



EASTERN CRANE BULLETIN

The Eastern Crane E-bulletin is 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.

To bring a species back from the brink – what does it take?

Fourteen years and over \$20 million invested in efforts to re-establish the Eastern Migratory Population of Whooping cranes – so, why is it taking so long?

According to Jeb Barzen of the [International Crane Foundation](#) (ICF) and [Whooping Crane Eastern Partnership](#) (WCEP), not only are biologists attempting to re-establish a species that has been absent from the landscape for over 120 years, but a species that is learning to adapt to a dramatically altered landscape. “Wetlands of the tall grass prairies in the Midwest, the historical stronghold of whooping cranes, have been substantially altered. It will take time for these birds to adapt their behaviors and breeding strategies to this landscape and its challenges, and our reintroduction team is learning right along with them.”

Fourteen years of blood, sweat, endless biologist and volunteer hours, heartache over birds lost to predators, low productivity rates, swarms of black flies, chicks hatching but not surviving to fledge, deaths due to power line collisions, natural weather disasters and the continued senseless shooting deaths (that we know of) that have occurred in Wisconsin, Indiana, Kentucky, Louisiana, Alabama, Georgia and Florida.

Regardless of all that, “...Since the first whooping cranes were released in Wisconsin in 2001, the Whooping Crane Eastern Partnership (WCEP) has accomplished much: good adult survival, good migration routes, good pairing, good egg fertility, good nest establishment and a solid understanding of what is causing nest failure – parasitism by an avian-specific species of black fly. No other crane reintroduction project has accomplished so much...”

Despite seemingly constant set-backs [Operation Migration](#), the International Crane Foundation and the Whooping Crane Eastern Partnership, with support from countless other groups, organizations and individuals, continue to tirelessly forge ahead to reach the goal of a sustainable Eastern Migratory Population of Whooping Cranes. Kudos to them and a huge thanks from all of us who look forward to a day when the cranes will be part of our landscape.

Read *What it Takes to be successful at Whooping Crane reintroduction* by Jeb Barzen for In the Field with Operation Migration, click here:

<http://operationmigration.org/InTheField/2014/07/22/what-it-takes-to-be-successful-at-whooping-crane-reintroduction/>

Listen to a July 14, 2014 Wisconsin Public Radio interview, “Whooping Crane restoration issues in Wisconsin and beyond” with Dr. Barry Hartup of the ICF/WCEP, click here: <http://www.wpr.org/listen/614031>

For an in-depth article, *Effort to restore whooping cranes in Wisconsin struggling*, by the *Milwaukee Wisconsin Journal Sentinel* click here: <http://www.jsonline.com/news/wisconsin/effort-to-restore-whooping-cranes-in-wisconsin-struggling-b99300584z1-265483081.html>

There are no albino Sandhills!

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) asks the public to help dispel the myth of “white” or “albino” sandhill cranes.

In July 2013, researchers with the world’s leading crane conservation organization, Baraboo, WI-based [International Crane Foundation](#) (ICF) found a dead radio-tagged whooping crane in a Waupaca County wheat field. The crane had been shot. Matthew Kent Larsen, 28, of New London pleaded guilty in federal court in Green Bay for violating the Migratory Bird Treaty Act by killing a protected species. Larsen told authorities he shot the crane because he thought it was an albino sandhill. Whooping cranes are white and sandhills are gray or reddish brown. Shooting either bird is illegal. [Read more here.](#)

With Fall migration beginning and the “experimental” Sandhill seasons in Kentucky and Tennessee approaching at the end of the year it is of utmost importance to know the difference between Whooping and Sandhill cranes.

Learn the difference between endangered whooping cranes and sandhill cranes from this chart developed by the ICF: [Large Water Bird: An Identification Guide](#)

Introducing the Whooping crane Class of 2014!

This year’s group of seven Whooping Cranes destined to follow the [Operation Migration](#) ultralights to Florida were hatched between May 12 and May 21, 2014. There are six females and a lone male (#4-14, aka “Peanut” because of his small stature). The group includes two sets of siblings. Recently Peanut sustained an injury to his hock but is showing steady improvement and not limping as much.

