



EASTERN CRANE BULLETIN

June 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.

Thousands of protected birds killed annually by Wildlife Services

In 2012 [Tom Knudson](#) (a Pulitzer Prize winning writer), while working as an investigative reporter at the *Sacramento Bee*, wrote a series of articles spotlighting the workings of a little known branch of the federal Department of Agriculture called Wildlife Services (WS). Only through the Freedom of Information Act was he able to obtain information about the group that has long specialized in killing animals that are deemed a threat to agriculture, the public and – more recently – the environment.

Wildlife Services (known as the Branch of Predator and Rodent Control until 1997 when it was renamed) had its beginnings in 1915, when Congress – in an effort to increase beef production for World War I – allocated \$125,000 to exterminate wolves, starting in Nevada. Over time the federal WS group has operated out of public sight with carte blanche in its methods for eradicating and then reporting "nuisance" wildlife to the USDA.

With steel traps, wire snares and spring-loaded sodium cyanide poison cartridges, agency employees have killed more than 50,000 animals (150 species) since 2000 that were *not* problems, including federally protected Golden and Bald Eagles; more than 1,100 dogs, including family pets; and several species considered rare or imperiled by wildlife biologists. According to former Wildlife Services employees many of the deaths go unreported.

If a migratory bird (protected by the 1918 Bird Migratory Act) is causing economic damage (such as destroying crops), posing a risk to humans (airports) or doing some other type of damage, a landowner can ask the Fish and Wildlife Service to approve the "lethal take," or killing, of the problem birds. In order to get a permit, applicants must explain what nonlethal measures they've tried and why they didn't work. The idea is to demonstrate that killing the birds is a last resort. Unable to check on all requests, the USFWS relies on Wildlife Services for followup. Landowners awarded permits often contract Wildlife Services to do the work. According to a 2011-2013 report by [U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service "Birds killed under depredation permits,"](#) 4,565 Sandhill Cranes, 55 Greater Sandhills and 6 Florida Sandhill Cranes were killed.

It seems ironic that millions of dollars are spent by both state government and federal government to preserve the very species Wildlife Services then turns around and kills.

For more information on the subject please read the following:

This short documentary, "EXPOSED," won Best Short at the 2015 Animal Film Festival and Best Wildlife Activism at the 2014 Wildlife Conservation Film Festival, the premier wildlife film festival in North America.

Film: "EXPOSED: USDA's Secret War on Wildlife"

<http://www.predatordefense.org/exposed/index.htm>

Shot and gassed: Thousands of protected birds killed annually

(REVEAL-from the Center of Investigative Reporting May 13, 2015)

<https://www.revealnews.org/article/shot-and-gassed-thousands-of-protected-birds-killed-annually/>

There's a reason you've never heard of this wildlife-killing agency

(REVEAL-Tom Knudson, February 4, 2015)

<https://www.revealnews.org/article/theres-a-reason-youve-never-heard-of-this-wildlife-killing-agency/>

The killing agency: Wildlife Services' brutal methods leave a trail of animal death (April 28, 2012)

<http://www.sacbee.com/news/investigations/wildlife-investigation/article2574599.html>

Canada:

Wood Buffalo National Park Whooping Crane tours on hold

In a recent article in the [Northern Journal](#), the Salt River First Nation (SRFN) announced it will file an injunction to stop Wood Buffalo National Park's (WBNP) new Whooping Crane tour program, citing a lack of consultation by the federal government agency with First Nations on the initiative. This failure to consult with the Salt River First Nation breaks a 1922 promise made by Parks Canada to the band concerning activities within Wood Buffalo. SRFN Chief Frieda Martselos said the decision to put a halt to the "Wood Buffalo Whooping Crane Experience" was made during a council meeting held May 21, 2015.

The tours were set to start May 25, with several excursions taking place over the course of the summer. Different experiential packages range from \$1,400 to \$3,900 and include everything from flights over the cranes' nesting grounds to hikes into a blind, set up only a few hundred yards from the nesting habitat. This close proximity to nesting cranes as well as the proposed, low ceiling for both fixed wing aircraft and helicopters flyovers could possibly cause enough disturbance to result in Whooping Cranes abandoning eggs or chicks to the weather and predators.

