



EASTERN CRANE BULLETIN

September 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.

Editor's note: *As Sandhill hunting seasons begin for several of the Flyways, along with the dangers posed by the spread of wind farms, loss of habitat and powerlines crisscrossing the migration corridor traveled by the wild Whoopers, it seems time to focus our attention on this endangered species. While some are already familiar with the "history" behind conservation efforts on behalf of the Whooping Cranes, whether it be the Aransas/Wood Buffalo National Park flock – the ONLY wild population in the world – or the reintroduced Eastern Migratory and Louisiana populations, the following is for those who wish to learn more. It is important to know where efforts began in order to see how far we have come and understand what still must be done to insure the survival of these beautiful birds.*

Fire and the discovery of Whooping Crane WBNP nesting grounds

The last known nest of a Whooping Crane had been seen in about 1926 in Saskatchewan. Subsequent searches failed to reveal the location of the nesting grounds of the only wild flock of Whooping Cranes. Whooping Crane observers only knew that the birds migrated each spring from "somewhere" in Canada to Aransas on the Texas coast. As pressure mounted to protect and manage the cranes, so did the urgency to locate the nesting grounds in order for that crucial habitat to be protected in the hope of saving the birds from extinction. Then, in 1954, in part due to a fire in the area and the resulting collaboration of three men, the Whooping Crane nesting grounds in Wood Buffalo National Park was discovered.

Read Dr. W. A. Fuller's account, "Discovery of the Nesting Ground of the Whooping Crane," (published in Wild Lands Advocate, The Alberta Wilderness Association, December 2004 • Vol. 12, No. 6, pages 16 and 17), here: <http://friendsofthewildwhoopers.org/whooping-crane-nesting-grounds-discovered/>

Friends of the Wild Whoopers group spearheads project for crucial Whooping Crane "stopover" habitat on U.S. military bases

[Friends of the Wild Whoopers \(FOTWW\)](#) has initiated a "stopover" habitat project to help the wild Whooping Cranes as they migrate 2,500 miles from their Wood Buffalo nesting grounds in Canada to Aransas National Wildlife Refuge on the Texas coast and then back to Canada in the spring. Stopover habitats are essential for Whooping Cranes to rest and feed during their journey. The cranes prefer small wetlands, ponds and streams with shallow water and shorelines with sparse vegetation as roosting sites. Such site specific wetland-pond habitats, once abundant are now becoming scarce along their migration route.

FOTWW prepared a proposal to evaluate wetland habitats on military installations and met with the

Department of Defense Partners in Flight (DODPIF). DODPIF sanctioned the proposal then worked with the group to assist them in establishing contacts with military installations within the migration corridor.

Due to its ongoing work with Whooping Cranes, FOTWW asked [the Gulf Coast Bird Observatory \(GCBO\)](#) to partner on the project. Currently six military bases have been visited to determine where marginal habitats areas can be improved by proper management or new habitats developed. Until FOTWW initiated this project officials on military bases were largely unaware of Whooping Crane needs or that they could play an important part in managing them. The response to the project from military natural resource managers has been overwhelmingly positive.

Kudos to the Friends of the Wild Whoopers for this innovative "stopover" habitat project! It is hoped that others are motivated by this work to join in identifying and protecting other key stopover habitats throughout the wild Whooping Cranes' migration corridor. The cranes' survival depends on it.

[Click here to become a partner of the Friends of the Wild Whoopers in this important "stopover" habitat project.](#)

To read more about the FOTWW "stopover" habitat project on U.S. military bases click here: <http://friendsofthewildwhoopers.org/whooping-crane-stopover-habitat-project-on-u-s-military-bases/>

Growth of wild Whooper population depends on acquiring safe winter habitat

Four experimental, reintroduction programs for Whooping Cranes were based on guidelines set forth by the [International Whooping Crane Recovery Plan](#). They included the Rocky Mountain-Grays Lake project (1975-1988), introduction of a non-migratory group in Florida (1993-2004), the eastern migratory population (EMP) of Whooping Cranes (2000-present, ongoing) and the introduction of a non-migratory population to Louisiana's White Lake area (2011-present, ongoing). Unfortunately, poor survival and low reproduction rates plague(d) every one of the programs.

The self-sustaining wild, migratory Aransas/Wood Buffalo population provides the best opportunity to increase Whooping Crane numbers.