For early photos of the gang as well as a handy chart to keep up with band colors, birthdates, etc. click here: <http://operationmigration.org/InTheField/2014/07/07/introducing-the-whooping-crane-class-of-2014-2/>

For even more information and photos of the 2014 ultralight group, the Direct Autumn Release (DAR) group, #W3-14 (only surviving wild-hatched juvenile) and the “parent reared” group click here: <http://www.learner.org/jnorth/tm/crane/14/BandingCodes.html>

Join the [MileMaker 2014 Campaign](#) and help the Class of 2014 reach Florida!

Seven states and 1200 miles separate the current year’s Class of young Whooping Cranes from their summer home in Wisconsin and their wintering grounds in Florida.

They NEED your HELP! Your generous support by becoming a MileMaker Sponsor will help to ensure the funding is in place for the biggest adventure of their young lives - their first-ever migration - a migration led by Operation Migration’s small aircraft

To read more and sign up to become a MileMaker click here: <https://secure.operationmigration.org/np/clients/om/campaign.jsp?campaign=45&>

To see the 2014 Whooping crane Migration Map click here: <http://operationmigration.org/operation-migration-map.asp>

Dr. Gary Krapu receives L.H. Walkinshaw Crane Conservation Award

Dr. Gary Krapu, retired U.S. Geological Survey wildlife biologist, was awarded the [L. H. Walkinshaw Crane Conservation Award](#) by the [North American Crane Working Group](#) for his career-long research on sandhill cranes.

The award recognizes Krapu's long-term commitment to better understand the needs of sandhill cranes in the Platte River ecosystem, for having initiated a comprehensive, long-term research program to guide conservation and management of the mid-continental population of sandhill cranes, and for collaborative research efforts with crane biologists from other nations to help guide crane conservation internationally. [Read the USGS press release about the award and Dr. Krapu's contributions here.](#)

Black flies

Several years ago biologists with the Whooping crane reintroduction project based at Necedah National Wildlife Refuge in central Wisconsin observed nesting cranes, early in incubation, for no apparent reason abandoning their nests and eggs. [It was determined that swarms of black flies were the cause, tormenting cranes to such an extent that the birds abandoned nests.](#) Nest-site fidelity and the fact that cranes return to where they fledged, means cranes will return to Necedah regardless of flies.

"We believe it's been an impediment to successful reproduction," Barry Hartup, director of the veterinary services at the International Crane Foundation said. So, scientists experimented at Necedah with spraying a naturally occurring bacterium, *Bacillus thuringiensis*, to kill the flies in 2011 and 2012.

Hartup said one promising experiment is removing eggs from nests, which prompts cranes to renest later and lay more eggs when the flies are gone. The eggs taken by crane managers are used for the captive rearing program.

Also, chicks have been released since 2011 farther east at [Horicon National Wildlife Refuge](#) and the [White River Marsh State Wildlife Area](#), where black flies don't appear to be as much of a problem. Hopefully, cranes raised there will return to successfully nest.

[Read more here about the effects black flies have on other nesting birds.](#)

Research Teams Collaborate to Protect Endangered Whooping Crane Populations from Vector-Borne Parasites

Through a collaborative study by [Dr. Gabriel Hamer's Research Team](#) in the [Texas A&M University's Department of Entomology](#), the Texas A&M College of Veterinary Medicine and Biomedical Science, and Dr. Barry Hartup of the [International Crane Foundation](#) the team hopes to gain a better understanding of vector-borne parasites in both Whooping and Sandhill cranes in the United States and Canada. The goal is to find out the diversity and seasonal occurrence of parasites in cranes as a first step to determine whether the parasites are limiting the population growth of whooping cranes.

"As human activities modify the landscape, we are potentially degrading habitat required by the whooping crane," said Dr. Miranda Bertram, lead veterinarian for the project. "As whooping crane populations become stressed and as habitat is modified, the transmission of parasites and pathogens might increase and further compromise bird health."

