



EASTERN CRANE BULLETIN

December 2015

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.

USFWS 'Vision' Recommends Ending Ultralight-Guided Migration of young Whoopers to Florida

In 1970 the Whooping Crane reached "endangered" status in the United States. Canada followed in 1978 with its own "endangered" listing of the species. In 1995, the separate recovery teams from both countries were joined as an international team, the *Whooping Crane Recovery Team* (WCRT) consisting of ten members: five Americans and five Canadians. The team of ornithologists and biologists provide recommendations for overall recovery objectives and strategies to the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and Canadian Wildlife Service.

Primarily, the team plans actions to protect the Arkansas-Wood Buffalo natural flock and to establish two additional flocks in efforts to safeguard the Whooping Crane from possible extinction. Scientists have long recognized the risk of having all of the wild Whooping Cranes in one wintering and breeding location as the population could be wiped out by disease, bad weather, or human impacts. [To read more about the International Whooping Crane Recovery Plan and download a pdf of the Plan click here.](#)

In September 1999, after searching for the best possible location to establish a second migratory flock, the WCRT recommended that the Eastern Migratory Population of Whooping Cranes be taught a migration route with central Wisconsin as the northern terminus and the west coast of Florida as the new wintering location. The WCRT sanctioned [Operation Migration](#)'s ultralight-led migration technique as the main reintroduction method.

On October 15, 2015 the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service issued the [FWS Vision for the Next 5-year Strategic Plan](#) with the recommendation to phase out use of the ultralight-guided migration technique in favor of the [Direct Autumn Release](#) and other, as yet, untested methods. The report states, "Ultralight-led rearing and release is more artificial and costly than any other currently used release method and does not appear to yield substantially better results." It also states that the *migratory* component of the goal for a self-sustaining migratory population of Whooping Cranes in the eastern United States has been met, but the *self-sustaining* aspect of the goal has been hindered in the past by low reproductive success. It also says that captive rearing techniques may not give Whooping Cranes the characteristics they need to successfully reproduce in the wild.

In response, [Operation Migration](#) (OM) CEO Joe Duff says the Whooping Crane project is on the cusp of learning whether the Whoopers can successfully breed after being raised the last few years at additional sites in [Horicon](#) and [White Water Marsh](#) in east-central Wisconsin. Unlike what has been experienced at the [Necedah National Wildlife Refuge](#), at these two sites the cranes have not been plagued by blackflies. The data from these nesting seasons was not included or taken into consideration in the released strategic plan.

The timing of the USFWS recommendation to end ultralight releases seems premature, since Whooping Cranes don't typically breed until five years of age and, even then, don't generally produce more than one offspring per season.

According to data derived from the WCEP database, the ultralight method is still the most successful thus far in terms of survivability, migratory behavior, and breeding success. In fact, this method most closely replicates the natural life history of the species in that OM teaches the young Whooping cranes a suitable migration route and cares for them until the following spring — just as their parents would.

The [Whooping Crane Eastern Partnership](#) is committed to working together to continue building the eastern migratory population of Whooping Cranes. The partners will be discussing the Fish and Wildlife Service vision document and many other items at the January 2016 meeting as part of the development for the next five year strategic plan. Questions and concerns about the vision document should be directed to Georgia Parham at USFWS ([812-334-4261 x 1203](tel:812-334-4261), Georgia_Parham@fws.gov)

To read the proposed USFWS strategic plan and Operation Migration's response to it, click here: <http://operationmigration.org/InTheField/usfws-vision/>
and here, [FWS Vision Document – Published October 15, 2015](#)
and here, [OM Response to the FWS Vision Document](#)

For those in support of continuing the OM ultralight-led migrations, click here:
[PETITION – Safeguard the Future of Whooping Cranes Using the BEST Method!](#)

To read the USFWS Statement on Vision for Eastern Migratory Population of Whooping Cranes Q&A, click here:
[FWS FAQ Document – Published October 28, 2015](#)

For Operation Migration's response to the Q&A click here:
[OM Response to the FWS FAQ Document](#)

Read more by Operation Migration's Heather Ray here:
<http://www.wisconsin gazette.com/opinion/fws-visions-end-to-ultralight-guided-migration-for-cranes.html>

Direct Autumn Release (DAR)

The direct autumn release of Whooping Crane chicks is an experiment to complement the known success of the ultralight-led migrations conducted by the [Whooping Crane Eastern Partnership \(WCEP\)](#).

From the beginning, DAR chicks are raised with costumed handlers, no human voices and penned next to adult Whooping Cranes that act as live imprinting models. During their first summer at the [Necedah NWR](#), the chicks live in specially-constructed facilities in the field, where they are often visited by some of the older, wild cranes which further facilitate proper imprinting.

Once released, the young cranes are left in the wild to form associations with wild Whooping Cranes. However, if a juvenile bird's survival is threatened by unsafe roosting behavior, unsatisfactory habitat use, or inadequate avoidance of human contact, recapture will be attempted. Additionally, if a direct autumn-released crane does not associate with older cranes, it may be retrieved from the wild and re-released at a later date to ensure the juvenile bird learns the appropriate migratory patterns and behavior.

To read more about WCEP's Direct Autumn Release (DAR) program / Questions and Answers, click here: <http://www.bringbackthecranes.org/conservationinaction/DAR.html>

Unfortunately, in 2013 only two of nine DAR Whooper juveniles released that fall survived to complete migration. Three failed to migrate along with other cranes in the area and fell victim to predation and pneumonia. It is not known whether snow cover and a freeze at that time made them more susceptible to

predators? On a happier note, "Latka" (DAR #59-13) one of the surviving DAR from that season, eventually ended up at the [Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge](#), Alabama for the winter and then migrated north in the spring with adult Whooping Cranes.