As their population has grown the wild Whoopers have had to expand their wintering range to private lands sometimes miles away from the [Aransas National Wildlife Refuge \(ANWR\)](#). In the very near future as little as a quarter of all potential suitable winter habitat for Whooping Cranes will be within a protected area in the bay systems. According to the [Whooping Crane Recovery Team](#) winter habitat has been identified as *the* limiting factor to increasing the population.

Read more about the need for safe winter habitat by Chester McConnell, President of [Friends of the Wild Whoopers](#) here: <http://friendsofthewildwhoopers.org/wild-whooping-crane-population-deserves-more-attention/>

Whooping Crane Range Map *(prepared by ICF)*

To see a range map of former breeding ranges, current summering and wintering areas, locations of captive populations, migration routes and stopovers, click here: <https://www.savingcranes.org/whooping-crane-range-map/>

Historic Whooping Crane numbers *(prepared in 2011 by ICF)*

For a 1938-2011 table of data of the natural flock(s), re-introduced and cross-fostered flocks click here: https://www.savingcranes.org/wp-content/uploads/2008/05/historic_wc_numbers.pdf

Editor's note: *My introduction to Whooping Cranes came when, as a kid (late 1960's), I saw a black and white photo of a gangly Whooper chick (maybe Tex?) accompanying a story about the endangered cranes in the local newspaper. I remember feeling disbelief that so few of this impressive bird were alive in the wild and sadness that I possibly would never get to see one. Years later I read about a crazy guy dancing with a crane name "Tex" in hopes that she would nest and lay eggs – how would that ever work? Now, many years after the fact, I want to thank Dr. George Archibald, from all of us who care about the Whoopers, for joining in that dance.*

Shall We Dance? – the unusual saga of George, Tex and Gee Whiz

"Tex" a female Whooping Crane born July 9, 1967 at the San Antonio Zoo was destined to become a genetically important part of the crane breeding program at the USGS [Patuxent Wildlife Research Center](#) in Maryland. Biologists there began what is now the largest Whooping Crane captive breeding program from 12 eggs collected from the wild in 1967.

In 1976 when Dr. George Archibald began his work at Patuxent with Tex, she was one of only 100 [Whooping Cranes](#) (*Grus americana*) left in the world. Because Tex had imprinted on humans as a chick she wouldn't mate with another Whooping Crane so it took three years of crane "dancing" (courting) on the part of Dr. Archibald to encourage Tex to lay an egg which, along with the help of artificial insemination, resulted in "Gee Whiz." Sadly, Tex was killed by raccoons not long after Gee Whiz hatched (named as tribute to [Dr. George Gee](#) at Patuxent Wildlife Research Center for his work in captive breeding of Whooping cranes) hatched. Gee Whiz went on to father and grandfather many captive cranes.

"I think very much that Tex was a metaphor for our whole effort here, for helping the cranes of the world. It's a roller coaster ride, the odds are against us in many cases, but if we stick with it, and have faith, we're going to come through okay, and the cranes are going to come through okay." – Dr. George Archibald

Read more about the courtship that helped the conservation of Whoopers, here: <http://www.treehugger.com/endangered-species/man-courts-whooping-crane-save-its-species-extinction-george-archibald-tex.html>

In a 2010 video by the International Crane Foundation, Dr. George Archibald talks about his part in the courtship of Tex, the challenging journey from egg to the final hatching of "Gee Whiz" and what it all has meant to the general conservation of Whooping Cranes: <https://youtu.be/fsDYhdaJL98>

Canadian-born ornithologist Dr. George Archibald co-founded the [International Crane Foundation](#) in 1973 and has since then continued his work in crane conservation all over the world. He has been recognized for his pioneering techniques in the field of crane conservation, most notably the use of bird costumes by human handlers. In 1984, Archibald was awarded a [MacArthur Fellows Program](#) grant for his work with cranes. In 1987, he was added to the [UN's Global 500 Roll of Honour](#). He was the inaugural winner of the 2006 [Indianapolis Prize](#) and in 2013, he was made a member of the [Order of Canada](#).

California:

Birds face devastating drought conditions along Pacific Flyway

Along the 4,000-mile-long Pacific flyway—one of four main routes in North America for migrating birds—up to six million ducks, geese, swans and Lesser Sandhill Cranes wing south every year to find warmth after raising young in the rich habitats of Alaska, Canada, and Siberia. They are joined by millions of shorebirds, songbirds, and seabirds, including the ultimate endurance winner, the arctic tern.