Read more on the collaborative study here: <http://ipmsouth.com/2014/08/18/hamer-research-team-collaborates-to-protect-endangered-whooping-crane-populations-from-vector-borne-parasites/>

Canada:

32 Whooping cranes fledged on Wood Buffalo National Park!

[Wood Buffalo National Park \(WBNP\)](#) officials reported that 32 whooping crane chicks of the wild, self-sustaining flock, were observed during this year's Whooping Crane Fledging Survey conducted August 9-12, 2014 at the park. In the June 2014 survey, a record number of 164 Whooping cranes were counted incubating eggs in 82 nests. These numbers are up from the 2013 survey where 28 juveniles fledged from 74 nests.

This year surveyors not only located more nests but recorded range expansion within and outside of the WBNP. A total of seven nests were seen outside the park's border, with five to the north and two on Salt River First Nation reserve land. WBNP Whooping crane surveys have been conducted for over four decades and witnessed the slow climb of the wild Whooping crane population from a mere 16 birds in the 1940's to over 300 today.

[To learn more about the surveys and see aerial photos of the Wood Buffalo National Park habitat used by the wild flock of Whoopers click here.](#) and [here.](#)

[Read more about the record-breaking number of nests counted in June 2014.](#)

Florida:

Monitoring Florida's non-migratory Whooping crane flock

Considered an experimental, non-essential flock the USFWS and conservation partners released 289 captive-reared Whooping cranes from 1993-2006 in an attempt to establish a self-sustaining, non-migratory flock in Florida. From the outset the birds faced low productivity rates, drought years, as well as mortality from a variety of predators, lightning strikes and a viral disease not well known in wild crane populations. In June 2012 after analysis showed only a 41% probability that the flock would ever be self-sustaining intensive monitoring of the flock was discontinued by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission. However, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is interested in any sightings of Whooping Cranes in Florida. *If you think you have seen one please report your sighting(s) here:* <http://www.fws.gov/midwest/whoopingcrane/sightings/sightingform.cfm>

The International Whooping Crane Recovery Team is in the process of evaluating how eggs and adult whooping cranes from the Florida non-migratory flock may be integrated into other existing recovery efforts. Currently, the flock size is estimated at 16 adults (7 males, 9 females).

Data and observations gathered during the Florida project have already and will continue to provide insight into Whooping Crane life history, survival and productivity of reintroduced flocks. In addition, best management practices related to trapping, transport, handling and release of Whooping Cranes were developed over the years and will serve to benefit the overall recovery effort.

To read the complete report on the 2012 breeding season-2013 spring migration, by US Fish & Wildlife Service and the Canadian Wildlife Service click here (*pages 12-13 pertain to the Florida non-migratory flock*): [http://www.fws.gov/uploadedFiles/WCRRecoveryActivitiesReport_SeptApril2013_24Sept2013_Sub_508%20\(1\).pdf](http://www.fws.gov/uploadedFiles/WCRRecoveryActivitiesReport_SeptApril2013_24Sept2013_Sub_508%20(1).pdf)

For 2011 Florida nesting research results and nest cam photos click here: <http://whoopingcrane.com/nesting-research-conducted-on-florida-cranes/>

For additional information read an in-depth July-September 2010 report by Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission: <http://www.operationmigration.org/FNMP%20Qtrly%20Rept2010.pdf>

Indiana:

DNR offers additional information on Greene County Whooper death

State and federal wildlife officials continue to seek information into the December 2013 shooting death of a Whooping Crane – a federally endangered species protected by the Endangered Species Act, the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and Indiana Law. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Indiana Department of Natural Resources TIP Advisory Board are offering a reward of up to \$5,000 for information leading to the arrest and conviction of the person or people responsible. *If you have information, you can reach law enforcement officers at 1-800-TIP-IDNR (847-4367) or [317-346-7016](tel:317-346-7016).*

The Whooping Crane was shot in southern Greene County along the White River south of Lyons according to Indiana Conservation Officer Mike Gregg.

