



EASTERN CRANE BULLETIN

Eastern Crane Bulletin - September 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 and the on-going work for the protection of these birds and their habitats.

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Experienced Whoopers lead the way in migration

How birds navigate often over thousands of miles between wintering and breeding grounds during migration has long been something of a mystery. Scientists continue the research to find how much is innate or learned, how much is based on landmarks, stars or even the Earth's magnetic field.

But the country's small, eastern population of whooping cranes has provided a clue.

The recovery of North American Whooping Cranes by release of captive-reared birds trained to migrate by following ultralight aircraft provided an opportunity for a team of University of Maryland ecologists, lead by Thomas Mueller, to analyze 8 years of data for individual birds. Their findings suggest captive-bred whoopers are picking up tips from older birds about how to skillfully navigate south for the winter. That the probability of the juvenile birds finding safer roosting sites with access to reliable food sources increases dramatically when migrating with an experienced adult.

"...The presence of older birds within a group of migrating cranes significantly decreased the deviations the flock took from a straight line migration path. The lack of evidence for a genetic component indicates that social learning dominates any innate capacity in developing migratory behavior..."
– *Science* (30 August 2013, Vol. 341 no. 6149 pp. 999-1002 DOI:10.1126/science.1237139)

To read more in article by NPR Science desk correspondent Christopher Joyce click here [Wise Old Whooping Cranes Keep Captive-Bred Fledglings On Track](#).

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Crowdsourcing, for the birds

Launched in 2002 by the [Cornell Lab of Ornithology](#), a nonprofit organization based at Cornell University, and National Audubon Society, the global ornithological network known as [eBird](#), began collecting daily global bird data in 2002.

Tens of thousands of birders are now what the lab calls "biological sensors," turning their sightings into digital data by reporting where, when and how many of which species they see.

And eBird's daily view of bird movements has yielded a vast increase in data — and a revelation for scientists. The most informative product is what scientists call a heat map: a striking image of the bird sightings represented in various shades of orange according to their density, moving through space and time across black maps. Now, more than 300 species have a heat map of their own.

"As soon as the heat maps began to come out, everybody recognized this is a game changer in how we look at animal populations and their movement," said John W. Fitzpatrick, director of the Cornell Lab. "Really captivating imagery teaches us more effectively."



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And the data are being used by a wide array of researchers and conservationists.

Data about bird populations can help scientists understand other changes in the natural world and be a marker for the health of overall biodiversity. "Birds are great indicators because they occur in all environments," said Steve Kelling, the director of information science at the Cornell bird lab.

The data is also being combined with radar and weather data by [BirdCast](#), another Cornell bird lab project that forecasts migration patterns with the aim of protecting birds as they move through a gauntlet of threats. "We can predict migration events that would be usable for the timing of wind generation facilities to be turned off at night," Dr. Fitzpatrick said.

To read the entire article click here: [Crowdsourcing, for the Birds](#) by Jim Robbin of *The New York Times*

"Salute to the Dawn"

You're invited to celebrate The International Crane Foundation (ICF) and the amazing work they've done for 40 years!

Celebrate ICF's 40th Anniversary September 27-29:

The celebration begins on Friday, September 27 with Heather Henson and IBEX Puppetry's [Celebration of Flight](#) performance at Discovery World Museum in Milwaukee, WI.

Celebrate the people and programs behind four decades of crane conservation. Join ICF in Milwaukee, Wisconsin on Saturday, September 28th as ICF Co-founder Dr. George Archibald hosts special guests Dr. Jane Goodall, award-winning actress Jane Alexander and renowned photographer Tom Mangelsen at its anniversary dinner event.

Tickets and table sponsorships are limited and start at \$250. For more information or to register visit www.cranegala.org. To register by phone, contact Kel Kopish at (608) 356-9462 ext. 115. Deadline for registration is tomorrow, September 10, 2013. All proceeds benefit ICF's highest priorities for cranes and wetlands.

On Sunday, September 29, the weekend concludes with a special [Celebrating Cranes and Culture](#) performance by award-winning actress Jane Alexander at the Al. Ringling Theatre in Baraboo, WI. [Click here to view and share our 40th Anniversary email.](#)

Learn more: http://www.savingcranes.org/index.php?option=com_jcalpro&view=event&id=169%3Aactress-jane-alexander-performing-at-al-ringling-theatre&Itemid=240

TWRC votes to approve first Tennessee Sandhill Crane Season

During its August 22-23 meeting in Knoxville, the Tennessee Fish and Wildlife Commission voted to approve the state's first Sandhill Crane (SACR) hunting season and the following day the full commission approved the rule.



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Despite results from an independent public survey, overwhelming opposition voiced during the TWRA public comment period, data from the International Crane Foundation indicating steady decline in SACR nesting success rates and the presence of, November through February, endangered Whooping Cranes in the company of Sandhills at Hiwassee and surrounding areas – Tennessee has joined Kentucky in hunting the eastern population of Sandhill Cranes.

The first season of a three-year experimental hunt will be held from November 28, 2013 through January 1, 2014.

For more details click here: <http://www.tn.gov/twra/sandhillhunt.shtml>

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Researchers work to restore whooping cranes in Louisiana

Until the early 1900s, Whooping Cranes (WHCR) were a fairly common sight in southwestern Louisiana with migratory flocks wintering in the White Lake area. "At one time, Louisiana had more whooping cranes than anywhere in North America," said Sammy King, of the U.S. Geological Survey Louisiana Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit at the LSU AgCenter. However, due to unregulated hunting, the collection of WHCR and their eggs as specimens for museums, and draining of wetlands used for breeding, Whooping Cranes were nearly extirpated in Louisiana. In 1950, after a devastating hurricane, the last wild bird at White Lake was captured and taken to Aransas, Texas.

Today, a project monitored by LSU AgCenter researchers is working to restore a breeding population of WHCR in the Louisiana coastal region. The project is funded with a combination of public and private grants, including one from the International Crane Foundation. Another partner in the project is the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Beginning in 2010, three groups of juvenile Whooping Cranes raised at the U.S. Geological Survey Patuxent Research Facility in Maryland have been released at White Lake. Of the 40 released 27 survive. Transmitters attached to the birds help track their movements but some have been lost either to presumed mortality, transmitter failures and senseless shootings.

To read the entire story click here:

<http://www.lsuagcenter.com/en/communications/publications/agmag/Archive/2013/Winter/Researchers-work-to-restore-whooping-cranes-in-Louisiana.htm>

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Louisiana whooping cranes build nest outside captivity for first time in decades

Two of the 27 Whooping Cranes in Louisiana's experimental flock made a first attempt at nesting earlier this year. Whooping cranes lay their first fertile eggs when 4 to 7 years old so the 2-year old female and 3-year old male are too young yet to successfully nest. The nest was found in the middle of a crawfish pond in southwest Louisiana. Biologists recognized it as a "dummy" nest as the birds did not defend it from other cranes as a nesting pair on territory would have done. If any of the Louisiana Whooping Cranes breed and raise a chick it will be the first state record since 1939.

Read the story by Janet McConnaughey of here:

http://www.nola.com/environment/index.ssf/2013/03/louisiana_whooping_cranes_buil.html



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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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