While drought and deluge are part of the natural weather cycle in California, species that have migrated on the same routes for thousands of years now struggle to adapt to human-managed water supplies coupled with a globally changing climate that exacerbates dry spells.

California's drought has dried up its wetlands. Many insects, fish, and plants are gone. As a result, some migrating birds have died or been depleted of so much energy that they will have trouble reproducing. Others, part of the thousands of ducks and geese now crowding limited feeding grounds along shrinking rivers and marshes and unable to fly due to post-breeding feather molt will succumb to avian botulism and cholera.

With multiple-use groups now vying for very limited water quantities, the balancing act of "water management" has become increasingly a challenge if not almost impossible. Wildlife refuges, their habitat and the wildlife dependent on them may end up being the losers.

The following are just a few of the California wildlife refuges along the flyway affected by the drought:

[Kern National Wildlife Refuge](#) near Bakersfield

[Lower Klamath National Wildlife Refuge](#)

Central Valley, from the Sacramento Valley to the San Joaquin Valley

[Mono Lake](#)

Southern California's inland [Salton Sea](#)

Klamath Basin

[Sacramento National Wildlife Refuge](#)

[Sutter Bypass Wildlife Area](#) in the Sacramento Valley

[Don Edwards National Wildlife Refuge](#)

The San Luis NWR Complex includes the [San Luis National Wildlife Refuge](#), [Merced NWR](#), [San Joaquin River NWR](#), and [Grasslands Wildlife Management Area](#))

For more information on the area known as the "Everglades of the West," and the water crisis facing the California Wildlife Management Areas click here: [REFUGES IN PERIL - Klamath Basin](#)

To read a National Geographic article about the drought click here: <http://news.nationalgeographic.com/2015/07/1579-birds-snowpack-drought-flyway-wetlands-California/>

Canada:

Drought and fires thought to have impacted nesting WBNP Whooping Cranes

Sixty-eight whooping crane nests, compared to 82 nests in 2014, were located during the 2015 Whooping Crane nesting survey on Wood Buffalo National Park (WBNP), Canada. The nest survey was run from May 25 to May 29. To complete the annual research, conservation officers fly in a grid over the previous year's nest locations. If the nests are not found, the aerial search continues in ever-widening circles

around old nest sites in hopes of finding the birds' new nesting grounds. Biologists can also track cranes that have been fitted with satellite location bands.

Parks staff believed the low nest count meant the cranes had moved outside of the research grid, the result of drought in the region. Water levels in the ponds were lower than normal for this time of year and, as seen in other dry years, cranes were forced to travel further to forage for food. Low water levels also made it easier for predators to access the nesting area.

An example of this movement is that for the first time a Whooper nest was found in the [Salt Plains](#) area of Wood Buffalo Park.

Read more here:

<http://friendsofthewildwhoopers.org/canadians-locate-68-whooping-crane-nest-during-survey/>

Twenty-three fledglings counted in Wood Buffalo nesting grounds

The [Wood Buffalo Whooping Crane fledgling survey](#) was run on August 7-11, 2015 according to Stuart MacMillan, Manager, Parks Canada, WBNP. Twenty-three Whooping Crane fledgling chicks (compared to 32 fledglings in 2014) were observed on Wood Buffalo National Park nesting grounds during the survey.

To read details of the survey and see striking aerial photos of the nesting "wetlands" during drought conditions, click here:

<http://friendsofthewildwhoopers.org/wood-buffalo-whooping-crane-fledgling-survey-completed/>

UNESCO requests investigation of impact of oil sands projects on Wood Buffalo NP

In response to a petition from Alberta's [Mikisew Cree First Nation](#), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has acknowledged the threats posed by proposed mega-projects upstream from the sensitive delta area, including the [Frontier Oil Sands Mine on the Athabaska](#) and the [Site C dam on the Peace](#).

[Wood Buffalo National Park](#) was listed as a World Heritage Site over 30 years ago for its globally unique and important ecosystems. UNESCO requested that Canada conduct an in-depth environmental assessment of how [Wood Buffalo National Park](#) is being impacted by hydro-electric and oil sands projects and gas development. Water is essential to the functioning of a healthy delta, and the life it supports, so what happens upriver invariably compromises downstream health.