Read the report from the International Crane Foundation here:

<http://operationmigration.org/InTheField/2014/01/24/two-of-nine-2013-dar-cranes-remain/>

Find out more about Latka (DAR #59-13) here:

http://www.learner.org/jnorth/tm/crane/13/BandingCodes_latka.html

Editor's note: Thanks to Lizzie Condon, Keeping Whooping Cranes Safe Coordinator, International Crane Foundation, for providing the following article, "Do you give a whoop?"

Do you give a whoop?

The [International Crane Foundation](#), along with organizations involved in the [Whooping Crane Eastern Partnership](#), has a new program designed to increase awareness and pride in Whooping Cranes in local communities. We have started this program with a pilot project in northern Alabama, centered on [Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge](#), a very important wintering site for Whooping Cranes in the eastern migratory population. Our outreach plan includes working with 27 Alabama partner organizations on K-12 education, television and radio PSAs, billboards, social and traditional media campaigns, art and photo contests, presence at gun and hunting shows, hunter education, and the promotion and support of [Wheeler NWR's Festival of the Cranes](#).

What can you do to support us? Join craniacs across the country who are stepping up to protect Whooping Cranes. Together, we are committing to do what it takes to make sure Whoopers are safe. We are committing to:

1. Be able to accurately identify a Whooping Crane. ([Large Waterbirds ID chart](#))
2. [Click here](#) to immediately report any suspicious activity that appears to harm or disturb a Whooping Crane.
3. Tell your friends, family, and networks, about the plight of the Whooping Crane.

Please take the time to share your support for Whooping Cranes with your friends, family and social media connections. In addition, we welcome you to join in celebrating both Sandhill Cranes and Whooping Cranes at [Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge's Festival of the Cranes](#), now in its fourth year. The festival will take place on January 9th and 10th, 2016 and it is free and open to the public. In addition to phenomenal viewing of thousands of Sandhill Cranes along with the rare Whooping Crane, the festival also includes children's activities, a raptor show put on by the Southeastern Raptor Center, a Teddy Roosevelt impersonator and a keynote speech from [Dr. George Archibald](#), co-founder of the [International Crane Foundation](#). We hope to see you there!

Thank you for your support of crane conservation. Thanks especially to the [Tennessee Ornithological Society](#), who recently donated \$10,000 to the [International Crane Foundation](#) in support of our Whooping Crane outreach programs. To learn more about the [International Crane Foundation](#) and to become a member, please visit our website at www.savingcranes.org.

Checking In On Wisconsin's Whooping Cranes

To listen to an August 2015 (Wisconsin Public Radio/NPR) interview with International Crane Foundation's Crane Research Coordinator, Anne E. Lacy click here:

<http://www.wpr.org/listen/804931>

Eastern Crane Population as of November 2015

For those interested in an update on the eastern migratory population of Whooping Cranes check out this PDF prepared by the [Whooping Crane Eastern Partnership](#) (WCEP). In the PDF click on "hatch year" to view more information about individual Whooping Cranes.

<http://www.bringbackthecranes.org/pdf/PopList11Nov2015.pdf>

Fall 2015 Ultralight-led Migration

For daily Operation Migration Field Journal updates, click here:

<http://operationmigration.org/InTheField/>

For a map showing where the ultralights/juvenile Whoopers are, click here:

[Daily Field Journal updates; map of progress](#)

Whooper friends seek military solutions to habitat loss along migration route

To date, Chester McConnell, president of [Friends of the Wild Whoopers](#), and Felipe Chavez-Ramirez, director of [Conservation Programs for the Gulf Coast Bird Observatory](#), have visited eight of the 46 military bases along the 200 mile-wide Whooping Crane migration corridor within North and South Dakota, Nebraska, Kansas, Oklahoma and Texas. Within those eight bases and camps, they've identified 43 wetland sites that could become Whooping Crane migration stops with little or no effort. Perhaps hundreds of additional sites could be readied with additional work, McConnell said.

"This is a very worthwhile and innovative endeavor," Wade Harrell, Whooping Crane recovery coordinator at the [Aransas National Wildlife Refuge](#) said. "It's certainly a niche that hasn't been fully explored and (the Department of Defense) has a number of military installations that have potential Whooping Crane habitat throughout the migration corridor. I've encouraged Chester and [Friends of the Wild Whoopers](#) to continue pursuing this."

Establishing these rest and refueling stations for the Whooping Cranes is possible, in part, through the [U.S. Department of Defense Partners in Flight program](#), a federally funded habitat-based management effort. The program's mission is to help species at risk, to keep common birds common and to engage in voluntary conservation partnerships for birds and bird habitats.

Read an article by [David Sikes](#) of the Caller Times here:

<http://friendsofthewildwhoopers.org/whooper-friends-seek-military-solutions-to-habitat-loss/>

Become a "Friend" of the Wild Whoopers and help their continuing work to secure stopover resting habitats along the 2,500 mile migration corridor and winter habitat around Aransas Refuge, here: <http://friendsofthewildwhoopers.org/support-fotww/become-friend-wild-whoopers/>

Great Plains stopover site use by Whooping Cranes

Upon review of the recent U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) report, [Friends of the Wild Whoopers](#) (FOTWW) was pleased to see that its efforts to identify, protect and manage stopover habitats was precisely on target. Most importantly, the USGS study will enable FOTWW to focus on stopover project efforts in the most needed areas.

