may soon have the opportunity to see them as they continue their annual migration south. In addition to sightings of the Florida-bound juveniles, winter provides a perfect opportunity to see Whooping Cranes in Alabama. Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge near Decatur hosts about 15 whooping cranes each winter, including nine birds from the Operation Migration Class of 2011.

Operation Migration volunteers maintain a daily blog about the cranes' progress throughout the fall migration ([operationmigration.org/InTheField](http://operationmigration.org/InTheField)). They also provide viewing locations along the route



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to see these birds following the planes at several locations in Alabama, including Franklin and Chilton counties.

For a list of migration flyover departure viewing locations, click here:  
<http://operationmigration.org/FLYOVERS2013.pdf>

For a map of the entire ultralight-guided migration route, click here:  
[http://operationmigration.org/migration\\_map.html](http://operationmigration.org/migration_map.html)

You also can follow the migration and where they are in Alabama by liking the agency's Facebook page — Alabama Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries.

*To read an article about the cranes in Alabama by Wayne Smith of the Times Daily, click here:* [http://www.timesdaily.com/news/local/article\\_af03488c-5895-11e3-860c10604b9f6eda.html?mode=jqm](http://www.timesdaily.com/news/local/article_af03488c-5895-11e3-860c10604b9f6eda.html?mode=jqm)

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## **Wild-hatched Sandhill #W3-13 heads south with parents**

To understand the fragile line between successful or failed nests among the eastern population of Whooping Cranes, consider the number of wild-hatched chicks that have survived to fledge. 2006 saw the first wild-hatched Sandhill, [Crane #W1-06 \(#W601\)](#) – and became the first second-generation Whooping Crane to successfully migrate roundtrip following her parents. In 2009, both wild-hatched chicks died; in 2010 only two of seven chicks survived; in 2011 none of the four that hatched survived; and in 2012, just two out of nine chicks fledged. Black fly infestations, natural predation, parental inexperience, weather and territorial disputes are believed to be typical causes for failed nests.

Sandhill Crane chick [#W3-13](#) is the only survivor of the summer 2013, wild-hatched chicks in the Eastern population. The chick's parents are female #9-03 ([Crane #309](#)) and male #3-04 ([Crane #403](#)). The chick hatched from the pair's second, late-season nest. In early November the family group was photographed in north-central Illinois indicating that #W3-13 has started her first southern migration accompanied by her parents.

#W3-13's bands: Left leg: Red/(VHF radio transmitter) Right leg: White/Green/White  
[http://www.learner.org/jnorth/tm/crane/13/BandingCodes\\_w3.html](http://www.learner.org/jnorth/tm/crane/13/BandingCodes_w3.html)

Female #9-03 ([Crane # 309](#)) is now considered the most-productive bird in the Eastern Migratory Population, as six of her chicks have successfully fledged. Eggs rescued from her failed nests have become part of the ultralight-led migrations – chicks #6-09 ([Crane #906](#)) and #8-09 ([Crane #908](#)) in the Class of 2009 and those rescued (from the first nest of #9-03 and #3-04) and hatched as [Crane #2-13](#) and [Crane #5-13](#) are in the Class of 2013. While wild-hatched chicks [#W1-10](#) and [#W3-13](#) were taught the migration route by their parents.

For in-depth background information, "mug shots" of chicks and updates on each of the eastern flock of Sandhill Cranes (2001-2013) – including ultralight led (captive born), Direct Autumn Release (DAR) and wild-hatched – visit Journey North's website:

<http://www.learner.org/jnorth/tm/crane/13/BandingCodes.html>



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## **Please remember**

For all Whooping Crane sightings, if you have a scope that, from a safe distance, will allow you to identify the band color sequence on the Whooping Crane's legs, ICF monitors are interested in receiving that information to help identify and track the migration progress of the eastern whooping crane population. However, never approach cranes in order to get the band colors!

Send information to: <http://www.savingcranes.org/banded-crane-sighting.html>

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## **Texas Whooping Crane watchers needed**

This is the time of year when Endangered Whooping Cranes start appearing at their wintering area at Aransas National Wildlife Refuge on the Texas Coast. On occasion, stray Whooping Cranes have also spent the winter elsewhere in Texas or even in Oklahoma.

This wintering behavior of Whooping Cranes has changed somewhat over the past couple of years. In fact, in April of last year, we reported on this phenomenon, when at least 16 cranes from the regular Aransas-Wood Buffalo National Park population spent at least part of the winter outside their typical coastal areas: <http://refugeassociation.org/?p=5322#cranes>

The Texas scene even has an additional twist: some of the Whooping Cranes from an experimental flock in Louisiana spent most of the summer months in Texas.

To track this potential trend, Texas Whooper Watch has been launched. This volunteer monitoring program is a part of Texas Parks and Wildlife Department's Texas Nature Trackers program. The program was developed to help the agency learn more about Whooping Cranes and their winter habits in Texas. The program seeks the help of citizen scientists in identifying Whooping Crane migration stopover sites and non-traditional wintering areas. Observers can help by reporting sightings of the cranes and by preventing their disturbance when they remain overnight at roosting and feeding locations.