For more information click here:

<http://friendsofthewildwhoopers.org/unesco-ask-for-investigation-of-impacts-to-wood-buffalo-national-park/>

For more information, map of affected area and aerial photo click here:

<http://www.mining.com/unesco-asks-canada-to-check-impact-of-oil-sands-projects-on-national-park/>

To read a Globe editorial, "Ottawa must stop threats to Wood Buffalo National Park," click here:

<http://www.theglobeandmail.com/globe-debate/editorials/ottawa-must-stop-threats-to-wood-buffalo-national-park/article25257317/>

Texas:

U.S. Supreme Court denies bid to reopen case of 23 dead Whooping Cranes

In June the U.S. Supreme Court denied a petition to review the case brought against the state environmental agency by [The Aransas Project](#), a group of concerned citizens, businesses and municipalities that advocate for responsible water management of the Guadalupe River Basin ([for background information see September 2014 issue of the Eastern Crane Bulletin](#)). The group maintains that by allocating too much water from the Guadalupe River, the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality did not allow enough freshwater to reach the bay, where the only wild flock of Whooping Cranes winter. Resulting high salinity levels in the bay compromised the cranes' staple food source of blue crabs and wolfberries making food scarce during the 2008-2009 winter and subsequently contributed to the deaths of 23 Whooping Cranes.

A previous decision by federal district court Judge Janis Graham Jack had ruled in favor of The Aransas Project, holding by the group's logic and blame of the state for the Whooping Crane deaths.

According to Jim Blackburn, the Houston environmental attorney representing The Aransas Project, despite the Supreme Court's refusal to take the case, the state can never again claim to be unaware of the potential consequences of withholding freshwater from Texas bays and estuaries. "Without freshwater, the bays decline and eventually die. If we don't fight for those bays, we're going to lose them."

Read more from the [International Crane Foundation](#) here:

<https://www.savingcranes.org/our-commitment-remains-after-supreme-court-denies-whooping-crane-case/>

Whooping Crane Partnership for Increasing Public Awareness in Texas

The Whooping Crane Partnership (WCP) was formed in response to recent deaths of several Whooping Cranes in Texas. A collaborative outreach campaign will be aimed at increasing public awareness of the cranes. Partnering agencies are: [Texas Parks and Wildlife Department \(TPWD\)](#), [Audubon Texas](#), Ducks Unlimited, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), [Friends of Aransas National Wildlife Refuge](#), [Friends of the Wild Whoopers \(FOTWW\)](#), and the [International Crane Foundation \(ICF\)](#)

Read more about the goals and strategies of the Partnership here:

<http://friendsofthewildwhoopers.org/whooping-crane-partnership-for-increasing-public-awareness-in-texas/>

Wisconsin:

Forced re-nesting may be glimmer of hope for EMP of Whooping Cranes

Last season, [Necedah National Wildlife Refuge](#) partnered with the University of Wisconsin at Stevens Point to try a new method of increasing chick survival rates, called "forced re-nesting." Researchers take eggs from whooping crane nests that are unlikely to be successful before the annual emergence of black flies (causes nest abandonment). The chicks are then transferred to captive rearing facilities. The refuge expects affected adult cranes to make new nests, increasing the overall number of healthy chicks in the long-term.

Challenged by pests and inexperience, the Eastern Migratory population of Whooping Cranes have struggled to reproduce successfully in the wild since a reintroduction program began in 2001. A record number of chicks hatched this year — 24 hatched from 37 nests — but the population is still threatened by a high mortality rate for the young birds.

Only three chicks had survived to mid-July, and if they survive to fledging, they will tie the previous record of fledglings from 2010.

Read more about black flies and re-nesting at the Necedah National Wildlife Refuge, WI here:

<http://www.fws.gov/refuges/news/LandmarkSuccessWhoopers.html>

and here:

<http://www.jsonline.com/news/wisconsin/whooping-crane-hatching-season-produces-hope-and-concern-b99541545z1-318595461.html>

EMP Whooping Crane Update - May 28 to June 30, 2015

Read more about the Eastern Migratory Population of Whooping Cranes from the Whooping Crane Eastern Partnership

here: <http://www.bringbackthecranes.org/technicaldatabase/projectupdates/2015/28MayTo30June2015.html> and here:

<http://www.bringbackthecranes.org/technicaldatabase/pdf/NestingSummary30June2015.pdf>