Read more here:

<http://friendsofthewildwhoopers.org/whooping-crane-stopover-site-use-intensity-within-the-great-plains-usgs/>

To read the full USGS report "Whooping Crane Stopover Site Use Intensity Within the Great Plains," and to download a PDF of the report, click here:

<http://pubs.usgs.gov/of/2015/1166/ofr2015-1166.pdf>

Habitat matters!

Editor's note: *Habitat, crucial to wildlife as well as to the health of the environment, is disappearing at an alarming rate due to development. This makes conservation efforts by collaboration between public and private sectors even more important. The following stories are examples of this collaboration. Whether by landowners electing to place their land in a range of conservation easements (wetlands, agricultural, etc.); farmers working with refuges to coordinate use of precious water resources; an EPA clean-up resulting in a new nature preserve; farmers practicing good land stewardship that benefits not only their farm but the wildlife subsequently drawn to it, or by landowners adding to an Important Birding Area through the purchase of adjacent lands with critical habitat – it is proven that if the habitat is there, birds and wildlife will come. Thanks for being an example for others to follow!*

Walmart and National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) announce renewal of *Acres for America* program

On November 17, 2015 Walmart and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) announced a 10-year, \$35 million renewal of the [Acres for America](#) program, "one of the most effective public-private partnerships in the history of U.S. conservation efforts." In its first 10 years, the program protected more than 1 million acres through 61 projects in 33 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico. "With this renewal, Walmart and NFWF are committed to doubling this success in the next decade."

"The need for effective public-private partnerships for conservation has never been greater," said Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell. "I applaud NFWF and Walmart for their continued commitment through the successful [Acres for America](#) program to preserve and protect some of our nation's most important lands."

In 2014 the project helped make possible the Texas Powderhorn Ranch acquisition on Matagorda Bay to conserve 17,351 acres of tidal bay shoreline, emergent wetlands, and wet prairies supporting waterfowl, raptors, terns and wading birds. In addition to conserving critical habitat for endangered species such as the federally endangered Whooping Crane, this acquisition created a corridor for wildlife between conservation areas and provided new areas of public access to the outdoors.

For additional information about the *Acres for America* program, please click [here](#).

For a detailed *Acres for America* Grant Slate 2005-2014, please click [here](#).

Read more here: <http://www.digitaljournal.com/pr/2747577>

California:

Teamwork Helps Birds Survive California's Drought

Agriculture and development in the Central Valley has filled in 95 percent of the original wetland habitat. A mere [205,000 acres](#) of managed Central Valley wetlands remain for millions of migrating birds, and California's four years of [severe drought](#) hasn't helped. Each year, less and less water is allotted to the

refuges. Since the rise of agriculture in the Central Valley, little if any wetland habitat would exist without the dedication of conservationists and landowners. The following are three ways California refuges and land managers have learned to make the most out of their limited water:

1. Getting the Timing Right
2. Distributing the "Wealth" Where It's Needed the Most
3. Collaborating with Farmers to Create "Pop-Up" Wetlands

To read about the 3-tiered collaborative effort to provide habitat for migrants in this period of severe drought, click here:

<https://www.audubon.org/news/3-ways-teamwork-helps-birds-survive-californias-drought>

For more information by the U.S. Geological Survey on California's drought, click here:

<http://ca.water.usgs.gov/data/drought/>

Iowa:

[From Wasteland to Treasure: Nahant Marsh Marks 15 Years as a Nature Preserve](#)

The 265-acre Nahant Marsh in southwest Davenport, Iowa was used as a sportsman's club from 1969 to 1995. As a result, an estimated 240 tons of lead-shot pellets settled in the Nahant Marsh silt. After the effects of lead poisoning began to be seen in both the marsh wildlife and vegetation, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) began a massive clean-up effort to remove the lead from the marsh.

After its recovery, Nahant Marsh became a nature preserve, part of a 513-acre wetland complex bordered by the Mississippi River, Interstate 280, and Highway 22. Made up of different habitats including bottomland forest, open-water habitat, and a marsh – all surrounded by suburban, industrial, and agricultural land, Nahant Marsh is an important stopover area for thousands of migrating birds in the Mississippi flyway as well as a nesting area for many ducks and geese and year-round habitat for other wildlife.

"We know it's the largest urban wetland between St. Paul and St. Louis" along the Mississippi River, said Executive Director Brian Ritter. "We think it's one of the largest urban wetlands in the United States."

Read about the history of Nahant Marsh here:

http://www.fws.gov/contaminants/documents/nahant_web.pdf

and more about the Nahant Marsh education center here: <http://nahantmarsh.org/>

Michigan:

Goat farm first in Michigan certified for wildlife-friendly practices

Ronald and Suzanne Klein's [Windshadow Farm](#) in Bangor was the first in Michigan to be recognized as [Certified Wildlife Friendly](#), a designation earned by their stewardship of wetlands and habitat for species from amphibians and reptiles to ground-nesting birds, migrating Sandhill Cranes and a host of raptors.

In nearly 5 years at its present location, careful nutrient management has resulted in improved soil, pasture, and habitat on Windshadow Farm's 46 acres. Instead of draining seasonally-wet areas, the farm has developed a management intensive grazing system around them. "We maintain a grassed perimeter around our pastures and time our hay crop and grazing to protect ground-nesting birds and capture rain water," Ron said.

Nebraska:

Rowe Sanctuary cleans up tracts while offering tours of new land

Until recently most visitors had never seen many of the interesting features hidden away on the [Lilian Annette Rowe Sanctuary](#)'s 2,400-plus acres along the Platte River. However, thanks to guided tours now offered by the [Iain Nicolson Audubon Center](#) staff, the public has the opportunity to learn how the different features are managed to benefit migrating Sandhill Cranes and endangered Whooping Cranes, and other birds, mammals and amphibians.