In a recent interview with the *Greene County Daily World*, Gregg said that officials had been tracking the bird electronically and discovered its remains after no visible sign of the bird could be found. An electronic signal emitted by a tag previously placed around the Crane's neck was used to eventually locate where the remains were hidden. "It was obvious somebody shot it," he said. "We believe there were hunters in the area and that once they shot it they buried it, realizing they had made a mistake."

The very fact that hunters misidentified and shot a Whooping Crane (there is no Sandhill Crane hunting season in Indiana) underscores the ongoing need to EDUCATE the public, and in particular hunters, if the reintroduced population of Whooping cranes is ever to become self-sustaining. These senseless killings must end.

Louisiana:

ICF news

DAR Whooping cranes are headed to Louisiana

Four Direct Autumn Release (DAR) Whooping Crane chicks (Tabasco, Pico de Gallo, Honey and Cholula) are headed to Louisiana! This year's DAR juveniles will be released in the non-migratory Whooping Crane population at the White Lake Wetlands Conservation Area in southwest Louisiana instead of with the eastern migratory population (WCEP population) in Wisconsin. On August 11, 2014 the four juveniles were sent to the [Patuxent Wildlife Research Center](#) in Maryland for socialization with other cranes.

To read the [International Crane Foundation's](#) press release click here:
<http://www.savingcranes.org/whats-new/2014/07/dar-whooping-cranes-are-headed-to-louisiana/>

Chevron recognized for supporting Whooping crane reintroduction

At an August 7, 2014 ceremony, the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF) and Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries Foundation (LWFF) recognized Chevron for three years of grant funding, valued at \$400,000, for the department's Whooping crane reintroduction project for the years 2012 through 2014. According to Robert Love, LDWF Coastal and Nongame Resources Division administrator, "...Success and sustainability also requires raising public awareness and appreciation of the birds' presence and educating our young citizens, as well as our farmers, on the importance having of this iconic and charismatic species back on the landscape. The Chevron grant funding was vital in each of these project components."

[Read more about Chevron and its contribution to the reintroduction of the Whooping crane in Louisiana here.](#)

Mississippi:

Mississippi Sandhill Crane National Wildlife Refuge

The Mississippi Sandhill Crane National Wildlife Refuge, located in Jackson County, was established in 1975 under authority of the Endangered Species Act to safeguard the both the endangered Mississippi sandhill crane and its unique wet pine savanna habitat. The refuge consists of more than 19,000 acres in four units and is now part of the Gulf Coast National Wildlife Refuge Complex, which includes Grand Bay NWR and Bon Secour NWR.

For photographs of the wet pine savanna habitat click here: <http://floridahikes.com/a-sandhill-crane-success-story>

Learn more about the Mississippi Sandhill Crane NWR here: <http://www.fws.gov/mississippisandhillcrane/>

New Hampshire:

On Wednesday, May 30, 2014 the New Hampshire Audubon's Rare Bird Alert posted that two sandhill cranes had returned to their summering grounds in Monroe and could sometimes be seen in fields along the Connecticut River north of the town center and also in fields along Plains Road. Currently, Sandhill cranes are considered rare in New Hampshire and not known to nest there.

Ohio:

Sandhills welcomed to Perkins Wildlife Center by the Cleveland Musuem of Natural History

Ohio's last nesting pair of cranes was reported from Huron Bog (southwestern Huron County) in 1926. Only in the past 20 years has the species returned as a breeding bird to the state, being reported on [Museum Natural Areas](#) and especially the McCoy Preserve. In 2012, 25 pairs of Sandhill Cranes nested in 19 Ohio counties, including Wayne, Geauga, Lorain, Holmes, Medina, Ashtabula and Trumbull. They are classed as an endangered species in Ohio.