Whooping Crane Eastern Partnership Captures Hybrid Whooping Crane

On July 22, 2015 [The Whooping Crane Eastern Partnership \(WCEP\) and staff with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service](#) captured a hybrid crane chick, referred to as a "Whoophill," in eastern Wisconsin. Whoophills are a result of a successful pairing between a Whooping Crane and a Sandhill Crane. This young hybrid was first noticed at [Horicon National Wildlife Refuge](#) in Dodge County, Wisconsin in late May. It will live at the [Patuxent Wildlife Research Center](#) in Maryland. The decision was made to capture the colt due to the fact that leaving the hybrid Whoophill (sterile) in the wild would do nothing to supplement the Eastern Migratory Whooping Crane Population or further recovery of the species. The father, Whooping Crane no.16-11, and his Sandhill mate will also be separated in the hopes the male will pair with another Whooping Crane.

Kudos:

[International Crane Foundation \(ICF\) Receives Prestigious **Plume Award** for Whooping Crane Captive Management](#)

The "[Plume Award](#)" is the annual Long-term Propagation Program Award from the Avian Scientific Advisory Group of the Association of Zoos & Aquariums recognizes excellence in husbandry and management of avian species. ICF's captive flock currently includes over 30 Whooping Cranes that produced 15 fertile eggs this spring for the captive management of the species and reintroduction programs in Wisconsin and Louisiana. Without the dedication of staff, biologists and Whooper caregivers this work would not be possible.

Nominees announced for Top Honor in Animal Conservation

The 2016 [Indianapolis Prize](#) will mark a decade celebrating outstanding individuals in the field of animal conservation and endeavors to sustain the planet's wildlife and wilderness. Recognized as the world's leading award in animal conservation, the biennial Prize shines a spotlight on twenty-eight nominees for the 2016 Indianapolis Prize who will join the ranks of recognized conservationists making strides to save species.

Joseph Duff, co-founder and lead pilot for [Operation Migration](#), is among the nominees for his work in devising the protocol used in guiding migratory birds with ultralight aircraft – foremost being the endangered Whooping Crane in the reintroduced eastern population.

The winner of the Prize will receive an unrestricted \$250,000 cash award while the five finalists will each receive \$10,000. In addition to the monetary award, the winner will receive the prestigious Lilly Medal reflecting the ongoing commitment of the Eli Lilly and Company Foundation, which has provided funding for the Indianapolis Prize program since its inception.

The award ceremony will be held on October 15, 2016. *Read more here:*

<http://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/wildlife-heroes-vie-for-top-honor-in-animal-conservation-300129480.html>

Environmental Impact Issues:

Wind Industry Ignores Bird Conservationists

The American Bird Conservancy (ABC) recently found that over 80,000 wind turbines have been, or are planned to be, erected in critical areas of federally-protected birds in America. 24,000 turbines alone are in the migration corridor of the endangered Whooping Crane, probably the nation's rarest and most spectacular bird.

"Attempts to manage the wind industry with voluntary permitting guidelines are clearly not working," said Dr. Michael Hutchins, Director of [American Bird Conservancy's Bird Smart Wind Energy Campaign](#). "Wind developers are siting turbines in areas of vital importance to birds and other wildlife, and this new data shows that the current voluntary system needs to be replaced with a mandatory permitting system."

Read more here:

<http://www.forbes.com/sites/jamesconca/2015/06/04/wind-industry-ignores-bird-conservationists/>

Learn more about the American Bird Conservancy's Bird-Smart Wind Energy Campaign here:

<http://abcbirds.org/program/wind-energy/>

Vortex Bladeless technology versus traditional wind turbines

One of several *bladeless* wind turbine technologies currently in the works is by a Spanish company, [Vortex](#). These turbines would not kill birds (ie. Whooping Cranes, Sandhill Cranes, shorebirds, passerines, hawks and eagles - current blade strike victims) or bats as do the traditional bladed turbines. According to Vortex, the turbine is smaller than traditional wind turbines, has no moving parts, a larger capacity factor, lower cost (LCOE of 3.5¢/kWh), and longer lifespan. The Vortex generates electricity by taking advantage of vorticity, an aerodynamic effect that occurs when wind breaks against a solid structure. The vorticity causes an oscillation which is coupled to a self-tuning magnetic system that captures the energy that is produced.

The structural design takes up less space resulting in less land being disturbed and therefore less habitat fragmentation. The Vortex design is simpler than conventional wind turbines, with fewer pieces making installation easier and in the end more cost effective. And, another positive is that the bladeless turbines are completely silent, a major consideration for people living nearby.