Director of Conservation Andrew Pierson said managing the Younkin property and other Rowe grasslands can involve grazing, haying and occasional prescribed burning to remove invasive species and give the native plants a better chance to thrive.

All management skills learned at Rowe over more than 40 years will be applied as a big new project begins to integrate the 590-acre Pierce tract, acquired earlier this year, with adjacent properties. On the south side of the Platte River, Younkin is on the west and the John J. Dinan Memorial Bird Conservation Area is to the east.

According to Rowe Director Bill Taddicken the [Pierce property](#) fills a gap for Rowe and gives the sanctuary about 4½ miles of contiguous riverfront and adjacent land. Tying the Younkin-Pierce project into other grasslands to the east will give Rowe Sanctuary one of the largest continuous grasslands in the Platte Valley.

Read more about the cleanup and new land tracts here:

http://www.theindependent.com/news/regional/kearney/sanctuary-cleaning-up-tracts-while-offering-tours-of-new-land/article_21bd4789-289f-5e83-9314-2b19ae7cdb0d.html

Texas:

USDA helps Refugio families conserve wetlands

The United States Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service (USDA-NRCS) is working with farming families in Refugio County (county adjacent to Aransas Co. and the [Aransas National Wildlife Refuge](#)) to secure wetlands against development. The marshy wetlands in Refugio County are home to fish and wildlife, including the federally endangered Whooping Crane. Landowners are working with the USDA-NRCS by enrolling in their land in six wetland easements under the Wetlands Restoration Program through the Gulf of Mexico Initiative. *Thanks to all private citizens who place their lands in wetland easements!*

[Agricultural Conservation Easement Program](#) Wetland Reserve Easements

With the authorization of the 2014 Farm Bill, Wetlands Reserve Easements replaced the Wetland Reserve Program (WRP). Similar to WRP, Wetland Reserve Easements are designed to provide a financial incentive to private landowners to encourage the restoration of wetlands previously degraded and/or drained. The WRP and Wetland Reserve Easements has been a very popular program. It has enrolled approximately 2.6 million acres since the inception of WRP in 1990.

Most of this acreage has been enrolled in the permanent easement option; NRCS pays a per-acre easement fee, plus 100 percent of the cost to restore the agricultural lands back to natural wetland ecosystems. The landowner retains title, control of access, and hunting rights, but must protect the restored wetland ecosystem for future generations. The landowner can sell the land, but the easement (and protections) remain enforce for perpetuity.

For information from the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service on preserving and restoring wetlands, click here:

<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/water/wetlands/>

and here: <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/national/programs/easements/acep/>

Wisconsin:

Pines family purchases 'gem' along Wisconsin River adding to the Leopold-Pine Island Important Bird Area

Jim Pines described the 1,000-acre property along the Wisconsin River between Portage and Wisconsin Dells and adjacent to the Aldo Leopold National Historic Landmark in northeast Sauk County as a “beautiful environmental corridor.” He and his family considered this a chance to expand the conservation legacy of his father, Phil Pines.

The land, along with 2,600 acres the Pines family owns across the river, has been partnered in conservation through the [Leopold-Pine Island Important Bird Area](#) since 2005.

The IBA is about 12,000 acres and includes the [Aldo Leopold Foundation](#), Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Baraboo River Waterfowl Production Area. “Phill and Joan and other private landowners within this IBA truly are leading by example,” said Yoyi Steele, Wisconsin’s IBA Coordinator. The Pines are preserving and actively restoring 2,000 acres of forest, wetlands, and prairie, home to an array of breeding birds with very different habitat needs.

“Birds don’t care if they’re on public or private land, a wildlife area or a park, or a county forest or someone’s back forty,” Steele explained. “They care about habitats and the resources they need. Conservation will not be as effective if you don’t pay attention to the way birds use landscapes, and try to meet their needs across those landscapes.”

Read more about the Pine family here: <http://www.aldoleopold.org/Programs/iba.shtml>
Read about the Leopold-Pine Island Important Bird Area here: <http://www.aldoleopold.org/Programs/iba.shtml>

Environmental Impact Issues:

EPA Pulls Registration for Dow’s *Enlist Duo* Herbicide Citing High Toxicity Levels

In response to litigation, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), announced in November 2015 that it is revoking the registration of "*Enlist Duo*." Approved by the agency just over a year ago, *Enlist Duo* is a toxic combination of glyphosate and 2,4-D that Dow AgroSciences created for use on the next generation of genetically engineered crops, designed to withstand being drenched with this potent herbicide cocktail. In its court filing, the EPA stated it is taking this action after realizing that the combination of these chemicals is likely significantly more harmful than it had initially believed.

A coalition of conservation groups had challenged EPA’s failure to consider the impacts of *Enlist Duo* on threatened and endangered plants and animals protected under the Endangered Species Act. Slated for use in 15 states, including key states in the migration corridor of the only surviving wild population of Whooping Cranes in the world, the EPA agreed that Whooping Cranes “will stop to eat and may consume arthropod prey” that may have been exposed to 2,4-D, and that in sufficient amounts, such exposure is toxic to the cranes.

Read more from on the subject here:
<http://earthjustice.org/news/press/2015/epa-pulls-registration-for-dow-s-enlist-duo-herbicide-citing-high-toxicity-levels-0>

Read the [March 2015 Eastern Crane Bulletin](#) story here: [EPA approval of toxic herbicide may harm Whooping Cranes and Indiana Bats](#)

Environmental Impact Statement requested for proposed Dakota oil pipeline

Before a public hearing in early October 2015, South Dakota's Public Utilities Commission (PUC) ruled that an environmental impact statement will not be required for the proposed 1,143-mile Dakota Access Pipeline, designed to transport at least 450,000 barrels of crude oil from the Bakken Oil Fields in North Dakota across South Dakota to a hub in Patoka, Illinois.