According to a Parks Canada spokesperson, the May hike-in tours were cancelled because no cranes have nested near the observation blind built by officials at Wood Buffalo National Park on the Alberta-Northwest Territories boundary. Despite the cancellation, Parks Canada remains committed to its "exceptional tourism product" that will highlight crane conservation efforts, provide local communities with economic benefits and offer a unique way for Canadians to build a meaningful connection to this endangered, charismatic species. Additional tours remain scheduled for August.

[Friends of the Wild Whoopers, \(FOTWW\)](#) was given permission in March 2015 to post on its website the following article, [Crane Expectations: Selling the Whoop](#) by Jack Danylchuk. Mr. Danylchuk is a Canadian journalist based in Yellowknife, Northwest Territories, who writes on business, politics and natural resources. His article (originally published at EdgeYk.com) provides a thought-provoking look at "monetizing" the wilderness experience through Whooping Cranes.

Louisiana:

Two young pairs of Whooping Cranes lay eggs without success

As happened with Whooping Cranes L7-11 and L8-11 in 2014, the pair again nested and incubated eggs that proved to be infertile (not unusual with younger birds). The Louisiana Dept. of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF) biologists were pleased to report however that another pair, L1-11 & L6-11 nested for the first time in the marsh at White Lake in early April. Unfortunately, heavy rains flooded the nest and it was abandoned. Biologists collected the surviving egg which was found to have been fertile although no

longer viable. While this is not the outcome LDFW was hoping for in the 2015 season, one fertile egg out of four is certainly a step in the right direction.

Read more about the nesting activity here: <http://www.wlf.louisiana.gov/blog-post/louisiana-whooping-crane-nesting-activity-2013-2015-update>

Read more about the 2015 nesting news here: <http://www.wlf.louisiana.gov/blog-post/good-news-bad-news-good-news-bad-news-follow-2015-nesting-season>

Singer-songwriter Zachary Richard speaks out on behalf of LA Whooping Cranes

As mentioned in the March issue of the *Eastern Crane Bulletin*, LDWF now has a Whooping Crane public awareness television message featuring Louisiana singer-songwriter and environmentalist Zachary Richard. Underwritten by Chevron, the TV message can be viewed here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nsMuaKTrCbk>

Read about LDWF's public awareness efforts here: <http://www.wlf.la.gov/news/38888>

Learn more about the Louisiana flock here: <http://www.wlf.louisiana.gov/wildlife/whooping-cranes>

Minnesota:

Overlapping Sandhill populations focus of study

In recent years both the Sandhill Cranes from the Midcontinent Population that migrate through Nebraska and breed predominantly in northwest Minnesota, and the Eastern Population of Sandhill Cranes that migrate to the Southeast U.S. and breed primarily in the east-central part of the state, have expanded their ranges within the state.

In a current study, cranes are fitted with GPS transmitters to track their movements so biologists may learn more about the two population segments and determine the extent to which their Minnesota breeding ranges overlap. Much of the fieldwork focuses, therefore, on a swath of western and north-central Minnesota that lies between the historic breeding ranges of the two population segments including areas such as Becker, Clearwater, Hubbard and Beltrami counties. The findings could impact northwest Minnesota, where the DNR has offered a Sandhill Crane hunting season since 2010.

The bulk of the study is being funded by the Legislative Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources – a partnership between the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Minnesota Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit.

Read more about the work here: <http://www.grandforksherald.com/outdoors/wildlife/3745485-minnesota-study-focuses-sandhill-cranes>

Nebraska:

Ongoing work in wetland and habitat conservation recognized

Tim Smith of Grand Island, Nebraska was one of three recipients recently presented with the [Rainwater Basin Joint Venture's \(RWBJV\)](#) Wetland Stewardship Award that recognizes significant contributions to wetland and habitat conservation in the Rainwater Basin and Nebraska's mixed-grass prairie regions.