Read more about bladeless technology here:

<http://www.sciencealert2014.com/spanish-researchers-are-developing-bladeless-wind-turbines>

and here:

<http://www.technologyreview.com/news/537721/bladeless-wind-turbines-may-offer-more-form-than-function/>

Nebraska's sensitive Sandhill region faces threat from powerlines

Local ranching families are currently joining forces against a plan by the Nebraska Public Power District (NPPD) to build more than 200 miles of 345,000-volt electric transmission lines — the ones with massive metal towers — in north-central Nebraska, right through the Sandhills.

Spanning nearly 25,000 square miles, the Sandhills cover more than one-quarter of the state and are one of the largest intact native grasslands in North America. Considered their own ecoregion, the Sandhills are the largest sand dune formation in the Western hemisphere — but it's no desert. The fragile dunes are stabilized by grass and the water table under much of the Sandhills is so close to the surface that the meadows in between the dunes give way to ponds, marshes and wetlands.

This ecoregion is home to more than 700 species of plants, including several that are endangered, and more than 300 species of animals. The region is also along the migration path of dozens of bird species, including the only wild flock of the endangered Whooping Crane. Tens-of-thousands of Sandhill Cranes, with a migration route starting throughout Siberia and North America that bottlenecks in Nebraska, pass through the Sandhills each year. [Death from powerline strikes is a major contributor to migrant mortality rates – click here to see map of proposed power lines.](#)

The presence of the tiny [American burying beetle](#), a federally protected endangered species found in the Sandhills, requires NPPD to apply for a permit from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to “take” (ie. “kill”) a certain number of beetles during the transmission line’s construction. NPPD is currently in the process of applying for that permit while the Fish and Wildlife Service researches the impact the project would have on the environment.

The controversial Keystone XL pipeline was originally planned to run through the Sandhills, but was rerouted out of concern for the region. In such a fragile ecosystem, any human disturbance increases the danger of “blowouts” where grass is removed from the dunes leaving sand exposed and at risk of erosion. Heavy equipment leave ruts or create bogs in the grass that can remain for years.

Read more about the Sandhills vs. powerlines

here: <http://america.aljazeera.com/articles/2015/6/27/battle-over-grassland-electrical-lines-looms-in-nebraska.html>

Habitat matters!

Pristine Door County WI wetlands designated as globally significant

More than 11,440 acres of pristine sedge meadows, lowland forests, marshes, groundwater springs and fens in northern Door County that harbor rare plants and animals have been designated as globally significant for protection under an international treaty.

In Door County, the designated wetlands encompass public and private properties in the towns of Liberty Grove, Baileys Harbor and Gibraltar and include more than 22 miles of protected Lake Michigan shoreline. The complex of coastal wetlands along Lake Michigan that stretches from Baileys Harbor north to Europe Bay joins [Everglades National Park](#) in Florida and [Chesapeake Bay estuary](#) in Virginia as one of only 37 “Wetlands of International Importance” in the United States recognized under the [Ramsar Convention](#).

In Wisconsin, only [Horicon Marsh](#) in Dodge County and the [Kakagon and Bad River sloughs](#) — known as the “Everglades of the North” — on the Bad River Chippewa Reservation in Ashland County have gained this international recognition. A cluster of floodplain wetlands along the Mississippi River in Wisconsin, Minnesota, Iowa and Illinois also are on the Ramsar list.

Find out what makes this wetlands area important and learn more about the Ramsar Convention

here: <http://www.jsonline.com/news/wisconsin/pristine-door-county-wetlands-designated-as-globally-significant-b99499605z1-303623391.html>

Science news:

Understanding parasites aids Whooping Crane conservation efforts

Miranda Bertram ([Ph.D. candidate at Texas A&M University](#)) spent the winters of 2012-13 and 2013-14 tramping around Texas's Aransas National Wildlife Refuge in search of Whooping Crane feces to research and document which parasites are present in the population, and if they could be affecting the recovery of this endangered species. "The biggest advantage to using feces is that it's noninvasive, so we minimize disturbance to the birds," says Bertram. "We don't have to capture them, touch them, or take blood samples, so we can let the cranes live their normal lives."

Knowing what diseases a species is susceptible to, and what affect those diseases have on a population is critical for conservation efforts. "Individual birds may appear to be healthy, but if there are low-level effects caused by parasites it could be having a big impact on population, perhaps slowing down growth," says Bertram.