Two hours before public hearings on the project began in the state's capitol, the Rosebud and Yankton Sioux Tribes, along with [Dakota Rural Action](#) and the [Indigenous Environmental Network](#), requested that the proceedings be stayed until an environmental impact statement could be generated.

"Because of the sensitive land areas over which this pipeline will traverse, we feel that it's imperative that a comprehensive environmental impact statement be performed prior to the Commission making a decision as to whether or not the pipeline should be authorized in South Dakota," attorney Matthew Rappold began on behalf of the groups. "An environmental review will provide the basis for a better, more informed decision for the commission in this case."

In a pre-filed testimony, PUC witness Tom Kirschenmann, a biologist with the South Dakota Department of Game, Fish and Parks, noted several endangered and threatened species along the pipeline's route, which enters the state to the north in Campbell County and continues southeast toward Iowa. The [Topeka Shiner](#) is the primary fish species along the pipeline route and on the endangered list.

Of particular concern is the Whooping Crane, of which only 400 remain in the world, according to [EarthJustice.org](#). Rappold claimed the proposed pipeline "crosses over some of the most pristine habitat left in the world for the Whooping Crane." While the biologist said habitat damage is a serious concern for any project of Dakota Access' magnitude, and that a spill could cause serious problems, depending on the magnitude, at that time he was not aware of any specific plans from Dakota Access to protect Whooping Crane habitat.

"Now the testimony and the application that we've read says, 'Well, we haven't really seen too many of them,'" Rappold added, referring to the cranes. "Well, you know what? There's a good reason you haven't seen many of them, because honestly, there are not too many left to be seen."

Read more here:

<http://www.courthousenews.com/2015/10/02/no-enviro-review-needed-for-dakota-oil-pipeline.htm>

and here:

<http://www.argusleader.com/story/news/2015/10/02/pipeline-impact-habitat-debated-puc/73240292/>

For a map of the proposed Dakota Access Pipeline route through North Dakota, South Dakota, Iowa and Illinois, click here: http://www.energytransfer.com/documents/DAPL_States_Counties.pdf

Science news:

Proposal for special registration of crane-repellent pesticide

The special registration proposed by the Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection will allow field and sweet corn growers to use [Avipel® Liquid Seed Treatment](#) and [Avipel® Hopper Box \(dry\) Corn Seed Treatment](#) on seed corn. Both contain the active ingredient 9,10-anthraquinone and are non-lethal.

Sandhill cranes dig in the soil to find seed corn, and can cause crop losses up to 60 percent. Avipel® is not lethal, but it has a bad taste and a laxative effect, so cranes learn to stop eating the seed corn. Of Wisconsin's four million acres of cornfields, three million are in areas where cranes are found.

[Arkion Life Sciences](#) manufactures Avipel® products. With support from the University of Wisconsin-Madison and the International Crane Foundation, the company sought the special local needs registration

to address the problem of crop damage from Sandhill Cranes.

The preliminary environmental assessment indicates that the proposed registration will not require a full environmental impact statement. This special pesticide registration will expire July 1, 2018.

Does growing up without parents make endangered birds more adaptable when choosing habitat?

In Vladimir Dinets' 2015 article, "*Can interrupting parent-offspring cultural transmission be beneficial? The case of Whooping Crane reintroduction*," he says that "Many animals learn some of their behavior, such as avoiding humans and choosing the right habitat, from their parents. This learning is called 'cultural transmission of behavior.' Usually it's a good thing for the young, But in our rapidly changing world, this learning of 'traditional' behavior can make the young animals less adaptable, for example, if they have to survive in human-modified habitats with lots of human disturbance...."

According to the research, historical records and recent observations show that the Aransas- Wood Buffalo population (AWBP) of Whooping Cranes has relatively narrow habitat preferences. In summer they inhabit large open wetlands of a particular type, surrounded by boreal forests. In winter they live in extensive wetlands with good visibility, occasionally move to drier grasslands or croplands, and only rarely use small ponds surrounded by open woodland. Historically, wild Whooping Cranes in Louisiana occurred almost exclusively in wet, partially flooded prairies. Reintroduced cranes from captive populations do not show such narrow habitat use. They use natural marshes, agricultural fields, pastures, vacant lots overgrown with tall grass, shores of suburban lakes and reservoirs, small forest clearings, and even dense floodplain forests.

To learn more read Vladimir Dinets' research article, "*Can interrupting parent-offspring cultural transmission be beneficial? The case of Whooping Crane reintroduction*," click here: <http://www.aoucospubs.org/doi/full/10.1650/CONDOR-15-70.1>

To download a pdf of the article, click here: "[Can interrupting parent-offspring cultural transmission be beneficial? The case of Whooping Crane reintroduction](#)"

Article Citation:

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Kudos!

Dr. George Archibald Receives Prestigious Conservation Leadership Award

Dr. George Archibald, Co-Founder and Senior Conservationist of the [International Crane Foundation](#), was honored for his lifelong dedication to cranes and their habitats by the Chicago Zoological Society. Dr. Archibald received the prestigious George B. Rabb Conservation Medal during the 12th annual Conservation Leadership Awards Dinner on September 30, 2015.