For four years before assuming the position of land manager at the [Crane Trust](#) in 2014, Smith was the RWBJV's wetland habitat specialist who worked with private landowners on wetland restoration projects and to secure easements, as well as helping public land managers with land management activities throughout 21 counties in central and eastern Nebraska.

Smith now works with others at the Crane Trust to preserve and maintain 10,000 acres of critical habitat along the [Big Bend Reach](#) of the Platte River managed by the Crane Trust. While the Sandhill migration season only lasts a few months each year, maintaining the habitat entrusted to the Crane Trust is a year-round responsibility.

Read more about the Crane Trust here: <http://cranetrust.org/>

Read more about managing critical habitat here:

http://www.theindependent.com/news/local/g-i-man-honored-for-his-work-in-conservation/article_09048910-cb89-11e4-a576-4b6edc921ae3.html

Platte Basin Timelapse Project

[Into the Current: A community works to conserve wildlife habitat along the central Platte River in Nebraska.](#)

Explore this new, beautifully produced [interactive multimedia piece](#) that focuses on the history of land use change and conservation work in the central Platte region. The interactive map is divided into three sections 1) Settlement: 1800s - 1930s; 2) Awareness 1930s - 1980s; 3) Recovery 1980s - Today. Historic photos, videos, maps, and interviews are just some of what can be accessed.

Start here: <http://projects.plattebasintimelapse.com/into-the-current/settlement/#>

Learn more about the Whooping Crane recovery efforts [here](#).

Learn more about the "ancient travelers" - Sandhill Cranes [here](#).

"This project is part of the [Platte Basin Timelapse](#) project which puts an entire watershed in motion, revealing stories about our most precious resource: water."

Sanctuary volunteer "craniacs" help put cranes on the map

In the mid-1970's the Audubon Society established the [Lillian Annette Rowe Audubon Society Sanctuary](#) near Gibbon, Nebraska with 782 acres. The sanctuary now encompasses more than 2,418 acres of prime crane stopover habitat. Kudos to the hundreds of volunteers who come from near and far to staff Rowe Sanctuary each migration season (mid-February to mid-April) and by doing so, help visitors experience the amazing spectacle of an estimated 500,000 Sandhill Cranes stopping in their migration northward to their nesting grounds. The Rowe volunteers understand the importance of protecting the cranes by securing habitat as well as educating the public.

Wisconsin:

First wild Whooping Cranes of 2015 hatch; record nest total spurs hope

With each hatching of wild whooping crane chicks at the Necedah National Wildlife Refuge, hopes of a successful 2015 nesting season have risen. According to the [Whooping Crane Eastern Partnership \(WCEP\)](#), to date there have been a record total of 31 nests, the earliest initiated on 3 April. This total includes renests by four pairs. Three nests failed, 8 nests had eggs removed as part of a renesting experiment (http://www.fws.gov/refuge/necedah/whooping_crane_funding.html), 19 nests are currently active and 1 is suspected to have hatched.

“We are cautiously optimistic, knowing that for these young birds, the next few months and years of their life will be perilous,” says Heather Ray, Director of Development for [Operation Migration](#). “We hope that greater numbers may increase the likelihood that some of these young whoopers will survive to adulthood and ultimately contribute to a self-sustaining population (of the Eastern Migratory Population) of this endangered bird.”

Read the full WCEP press release here:

<http://www.bringbackthecranes.org/newsroom/2015/nr14May2015.html>

Read the full WCEP report on the EMP of Sandhill Cranes and nesting summary here:

<http://www.bringbackthecranes.org/technicaldatabase/projectupdates/2015/01AprilTo4May2015.html>

ICF Announces the First Hatch of the Season at Baraboo Headquarters

On May 27, 2015 the [International Crane Foundation \(ICF\)](#) announced this spring’s first hatch of a Whooping Crane chick at its headquarters in Baraboo, Wisconsin. As a federally designated endangered species, the hatch of a Whooping Crane is always a significant event. The fact that it was hatched through a captive breeding program for release into the wild is further evidence of how critical such programs are to the species’ survival.