Bertram and her colleagues decided to investigate the presence of coccidian parasites in the Aransas population, the first major study of parasites in wild Whooping Cranes. They chose coccidian parasites because they can cause a disease called *disseminated visceral coccidiosis*, or DVC. A known cause of chick mortality in captive crane breeding programs, DVC causes inflamed intestine, spleen, heart, liver and lungs.

Parasite-caused diseases like DVC could be affecting wild cranes, but first researchers need to determine how prevalent those parasites are in the wild birds.

Read more about Bertram's research here: <http://blog.nature.org/science/2015/08/10/poop-parasites-whooping-crane-conservation-endangered/#sthash.qnI5MuEW.dpuf>

To read the entire abstract click on the following: [Coccidian Parasites and Conservation Implications for the Endangered Whooping Crane](#)

50 years of science

It is all about the science at the [U.S. Geological Survey Northern Prairie Wildlife Research Center](#) located just south of Jamestown, ND. Celebrating its 50th anniversary this year, Northern Prairie was one of the first government research centers in the country when it began operating in 1965, according to Robert Gleason, current director of the center. "It came to Jamestown because they wanted a waterfowl research center in the heart of the [Prairie Pothole Region](#)," he said. Successes at Northern Prairie include the development of a categorization system used in wetlands and work on identifying the migration routes of the Whooping Crane which was important for land use planning.

Read more here: <http://www.jamestownsun.com/news/local/3820767-50-years-science>

Update: Eastern Population of Sandhill Crane hunting seasons

Kentucky:

In a [Final Rule published in the Federal Register on August 21, 2015](#), the Atlantic and Mississippi Flyway Councils recommended that Kentucky be granted an operational Sandhill Crane hunting season beginning in 2015 following the guidelines established in the [Eastern Population of Sandhill Cranes Management Plan](#) (EP Management Plan). According to the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources (KDFWR), the 2015-2016 season will remain the same as the previous four experimental seasons – 30 days (starting December 12) with up to 400 hunters receiving 2 permits each.

Minnesota:

Decline in Sandhill Crane numbers and hunter interest related?

According to U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service harvest reports for Sandhill Cranes, estimated numbers of the mid-continent population hunted in northwest Minnesota, has shown a steady decline since 2012. Spring aerial survey estimates of breeding Sandhill Cranes, show a drop in population from 8,000 in 2012, 5,000 in 2013 to 3,000 in 2014. Mirroring the decline in cranes is the decline in active hunters since the season started in 2010. There is speculation that for some the Sandhill is considered a trophy bird and once it is hunted it is crossed off their list.

Read more here: <http://www.outdoornews.com/June-2015/Sandhill-crane-kill-in-Minnesota-continues-decline/>

2015 Crane Festivals and Events:

Whooping Crane Festival 2015

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

September 10, 5:00 p.m. - September 13, 5:00 p.m. (CST)

Various locations in Green Lake County – Princeton, Green Lake & Ripon, WI

To register online, see a complete seminars/events listing and a festival map, click here:

<https://secure.operationmigration.org/np/clients/om/event.jsp?event=13&>

Kankakee River "Sandhill Crane" Paddle

Thursday, October 8

10:00 a.m. (CST)

Dunn's Bridge County Park

500 E. County Rd., Kouts, IN 46347

For more information call: [219-871-9559](tel:219-871-9559)

Since its beginning in 2010, the Kankakee River "Sandhill Crane" Paddle has become an annual tradition attracting hundreds of participants each year. After an 8.6 mile trip down the Kankakee River the day ends at the Jasper-Pulaski Fish and Wildlife Area where one can witness tens of thousands of Sandhill Cranes on their annual migration coming in at dusk to roost in the shallow marshes.

<http://www.indianadunes.com/events/dunns-bridge-county-park-kankakee-river-sandhill-crane-paddle/>

CraneFest

Saturday, October 10 - Sunday, October 11

Noon until dusk

At the Kiwanis Youth Area, overlooking Baker Sanctuary and Big Marsh Lake, in Bellevue, Michigan

<http://www.cranefest.org/about/>

Celebrating 20 years, CraneFest is a chance to observe thousands of Sandhill Cranes as they come in to roost. The 900-acre [Bernard W. Baker Bird Sanctuary](#) was Michigan Audubon Society's first sanctuary and is still one of its largest.

Learn more about the festival here: <https://youtu.be/2XW86Af5rnQ>

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