Read more about the award and Dr. Archibald here:

<https://www.savingcranes.org/dr-george-archibald-to-receive-prestigious-conservation-leadership-award/>

Local nature writer Pete Ottesen honored by Sandhill Crane Festival

The Lodi, California Sandhill Crane Festival Steering Committee selected Pete Ottesen as recipient of its *2015 Sandhill Crane Festival Conservation Award* for his extensive work in habitat conservation and for his 35 years of conservation education. Following the toxic disaster at [Kesterson National Wildlife Refuge](#), Ottesen documented the need for an adequate supply of good-quality, well-timed water for the Grassland Ecological Area and Central Valley Refuges. His efforts helped create the Central Valley Project Improvement Act of 1992.

To read more click here:

http://www.lodinews.com/news/article_93bc6324-7e09-11e5-8007-473b598ead05.html

To read more about the Central Valley Project click here:

http://www.usbr.gov/projects/Project.jsp?proj_Name=Central+Valley+Project

Sandhill Crane Festival: Conservation Farmer Award announced

At the same festival in Lodi, the Sandhill Crane Festival Steering Committee selected the Johnson family to receive the *2015 Sandhill Crane Festival Conservation Farmer Award*. The award, funded by the Morrissey Family Foundation, recognizes an area farmer whose farming practices enhance habitat for cranes and other migratory species that winter in the region.

In 1908 Mike Johnson's great-grandfather bought 20 acres in the vicinity of the Cosumnes River, and several generations of the Johnsons grew up in the family home built on the property. In 1929 another 575 acres were added to the farm and in the late 1990s, the Johnson family, in collaboration with The Nature Conservancy, purchased the Desmond and Wilder ranches creating a consolidated Johnson Farm of about 1,300 acres.

The Nature Conservancy holds easements on both of those properties that assure the protection of habitat values for cranes and waterfowl.

Read more about the Johnson family farm conservation efforts here:

http://www.lodinews.com/news/article_76c4fce4-7ed2-11e5-bb86-7ff907ff0d80.html

Southern Company supports [Operation Migration's](#) annual journey for eighth consecutive year

Through its *Power of Flight* program, Southern Company is partnering with the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) for the eighth consecutive year to sponsor Operation Migration's efforts to reintroduce the endangered Whooping Crane.

"The Whooping Crane ranks as one of the world's most majestic birds, and also one of its most imperiled," said NFWF Executive Director and CEO Jeff Trandahl. "[Operation Migration's](#) use of ultralight aircraft to teach young cranes how to migrate serves as an inspiring conservation success story. All of us at the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation are proud to support this program."

Launched in 2003, Southern Company's *Power of Flight* program strives to restore and revive the populations and habitats of southern birds through habitat restoration and environmental education. The program is the largest public/private funding effort for bird conservation in the south United States.

Read more about the projects funded by Southern Company's Power of Flight program here:

<http://www.marketwatch.com/story/southern-company-supports-operation-migrations-annual-journey-for-eighth-consecutive-year-2015-10-12>

Louisiana:

[Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries](#) (LDWF) Whooping Crane reintroduction program has released cranes into the wild from [White Lake Wetlands Conservation Area](#) each year since 2011. The birds have dispersed over time to locations that include east Texas, and Whooping Cranes now frequent Acadia, Avoyelles, Calcasieu, Cameron, Jefferson Davis, Rapides and Vermilion parishes in Louisiana.

Anyone encountering Whooping Cranes in the wild is advised to observe them from a distance and minimize any disturbance. Hunters are cautioned to positively identify their targets as game birds before shooting. Although Whooping Cranes in Louisiana are considered an “experimental, non-essential population” under the Endangered Species Act, they are still protected by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and cannot be pursued, harassed, captured or killed.

Anyone witnessing Whooping Cranes being pursued, harassed, captured or killed is urged to call the LDWF Enforcement Division’s Game Thief hotline at [1-800-442-2511](tel:1-800-442-2511) to report what they’ve seen.

Rice And Crawfish Farmers Play Key Part In Louisiana’s Whooping Crane Restoration

The [Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries](#) (LDWF) records indicate that some Whooping Cranes spend considerable time on rice/crawfish farmlands, whereas some stay in marshes or pastureland. Indeed, most wildlife in the south is found on private land. Therefore, the success and progress of the Whooping Crane reintroduction program and the conservation achievements made thus far is due, in part, to the rice/crawfish producers of Louisiana.

Currently, there are a maximum of 35 cranes in Louisiana, including a few summering in Texas. However, the majority including six breeding pairs are scattered about the [Cajun Prairie](#) and the [Chenier coastal plain marshes](#).

"Species conservation and restoration is highly dependent on the support of private landowners, and we hope that you will help us to restore a unique part of Louisiana’s natural heritage back to the Cajun Prairie. Thank you for your good stewardship." – Robert Love, *Louisiana Coastal Nongame Resources Division Administrator*

For contact information and to read more by Robert Love, Louisiana Coastal Nongame Resources Division Administrator, click here:

<http://agfax.com/2015/10/01/rice-crawfish-farmers-play-big-part-whooping-crane-restoration-bayou-state/>

*For a printable LDWF **Whooping Crane Reporting Form**, and for information on how to report WHCRs seen in the eastern and western U.S. click here:*

<http://www.wlf.louisiana.gov/webform/whooping-crane-reporting-form>

*For an excellent **Whooping Crane identification sheet** by the Louisiana Department of Wildlife & Fisheries click here:*

http://www.wlf.louisiana.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/document/34616-whooping-crane-identification-fact-sheet/whooping_crane_fact_sheet.pdf

Mississippi:

Mississippi Sandhill Crane National Refuge celebrates 40 years

The 19,300-acre refuge was the first created under the Endangered Species Act of 1973. It protects an endangered subspecies of Sandhill Cranes with a current population of 100 individuals. Decline of this subspecies is primarily due to loss of habitat due to the conversion of open pine savanna to pine plantations created following World War II and fire suppression practices. A celebration is scheduled for Saturday, December 5, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the refuge visitor's center in Gautier, MS.