Read the full press release and follow the ICF Egg scorecard here:

<http://www.savingcranes.org/whats-new/2015/05/endangered-whooping-crane-hatches/>

Texas:

2014-2015 Whooping Crane winter population survey

The wintering grounds survey area includes more than 153,000 acres on and around the Aransas National Wildlife Refuge. Over the years the Whooping Crane population has grown, and the wintering cranes can be more widely distributed, making it increasingly difficult to count each individual bird during the surveys. Therefore, in 2011, USFWS biologists began using the [Distance Sampling](#) method to estimate the winter population of the whooping cranes within a survey area. This method includes flying along transect lines set at specific distances within the survey area. From these transect lines, biologists count the individuals within each group of cranes and mark their GPS location. The data collected is used to estimate the population within the surveyed area.

The 2014-15 USFWS survey estimated approximately 308 cranes wintering at the Aransas refuge, slightly higher than last year’s count of 304 cranes. Last summer, after the nesting season in Wood Buffalo National Park in northern Canada, researchers predicted that [32 juveniles](#) would migrate south with their parents to winter in Texas, but the winter survey showed 39 juvenile Whooping cranes present.

Excellent news!

With the severe drought conditions in Texas having lessened, more cranes spent the 2014-2015 winter in coastal marshes — their preferred habitat. In previous years, a couple dozen birds had wintered as far as 150 miles inland.

Read the USFWS 2014-2015 winter aerial report from Aransas here:

<http://www.fws.gov/uploadedFiles/WHCR%20Update%20Winter%202014-2015.pdf>

Aransas NWR Whooping Crane survey data now available

For those interested in record-keeping on a grand scale, USFWS has recently released approximately 61 years of survey data for the wintering Whooping Cranes at Aransas National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR). Some of the old area maps initially used by biologists to record locations of the cranes are included, giving the reader an inkling of the work involved with one aspect of running the survey.

Starting in the winter of 1950-1951, annual aerial surveys were conducted to observe and record the number of whooping cranes wintering on Aransas National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR) and surrounding areas. This effort resulted in 38,332 observations of whooping crane groups being marked on paper maps between winter 1950-1951 and winter 2010-2011. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service staff recently digitized those locations and archived them in single file – "Observations of Whooping Cranes During Winter Aerial Surveys: 1950-2011".

USFWS digitized those locations by matching the ArcMap 10 screen display as closely as possible with the paper maps and approximating points in each of the marked locations. The agency cautions that "these data have quality issues and limitations due to, but not limited to, inconsistencies and lack of documentation on how data were collected, reliance on perceived knowledge of unmarked birds' identities, and inaccuracies introduced during both recording and digitization."

Credit for dataset:

Compilers, Taylor, L.N., L.P. Ketzler, D. Rousseau, B.N. Strobel, K.L. Metzger, and M.J. Butler. 2015. *Observations of whooping cranes during winter aerial surveys: 1950-2011*. Aransas National Wildlife Refuge, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Austwell, Texas, USA.

To access the USFWS file click here:

<http://dx.doi.org/10.7944/W3RP4B#sthash.TXUfAjUw.xDfu7p3B.dpuf>

There are two files included in the zipped file.

WHCR_Aerial_Observations_1950_2011.txt

WHCR_Aerial_Observations_1950-2011_metadata.pdf

Questions remain about death of Aransas Whooping Crane

The body of a Whooping Crane (see [March 2015 issue of the Eastern Crane Bulletin](#)) found dead on January 4, 2015 was sent to a federal forensic laboratory in Oregon, where scientists conducted a necropsy in hopes of explaining the death. The necropsy report was requested and received by the *Caller-Times* through a Freedom of Information request. Unfortunately, sections of the report had been redacted.

The necropsy listed "trauma-predation" as the cause of death, indicating that extensive damage to the bird's neck was caused by the teeth of a carnivore of undetermined species. The report stated that an accompanying cause such as a gunshot could not be ruled out.

"In summary, I suspect predation trauma killed this whooping crane, but I cannot rule out the possibility that a gunshot wound or other human-induced trauma made this bird more easy prey," the report's author wrote.