Recently a juvenile male Sandhill was found alone and wandering a Michigan truck stop. After capture it was ultimately decided that he was too tame for release so he and a female with a permanent wing injury, were placed at the Perkins Wildlife Center. Visitors now have the opportunity to observe up close and learn about a species once extirpated from the state.

Read the entire story here: <https://www.cmnh.org/Cranes>

For additional background information of Sandhills in Ohio click here: <http://www.ohiobirds.org/obba2/pdfs/species/SandhillCrane.pdf>

<http://wildlife.ohiodnr.gov/species-and-habitats/species-guide-index/birds/sandhill-crane>

Texas:

Aransas Ecosystem/ Whooping Cranes threatened by mismanagement of Guadalupe River Basin

In March 2010 [The Aransas Project](#) (TAP), a non-profit coalition of municipalities, businesses, and conservation organizations including the International Crane Foundation (ICF), [filed a citizen suit against the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality \(TCEQ\)](#). The suit contended TCEQ allowed too much water to be removed from the Guadalupe and San Antonio Rivers, and consequently the bay salinity increased beyond what drought would cause. These actions resulted in reduced fresh drinking water and food supply for the cranes and ultimately caused the deaths of 23 Whooping Cranes in 2008-2009 – 8.5% of the Texas Whooping Crane flock.

Unfortunately, in July 2014, the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals reversed the 2013 lower court decision that mandated fresh-water inflows to Whooping Crane habitat on the Texas coast. The Court of Appeals found that TAP presented compelling evidence of up to 23 Whooping Crane deaths in 2008-2009, and that the deaths were related to lack of essential food, water and habitat requirements. However, the Court ruled that the deaths could not have been foreseen, and that TCEQ cannot be held liable because their authorization of water use was too attenuated from the crane deaths.

On July 29, 2014, [The Aransas Project](#) responded to the recent Fifth Circuit Court of Appeal's three judge panel decision by asking that there be review of the panel's decision with all of the Fifth Circuit judges participating ([view the full petition](#)). "The Appeals panel seemingly exceeded its authority by disregarding the fact finding done by the trial judge, and substituted its own fact finding, rather than returning the case to the district court with direction to apply the facts to what the panel believes is the correct legal standard."

For an in-depth ICF report/July 1, 2014, click here: [Appeals Court Reverses Decision for Whooping Cranes in Texas](#)

Read [The Aransas Project's](#) (TAP) July 2, 2014 initial analysis of the ruling: [Fifth Circuit Acknowledges 23 Whooping Crane Deaths from Lack of Inflows, Yet Refuses to Hold Texas Liable](#)

The International Crane Foundation (ICF) is one of the many organizations seriously concerned about the mismanagement of freshwater flowing into our coastal systems. [Read Whooping crane conservation biologist for ICF, Dr. Elizabeth Smith's response to the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals decision – We should be saving coastal treasure.](#) (*Victoria Advocate*, July 27, 2014)

What decades of study show is that the health of bays and estuaries and all that depend on a healthy ecosystem – the blue crabs that the Whoopers eat, shrimp, crab and oyster production as well as recreational fishing is all tied to freshwater inflows. [Read a Houston Chronicle opinion piece Blackburn: Cost of water a key element in bay debate.](#) by Jim Blackburn, a Houston-based environmental lawyer representing The Aransas Project.

2013-2014 Winter Whooping Crane Survey Results Upward Trend Continues

In a March 17, 2014 press release, the [U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's 2013-2014 Winter Whooping Crane Survey for the Aransas-Wood Buffalo population](#) estimated there were 304 Whooping cranes in the primary survey area. This included an estimated 39 juveniles.

The primary survey area spans approximately 154,000 acres on and around the Aransas National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) in Texas. Secondary areas (approximately 101,500 acres) on the Texas coast were surveyed to monitor expansion of the whooping crane's winter range.

The Aransas-Wood Buffalo population is the only remaining wild flock of Whooping cranes. This endangered bird nests in Canada and migrates 2,500 miles to winter on the Texas coast on and around the Aransas NWR.