Read more about the Mississippi Cranes here:

http://www.fws.gov/refuge/Mississippi_Sandhill_Crane/wildlife_and_habitat/mississippi_sandhill_crane.html

For additional stories of the refuge see the March, September and December 2014 issues of the Eastern Crane Bulletin [click here](#).

Missouri:

Captive-hatched Sandhill Crane released at refuge

This fall marked the first release of a captive-hatched Sandhill Crane colt in Missouri. "Clyde" was released at the [Squaw Creek National Wildlife Refuge](#) in northwest Missouri where a group of Sandhills reside. The release was a partnership effort among the Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC), World Bird Sanctuary (WBS), and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Walter C. Crawford, Jr., the late founder and executive director of [World Bird Sanctuary](#) located near St. Louis, acquired the parent cranes, a pair of non-releasable Sandhill cranes, Shawnee and Menomenee, two years ago from Wisconsin. The pair laid and faithfully incubated the egg, then raised the youngster, all under the watchful eye of Crawford. Sandhill Cranes are a species of conservation concern within the state. The release of the crane into the wild in Missouri was to honor Crawford.

Read more here: <http://mdc.mo.gov/newsroom/mdc-assists-sandhill-crane-release-refuge>

Nebraska:

Whooping Cranes continue at Father Hupp WMA, Thayer Co., Nebraska

Six wild Whooping Cranes first reported at the Hupp WMA on Friday, November 13, finally departed on December 1 to continue their southward migration to Texas. Records since 1941 indicate that the cranes' stopover of 19 days ties the fourth longest known stopover during fall migration in Nebraska. According to Chester McConnell of [Friends of the Wild Whoopers](#), this extended period of time is unusual as migratory stopovers by the cranes to rest and eat usually last only several days before the birds move on. It is only the third time in Nebraska records that Whoopers have stayed into December during fall migration. The 160-acre [Rainwater Basin wetland](#) underwent an extensive restoration in 2013. Ground water is pumped into the wetland each fall to provide habitat for migratory waterbirds as well as for waterfowl hunting. Hupp WMA was closed to hunting while the federally endangered Whooping Cranes were present but is now open to the public.

For photos click here:

<http://magazine.outdoornebraska.gov/2015/11/father-hupp-wmwhooping-cranes/>
<http://magazine.outdoornebraska.gov/2015/11/more-whooping-action-at-hupp/>

Controversial sand and gravel permit approved

Despite strong opposition by the [Crane Trust](#) and its supporters to a conditional use permit to Vontz Paving of Hastings to create a sand and gravel pit and temporary asphalt plant on 150 acres of cropland just west of the Crane Trust, the permit was recently approved.

According to [Crane Trust](#) President and Chief Executive Officer Chuck Cooper, in March 2015 the visitor center had 35,000 visitors from all 50 states and 51 foreign countries. Among the annual visitors to the center is Jane Goodall, world-renowned chimpanzee researcher, who is an advocate for animals and the environment worldwide. The trust recently spent more than \$2 million to upgrade the visitor center and create walking trails and viewing bridges. Opponents to the permit felt the sand and gravel operation would create noise, dust and leave the land unable to be restored to native prairie in the future.

In a compromise Vontz Paving and the [Crane Trust](#) agreed to 18 conditions that will allow the sand and gravel pit to operate but will lessen the impact it will have on the migrating Whooping Cranes, Sandhill Cranes and on the tourists who come to the nature center to learn more about them. Some of the conditions addressed include excessive light, noise levels, native plantings as a visual barrier and mining and hauling restrictions. These conditions are expected to be approved as part of a 10-year conditional use permit.

Read more here:

http://www.theindependent.com/news/local/strong-opposition-to-sand-and-gravel-pit/article_7b9b3bd6-56a3-11e5-93a8-db5a0f7d1192.html

and here:

http://www.theindependent.com/news/local/controversial-sand-and-gravel-permit-negotiated/article_421c429c-76d8-11e5-8ef9-5fabcae9b8f2.html

Texas:

Guadalupe River saltwater barrier putting Whoopers and sea turtles at risk?

The Guadalupe River saltwater barrier is to prevent saltwater from coming upstream during times of drought. The barrier is activated by inflating a fabridam (inflatable dam) causing upstream water to pool to the desired operating level of four feet, with most of the water still flowing over the bags and downstream to San Antonio Bay. A two- to four-foot drop in water level is possible from the upstream to the downstream side of the Salt Water Barrier when the bags are inflated. During periods when the fabridam bags are not in operation they are completely deflated and lie flat on the river bottom allowing normal flows of the river to pass through without restriction.

Attorney [Jim Blackburn](#), president of the Matagorda Bay Foundation, questions whether the Guadalupe River saltwater barrier is allowing enough freshwater to reach the bay to maintain the blue crab, a food source for two endangered species there, the Whooping Crane and Kemp's Ridley sea turtle. When the permit for the barrier was approved in 1964 by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers its subsequent impact on Whooping Cranes was not taken into consideration as the Endangered Species Act was not passed until 1973.

The Matagorda Bay Foundation sent a letter to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in early November, 2015 asking for a formal review of the inflatable barrier under the Endangered Species Act.