A curious addition to the summary report alluded to something scientists observed in the crane's tail section that may indicate it was handled by a human. The tail feathers together with undertail coverts were found some distance from the body.

Read more here:

<http://friendsofthewildwhoopers.org/predator-likely-killed-aransas-whooping-crane/>

Read the necropsy report here:

<http://www.scribd.com/doc/260058411/Necropsy-Report>

Anyone with information about the crane's death should call the Fish and Wildlife Service's Houston Office of Law Enforcement at [\(281\) 876-1520](tel:2818761520), or Operation Game Thief at [\(800\) 792-GAME \(4263\)](tel:8007927643). Callers may remain anonymous.

Support Operation Migration's Class of 2015!

Months before this year's class of Whooping Cranes even hatch, Operation Migration began its [2015 MileMaker Campaign](#). The success of the aircraft-guided Whooping Crane migration from Wisconsin to Florida rely this campaign for its operating funds. [Operation Migration](#) has determined that each mile of the 1200-mile southward migration costs \$200. This covers insurance, fuel and maintenance costs for the ground vehicles and aircraft, food for the cranes and the crew and any repairs or maintenance required for the crane enclosures, etc. Sponsorships can be for a full mile (\$200), a half mile (\$100) or even a quarter mile (\$50).

Please consider supporting the Class of 2015 by becoming a Milemaker Sponsor here:

<https://secure.operationmigration.org/np/clients/om/campaign.jsp?campaign=47>

Read more from Operation Migration here:

<http://operationmigration.org/InTheField/2015/04/24/8784/>

Roland Clement, Environmental Advocate, Dies at 102

Roland Clement, a lifelong birder and environmentalist who worked for the National Audubon Society (NAS) for nearly two decades, died on March 21, 2015 at the age of 102. Clement was a strong supporter of the Environmental Defense Fund's lawsuit that ignited the effort to ban DDT, says EDF founder Charles Wurster. He also testified before a 1963 Senate subcommittee against the use of the pesticide, and, as an expert, was sent a copy of [Rachel Carson's Silent Spring](#) to review. During his tenure with the NAS, he helped conserve threatened species through programs aimed at Whooping Cranes, Bald Eagles, Peregrine Falcons, and California Condors. Clement eventually became an Audubon vice-president.

Read the Audubon obituary here:

<http://www.audubon.org/news/roland-clement-environmental-advocate-dies-102>

Diversity of conservation actions needed with Whooping Cranes

In a recent letter to the editor of the *Victoria Advocate*, Richard Beilfuss, president of the [International Crane Foundation](#), Baraboo, WI underscored the need for a wide range of conservation strategies when working toward protecting the endangered Whooping Crane. Actions ranging from safeguarding the flow of fresh water from rivers and streams to coastal estuaries and the purchase of water rights in Texas, securing land for habitat, sound energy development to allow safe passage along the migratory flyways and the continued support of work being done in regards to the reintroduced populations of Whooping Cranes.

Read Beilfuss's April 2015 letter here:

<https://www.victoriaadvocate.com/news/2015/apr/16/support-diversity-of-conservation-actions-needed-f/>

Environmental Impact Issues:

Radar, Birds and Wind Turbines – detecting a needle in a haystack

"Wind turbine blades cause a very small percentage of bird deaths annually—domestic cats are the big culprits. But some of the most majestic birds of America fly at the height of those huge turbine blades, so anything that can be done to save some lives is important. Golden eagles, protected under federal law, are among the large birds that could be at risk from wind turbines."

– Quoted from *"The (Scientific) Flight of the Falcon"* by the National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL): http://www.nrel.gov/news/features/feature_detail.cfm/feature_id=16495

Wind turbines cause an estimated 1.4 - 2.0 million bird deaths each year. As wind farms spread deaths by turbine strike will only increase.