You can review the materials and participate in activities through this site:

<http://tpwd.texas.gov/whoopingcranes/>

and Whooping Crane sightings may be reported here: [www.whoopingcrane.com/report-a-sighting/](http://www.whoopingcrane.com/report-a-sighting/)

*(The above appeared in the November 2013 issue of THE BIRDING COMMUNITY E-BULLETIN, an excellent source of current information for those concerned with the protection of birds and their habitats. To subscribe contact [wpetersen@massaudubon.org](mailto:wpetersen@massaudubon.org) or [paul.baicich@verizon.net](mailto:paul.baicich@verizon.net))*

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## **Whooping Cranes return to Louisiana**

### ***Alive! In America's Delta: The Whooping Crane's Majestic Return***

Trace the landmark effort to reintroduce the Whooping Crane into Louisiana's wetlands. 70 years ago these 5-foot tall stately birds were on the brink of extinction, with only 16 left in the world. Trek along with Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries biologists and their partners to trace the landmark effort to reintroduce the Whooping Crane into Louisiana's wetlands for the first time in half a



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century. Follow the birds from hatchlings at a national research facility in Maryland, through the delicate dance to adapt to their new Louisiana home in a carefully constructed pen, where people in crane suits – worn to protect the birds from human contact – oversee their historic, but fragile homecoming.

[http://beta.lpb.org/index.php?site/programs2/alive\\_in\\_americas\\_delta/](http://beta.lpb.org/index.php?site/programs2/alive_in_americas_delta/)

Louisiana Public Broadcasting/Monday, December 9 at 8:00pm Central Time

***Alive! In America's Delta*** is a documentary series of six 30-minute episodes produced by Louisiana Public Broadcasting in cooperation with Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. It will be nationally distributed to PBS stations, reaching a potential viewing audience of more than 230 million Americans. This original programming will take viewers deep into the Mississippi River Delta and the northern Gulf of Mexico to experience one of the few remaining wild frontiers in America.

There will be an encore showing of the first episode in the series *Whooping Cranes Majestic Return* on December 9th immediately following the Black Bear episode. Both shows will re-air on Sunday, December 15th starting at 5PM on LPB.

Black Bear Comeback will air in New Orleans on WLAE- TV32 on January 3th at 8:30PM.

*Whooping Cranes Majestic Return* will air January 17th at 8:30PM on WLAE.

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## **The Environmental Almanac: SANDHILL CRANES PUT ON A SHOW**

March 2014 will mark the 44th annual Nebraska Sandhill Crane festival, where over 500,000 cranes – the largest concentration of this species in the world – plus millions of snow geese and other waterfowl can be seen each spring as they stop over along the Platte River during their migration north. Not as well-known is a similar spectacle that takes place each fall, albeit on a smaller scale, in western Indiana at the Jasper-Pulaski Fish and Wildlife Area, 60 miles north of Lafayette. Here at this staging area, one may observe tens of thousands of Greater Sandhill Cranes, the occasional Whooping Crane and, if lucky, a rarity such as a Common Crane (October 30, 1999).

You can find the Jasper-Pulaski Fish and Wildlife Area on the web at <http://www.in.gov/dnr/fishwild/3091.htm>

Read more by Rob Kanter, communications coordinator for the UI School of Earth, Society and Environment here: <http://www.news-gazette.com/living/2013-11-24/environmental-almanac-sandhill-cranes-put-show.html>

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## **2014 Sandhill Crane Festivals**

*Festival of the Cranes*

January 11, 2014

Wheeler Wildlife Refuge, Decatur, Alabama

<http://www.friendsofwheelerrefuge.org>



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*Tennessee Sandhill Crane Festival*  
January 18-19, 2014  
Hiwassee Wildlife Refuge, Birchwood, TN  
<http://www.tncranefestival.org>

*Whooping Crane Festival*  
February 20-23, 2014  
Port Aransas, TX  
<http://www.whoopingcranefestival.org>

*44th Annual Audubon's Nebraska Crane Festival*  
(Formerly known as Rivers and Wildlife Celebration)  
Platte River, Nebraska  
<http://nebraskacranefestival.org>

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## **UPDATE: Eastern Population of Sandhill Cranes hunt seasons**

**Kentucky:** The third season of the experimental three-year KY Sandhill Crane hunt begins December 14, 2013 and ends January 12, 2014 (or earlier once 400 cranes have been killed).

Next step in finalizing a Kentucky season. At the flyway level, the Atlantic and Mississippi Flyway Councils Technical Section's Webless Migratory Bird Committees will review the Kentucky season in February, as set forth by the EP Management Plan [Management Plan for the Eastern Population of Sandhill Cranes]. Comments regarding the management plan and Kentucky's season would be considered during these meetings. Recommendations involving the EP Plan and Kentucky's hunting season will then be reviewed by the Atlantic and Mississippi Flyways Councils in March. Flyway council meetings are open to the public. Comments addressing specific issues can be presented in person at the flyway council meeting or in writing by submission to the presiding council chairman.

For those interested in expressing their opinions of the Kentucky Sandhill season to the Flyway Councils, when available, the USFWS submission dates/contact information will be posted on the Kentucky Coalition for Sandhill Cranes website:  
<http://kyc4sandhillcranes.com>

**Tennessee:** The first season of a three-year experimental Sandhill hunt began November 28, 2013 and runs through January 1, 2014, (or earlier once 1,200 cranes have been killed). It ends two weeks prior to the annual TN Sandhill Festival at Hiwassee Refuge (no hunting is allowed on the refuge but lands surrounding it are included in the hunt zone).

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If you have any friends or co-workers who want to get onto the monthly E-bulletin mailing list, have them contact:

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*Kentucky Coalition for Sandhill Cranes*



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