"The freshwater inflow is critical to the ecological health of the bay. It's critical for whooping cranes. It's critical for fishing. It's critical for birds and any kind of living thing that uses the estuary system. A healthy

bay also means a healthy economy for coastal towns. If we ensure these freshwater inflows, we will heal the major illness of the Texas Coast." – James B. Blackburn

Read more here:

<https://www.victoriaadvocate.com/news/2015/nov/11/attorney-brings-whoopers-into-water-fight-again/>

For a map and information about the Guadalupe River Basin, San Antonio River Basin, San Antonio–Nueces Coastal Basin, and Portion of Bays and Estuaries, click here:

http://www.tceq.texas.gov/publications/gj/gj-316/gj-316_basin18-20.html/at_download/file

Whooping Cranes on Lamar Peninsula, TX

Lamar Peninsula is a relatively small peninsula between Copano Bay and St. Charles Bay. Just across St. Charles Bay is the [Aransas National Wildlife Refuge](#) where the majority of the original population of Whooping Cranes winter. Most of the Lamar Peninsula is privately owned with small acreages owned by the State of Texas and Aransas National Wildlife Refuge. The Lamar Peninsula is becoming known by Whooping Crane enthusiasts as one of the most easily accessible places where one is very likely to observe wild Whooping Cranes outside the protected refuge areas.

This past winter Felipe Chavez-Ramirez and Lijn Zeng of the [Gulf Coast Bird Observatory](#), studied the Lamar Whoopers to better understand their ecology – distribution and movement patterns – and to see how the cranes were adjusting to winter outside the refuge. During their research the biologists observed that on many occasions the Whooping Cranes on Lamar spent the night together at a communal roost. This is rather rare behavior, as it is not commonly observed in other areas where cranes spend the winter. On both Aransas and Matagorda Island Whooping Cranes spend the night in their territories generally as a pair (male and female) or family (pair plus young).

Read more by Felipe Chavez-Ramirez and Lijin Zeng of the Gulf Coast Bird Observatory here:

<http://friendsofthewildwhoopers.org/whooping-cranes-on-lamar-peninsula/>

Wintering Whooping Crane Update

According to Wade Harrell of the U.S. Whooping Crane Recovery Team, an adult Whooping Crane was the first to arrive on the Texas coast this season. It was spotted by four boat guides on 19 September on San Jose Island. At the end of October there were several reports about Whooping Cranes still on the staging grounds in the Saskatchewan prairies of Canada, and a radio-marked family group was still in [Wood Buffalo National Park](#). As of November 4, only one of 13 Whooping Cranes with active radio transmitters had arrived on the Texas coast. In early November Whooping Cranes were spread out across their range, all the way from their northern breeding grounds to their southern wintering grounds. The mild fall in the northern plains states appeared to have contributed to a delayed migration. Biologists at the [Northern Prairie Research Center](#) in North Dakota estimated migration of cranes and waterfowl was about two weeks behind schedule.

For additional USFWS reports of the wintering Whooping Cranes at Aransas, click here:

<http://www.fws.gov/nwrs/threecolumn.aspx?id=2147580596>

Update: Eastern Population of Sandhill Crane hunting seasons

Large waterbirds identification chart

As hunting seasons begin it is crucial to correctly identify birds when in the field to avoid accidental shooting/killing of federally protected species – especially the endangered Whooping Crane.

For an identification chart prepared by the International Crane Foundation click here:

https://www.savingcranes.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/large_waterbird_id_1200.jpg

Kentucky:

Sandhill Crane season opens December 12, 2015 and closes January 10, 2016. The daily and season bag limit is two birds. Hunters are selected by lottery and must pass an online identification exam before receiving a Sandhill Crane hunting permit. The season closes once hunters' reports reach the quota of 400 Sandhill Cranes. Hunters must monitor the Kentucky Fish and Wildlife website at fw.ky.gov daily for notices involving season closure and for the presence of Whooping Cranes in Kentucky. Hunters may also call [1-800-858-1549](tel:1-800-858-1549) for this information.

Tennessee:

The limited Sandhill Crane hunting season for a designated zone in southeast Tennessee is open during the late waterfowl season on Nov. 28-29 and December 5, 2015 through January 1, 2016. The 400 permits (three cranes per permit) issued are not valid until a verifiable "Sandhill Test" validation code is written on each permit. The purpose of this test (available online) is to improve hunter's awareness and ability to distinguish between Sandhill Cranes and protected species which may be encountered while hunting.

2015-2016 Crane Festivals and Events:

[Holiday with the Cranes on Galveston Island](#)

December 11-13, 2015

Holiday with the Cranes is a new island experience that offers nature enthusiasts a unique opportunity to spend a weekend observing and celebrating the flocks of Sandhill Cranes that migrate through Galveston each winter. Events include indoor and outdoor nature activities and presentations, combined with the arts and ambiance of historical Galveston Island.

For additional details on festival events and to register visit:

<http://www.galvestonnaturetourism.org/holidaywiththecranes.asp>

[Festival of the Cranes](#)

Saturday, January 9th - Sunday, January 10th, 2016

Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge

Decatur, Alabama

[256-350-6639](tel:256-350-6639)

<http://www.fws.gov/nwrs/threecolumn.aspx?id=2147530985>

[Hiwassee Crane Festival](#)

Saturday, January 16 - Sunday, January 17, 2016

Birchwood, Tennessee

<https://www.tn.gov/twra/article/sandhill-crane-festival>

20th annual Whooping Crane Festival

Thursday, February 25 - Sunday, February 28, 2016

Port Aransas and Mustang Island, Texas

<http://www.whoopingcranefestival.org/>

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For archived issues of the *Eastern Crane Bulletin* click here:

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

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