(See [March 2015 Eastern Crane Bulletin / American Bird Conservancy Files Petition to Regulate Wind Industry](#))

The [Energy Department's National Renewable Energy Laboratory \(NREL\)](#), near Boulder, Colorado, and [Laufer Wind](#) are working on a radar system with the goal of being able to detect birds in time for the industry to take the evasive measure of shutting off the turbines to prevent bird strikes. In 2009 NREL developed a radar system to forewarn low-flying planes by automatically triggering lights so the pilots could avoid the turbine blades.

Laufer's radars are connected about 30 feet above the ground to the large wind turbines that are tested at the [National Wind Technology Center \(NWTTC\)](#), a 305-acre site that experiences diverse and vigorous wind patterns—more than 100 miles per hour—making it an ideal setting for testing the performance of wind turbines.

Now, with the help of a Peregrine Falcon named "Houdini" and falconer Sam Dollar, NREL hopes to use the Peregrine to "train" a radar system to spot small birds among all the cars, deer, litter, and atmospheric disturbances that make up the returns of the radar system.

Houdini has been equipped with a tiny GPS device the size of a USB flash drive with flashing blue light and a very high frequency tracker. Every second he is in the air is a second that the Laufer radar records data on his movements. The radars collect a gigabyte of data every minute; the trick is to discern the bytes of data that represent the bird. The ultimate aim is to be able to detect birds soon enough that an alert can be sent to the wind power plant operator in time to shut down the blades.

The radar that sees Houdini won't see everything, including smaller birds and bats, but tailoring the system to see falcons may help make turbines safer for larger birds including Golden Eagles and the endangered Whooping Crane.

Changing global climate could see shift in Sandhill migration through Nebraska

Fossil evidence indicates that migrating cranes have fed and rested in Nebraska for millennia on their way to nesting grounds in the tundra of North America and Siberia. But changes in temperature, precipitation and other variables that cranes need to survive could tweak the birds' environment enough to trigger noticeable alterations in migration patterns.

According to University of Nebraska ornithologist [Paul A. Johnsgard](#) in his recently published [Global Warming and Population Responses among Great Plains Birds](#), there have been many instances of a substantial shift northward in early-winter populations among both migratory and nonmigratory species. Johnsgard analyzed more than four decades of Great Plains data from the Audubon's annual Christmas bird count. He said the densest population centers of birds sometimes shifted a distance equal to one state northward since the 1960s. And, in a few cases, the shift northward was the equivalent of two states.

With the changes in climate, habitat may prove to be one of the key elements in determining how far south or north cranes migrate in the future — and how attracted they remain to the central Platte River basin as a refuge and sanctuary for their migration stopover.

Read the entire article here:

http://www.omaha.com/outdoors/changing-climate-means-sun-might-begin-to-set-on-sandhill/article_a8b3d48b-3654-5855-abc3-d459796b30e2.html

Habitat matters!

Iowa:

Sandhills nest in reconstructed wetland

A wetland built just last winter at [Linn County's Matsell Bridge Natural Area](#) is home this spring to the county's first documented successfully reproducing Sandhills of the modern era. The adult cranes have been seen accompanied by a colt.

Nesting Sandhills, gone from Iowa for nearly a century, began reappearing in 1992, when the first successful Iowa nesting in 98 years was recorded in Tama County's Otter Creek Wildlife Area. As of last year, Sandhills had reproduced in 26 Iowa counties and had been sighted in 33 others, according to the Department of Natural Resources.

The project originated in 2012 when Linn County acquired the 129-acre Anderson-Teymer tract with the assistance of a \$220,000 [DNR wildlife habitat stamp grant](#), a \$100,000 [North America Wetland Conservation Act](#) (NAWCA) grant and donations from three Pheasants Forever chapters. An additional \$36,000 NAWCA grant paid for the actual reconstruction late last year.

The acquisition included an eight-acre, stagnant water wetland, which has been expanded to 19 acres and infused with fresh water. The wetland consists of three connected basins with an assured source of water from a spring-fed creek.

Reconstructed wetlands provide valuable wildlife habitat while improving water quality and slowing runoff after heavy rains, said DNR special projects coordinator Todd Bishop, who arranged much of the funding for the wetland reconstruction.