All of the Whooping cranes alive today, both wild and captive, are descendants of the last 15 remaining cranes found wintering at the Aransas NWR in 1941.

Contacts:

Dr. Wade Harrell, Whooping Crane Recovery Coordinator, at [361-286-3559](tel:361-286-3559)

Nancy Brown, Outreach Specialist, at [512-339-9432](tel:512-339-9432)

HABITAT matters!

Whooping Crane Stopover Study To Aid Species Recovery

Suitable habitat for Whooping cranes to stop, rest and feed during their spring/fall migration is critical for the Aransas-Wood Buffalo population to complete its 2,500-mile journey each way. These stopover sites are the focus of a comprehensive ground-based study by the Whooping Crane Tracking Partnership to improve understanding of the specific habitats and locations selected by Whooping cranes during their migration in western Canada and the United States. As 40-60% of deaths in this Whooping Crane population may occur during migration, it is also a critical time to track the birds to learn about possible threats, such as collisions with power lines or disease.

Read more about the stopover study in a *Crane Trust Spring 2014 Newsletter* article here:

<http://friendsofthewildwhoopers.org/whooping-crane-stopover-study-aid-species-recovery/>

The [Whooping Crane Tracking Partnership](#) began in 2008 as a research project to use Platform Transmitting Terminals with Global Positioning System capabilities (GPS-PTTs) as a means to advance knowledge of whooping crane breeding, wintering, and migratory ecology including threats to survival and population persistence and to provide reliable scientific knowledge for conservation, management, and recovery of whooping cranes.

Read more about the Aransas-Wood Buffalo Whooping crane telemetry projects here: [http://](http://friendsofthewildwhoopers.org/whooping-crane-tracking-study/)

friendsofthewildwhoopers.org/whooping-crane-tracking-study/ and here: <http://operationmigration.org/InTheField/2013/03/12/tracking-western-flock-whooping-cranes/>

Powderhorn Ranch Becomes Largest Conservation Land Purchase in Texas History

[Purchase of the 17,351-acre Powderhorn Ranch](#), one of the few remaining large tracts of intact native coastal prairie and wetlands on the Texas coast, was announced August 21, 2014 by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Foundation. The Texas Parks and Wildlife Commission voted unanimously to authorize the agency to accept donation of the 27-square-mile expanse of land in Calhoun County, near Port Lavaca, TX.

Almost all - \$34.5 million - of the property's \$37.7 million purchase price came from the [Gulf Environmental Benefit Fund](#), a \$2.5 billion fund created with money BP and Transocean agreed to pay in plea agreements following the 2010 Deepwater Horizon rig explosion and resulting oil spill. [Click here for more info on how the fund will benefit Texas conservation needs.](#)

This pristine property is an unaltered natural mosaic of coastal prairie/savannah peppered with scores of mima/pimple mounds, oak motts, freshwater wetlands, coastal brackish and saline marsh and, on ridges, extensive stands of old-growth live oak trees. It is viewed as having "exceptional potential for outdoor recreation, including kayaking, fishing, hunting, hiking and birding."

Click here for aerial footage of the Powderhorn Ranch: <http://friendsofthewildwhoopers.org/aerial-view-powderhorn-ranch/>

Federal agency considers regulating oil, gas drilling on wildlife refuges

In 1937 the federal government purchased the 47,163-acre coastal area known as the St. Charles ranch, stretching from Austwell to Rockport, TX, from San Antonio oilman Leroy G. Denman. The refuge later became known as the [Aransas National Wildlife Refuge](#) and is home to 300 species of birds, including the endangered Whooping crane.

At the time of the land purchase, Conoco Inc. (then Continental Oil Co.) owned the mineral rights. Now Houston-based Hilcorp Energy Co., is the sole owner of the refuge's oil and gas lease. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service biologist Felipe Prieto, the oil and gas manager of Aransas National Wildlife Refuge and Matagorda Island, works directly with Hilcorp in monitoring all drilling activity. It is a constant balancing act as the noise, traffic, lights and possibility of pollution that accompany drilling operations are pitted against the goal of refuges – the conservation of wildlife and habitat.