Out West:

Funding Awarded to Study Sandhill Cranes and Associated Wetlands

Sandhill Cranes in the Intermountain West rely on wetland habitats that change dynamically within and across years, and even more with human manipulation. To date, over half of all wetland habitat in the Western U.S. has been lost, and remaining wetlands are under threat of land-use change. The [Intermountain West Joint Venture \(IWJV\)](#), Idaho Department of Fish and Game, the University of Montana and partners have received key funding that will allow them to evaluate and measure long-term patterns in wetland conditions and land-use, and how these changes in landscape influence the demographics of the Rocky Mountain population of Greater Sandhill Cranes.

Read more about the IWJV funding here:

<http://iwjv.org/news/funding-awarded-study-sandhill-cranes-and-associated-wetlands>

PhD Applicants Wanted For Greater Sandhill Crane Studies

The [Avian Science Center](#), part of the Wildlife Biology Program at the University of Montana (UM), invites applicants to conduct research towards a PhD. This position involves analytical monitoring and research data on the Rocky Mountain population of Greater Sandhill Cranes (*Grus canadensis tabida*) to address multiple ecological and management questions.

Find more information about applying here:

<http://iwjv.org/news/phd-applicants-wanted-sandhill-crane-studies>

Update: Eastern Population of Sandhill Crane hunting seasons

Wisconsin:

Safeguarding critically endangered Whooping Crane vs. a Sandhill Crane season

On April 13, 2015 Wisconsin's 2015 Conservation Congress met in statewide-held public hearings where individuals interested in natural resources management had an opportunity to provide their input by non-binding vote and testimony on proposed rule changes and advisory questions relating to fish and wildlife management in Wisconsin.

One of the advisory questions under consideration was the desirability of a Sandhill crane hunt. In the 1930's there was only an estimated 25 pairs of Sandhill Cranes in the entire state. Today the population is estimated at 15,000 Sandhill Cranes.

Implementation of a hunt season would greatly increase the likelihood of accidental killings of the endangered Whooping Crane. The mistaken killing of even one Whooping Crane significantly hurts the experimental Eastern Migratory Population. In July 2013 a Whooping Crane was shot and killed in Waupaca County when a person mistook it for a white Sandhill Crane – another species not legally hunted. (see story in [December 2014 Eastern Crane Bulletin / Whooping Cranes should be treasured](#)) Wisconsin is the only eastern site for the re-establishment of Whooping Cranes – home to both the [Necedah National Wildlife Refuge](#) as well as [the International Crane Foundation](#).

"As the principal federal partner responsible for administering the [Endangered Species Act \(ESA\)](#), we take the lead in recovering and conserving our Nation's imperiled species such as the Whooping Crane. As we work in partnership with others, our two major goals are to protect endangered and threatened species, and then pursue their recovery, and conserve candidate species and species-at-risk so that

listing under the ESA is not necessary. These spectacular birds are an enjoyable sight on the refuge."
– [USFWS Necedah National Wildlife Refuge](#)

Based in Baraboo, Wisconsin [The International Crane Foundation's \(ICF\)](#) mission is to work worldwide to conserve cranes and the ecosystems, watersheds, and flyways on which they depend. ICF is dedicated to providing leadership, knowledge, and inspiration to engage people in resolving threats to these ecosystems. Its programs stress the interdependence between wildlife and their habitats and the relationships that exist between wildlife, ecosystems and people. ICF believes that cranes are a symbol inspiring people from many nations to trust each other and to work together to conserve these magnificent birds.

See the statewide results of the 2015 Conservation Congress here:
http://dnr.wi.gov/About/WCC/Documents/spring_hearing/2015/2015_StatewideResults.pdf

Learn more about The International Crane Foundation's work with Whooping Cranes and other crane species around the world, watch ICF's "Cranes: Symbols of Survival," here:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g9S2u0jh3Xs&feature=youtu.be>
(the video begins with a black screen and Sandhills calling; length is about 14 minutes)

Read more about the Wisconsin Sandhills here:
<http://madisonaudubon.org/about-us/news-updates/friday-feathered-feature-sandhill-crane>

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