Drilling activity has increased at the Aransas National Wildlife Refuge in an area known as Blackjack named after the Blackjack Peninsula located in the Aransas Bay. About seven well sites are currently active in the refuge. Drilling only occurs on the interior of the peninsula, away from the coast where the Whooping cranes winter. The refuge also keeps oil and gas production off the 5,000 acres of public use area. No drilling is allowed from October 15 through April 15 while the wintering Whooping cranes are on the refuge.

Currently surface owner rights vary from state to state. Unlike other federal land management agencies, such as the U.S. National Park Service and the U.S. Forest Service, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) doesn't have basic rules to safeguard against drilling activities beyond the individual state requirements and lease terms.

[About half of the nation's 562 refuges have oil and gas development.](#) As in the case of Aransas, the land for most refuges was purchased without the mineral rights, either because they were not for sale or prohibitively expensive. USFWS wants a predictable and consistent approach to regulating oil and gas development on refuges. In February, the USFWS Federal Register issued an advance notice of proposed rule-making seeking public comment about regulatory options for management of nonfederal oil and gas production on refuges. The agency is currently reviewing the approximately 80,000 comments received.

Read more here: http://www.victoriaadvocate.com/news/2014/aug/02/aransas_drilling_ss_080314_245473/?business

Read the USFWS Federal Register proposed rule: *Non-Federal Oil and Gas Development Within the National Wildlife Refuge System*

[Docket No. FWS-HQ-NWRS-2012-0086; FXRS1261090000-134-FF09R200000] here: <http://www.fws.gov/policy/library/2014/2014-03792.pdf>

Bay Delta Conservation Plan proposed tunnels may impact critical Sandhill habitat

[Staten Island is a 9,200-acre island that lies in San Joaquin County](#), between two forks of the Mokelumne River. California taxpayers spent \$32 million from two bond measures in 2001 to preserve the island as wildlife habitat.

The island is owned and farmed by [The Nature Conservancy](#) (TNC), a nonprofit group. A permanent conservation easement covers the entire island, limiting activities to those that “preserve agricultural land, protect wildlife habitat, and protect this floodplain area from inappropriate and incompatible development.” A focus is on maintaining wintering crane habitat there as Staten Island is considered to be the most important wintering site for Sandhill Cranes in California, supporting about 20% of the state-threatened Greater Sandhill Cranes.

As part of the [Bay Delta Conservation Plan](#), two massive water diversion tunnels are planned to re-route water from the Sacramento River around the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta to southern California. The proposed

water tunnel system would go through Staten Island. Many conservation groups oppose the selection of the tunnel route under Staten Island out of concern for the impact it may have on the critical wintering areas for Sandhill cranes as well as other wildlife.

Read more about ICF's recommended crane conservation measures for southern California's Bay Delta Conservation Plan, here:

<http://www.savingcranes.org/whats-new/2013/09/icf-research-informs-water-development-in-california/>

Read an August 2013 comment by TNC here: [*The Nature Conservancy Will Vigorously Protect Staten Island Habitat for Sandhill Cranes*](#)

Learn more about the California Department of Water Resources' plan to run massive water-diversion tunnels under Staten Island in this *Sacramento Bee* article, *The Public Eye: Water plan may shift Delta tunnels*:
<http://www.sacbee.com/2013/08/15/5652161/water-plan-may-shift-delta-tunnels.html>

Upcoming festivals:

Whooping Crane Festival 2014

A weekend of fun activities in support of Operation Migration and the Whooping Cranes!

Location: Princeton, Wisconsin

Date: 09/12/2014 07:00 AM - 09/14/2014 05:00 PM ET

For full schedule of festival activities and to register for events click here:

<https://secure.operationmigration.org/np/clients/om/event.jsp?event=2&>

If you have any friends or co-workers who would like to receive this quarterly E-bulletin please have them contact:

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