



EASTERN CRANE BULLETIN

December 2017

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 clarification: In the September issue of the Eastern Crane Bulletin I stated that "Shootings and powerline strikes are the main contributors to Whooping Crane mortality." A more accurate statement would be to say, "Shootings and powerline strikes are the main, preventable (or known) contributors to Whooping Crane mortality." Thanks to Jeb Barzen for bringing this to my attention.

"Most mortality of Whooping Cranes in the Eastern Migratory Population (EMP) or in the remnant population is unknown but likely due to predators and disease. This is especially true when chicks are included. In the EMP alone, and during 2017 only, more chicks died before fledging than did all the cranes killed by vandalism in the EMP ever. Most, if not all, deaths of pre-fledged chicks were due to predators. The same circumstances occur with post-fledged chicks and adult cranes. Most mortality events are unknown but likely due to predators and definitely not due to vandalism or powerlines. We know a lot about powerline collision and vandalism because we find those birds and we can more easily determine the cause of death. Please understand that I am not trying to reduce the importance of solving problems due to vandalism or powerlines. We just need to understand all causes of mortality and address the causes of mortality where best we can. Getting these facts correct is critical because we ultimately need to focus on the biological aspects of mortality to find any solution and, if we get these details wrong, our solutions will be misdirected. Since our resources are limited we cannot afford to be often [led] down the wrong or lower priority path." – Jeb Barzen, Director, Field Ecology Department at the International Crane Foundation for over 28 years, now Ecologist at Private Lands Conservation LLC.

Eastern Migratory Population of WHOOPERS

Harvey and the eastern population of Whooping Cranes

Excerpted from a September 20, 2017 "In the Field with Operation Migration" post by Joe Duff

"Storms of increasing intensity and rising sea levels threaten the critical habitat used by Whooping cranes both in Texas and Louisiana where a reintroduced flock of non-migratory Whooping cranes now numbers more than 50.

When the Eastern Migratory Population began, it was intended that the birds would winter in the salt marshes on the Gulf Coast of Florida. Obviously, our birds had other ideas because they are now spread out over much of the eastern flyway. Some birds winter at St Marks NWR south of Tallahassee while others prefer Wheeler NWR in Alabama. Some only travel as far south as Goose Pond State Wildlife Area in Indiana.

That distribution was once considered a shortcoming of this project but maybe it will safeguard the birds from any one weather event. Maybe it makes them more adaptable than the natural flock that seem focused on a small area of precious habitat with an uncertain future.

Storm events are only one of the hazards that threaten the critical habitat in Texas. There is the possibility of chemical spills, erosion, human encroachment, invasive species like black mangrove or even an avian disease. That's why the Whooping Crane Recovery Team began the Eastern Migratory Population and other flocks in the first place and why they are more important now than ever.

We have an unprecedented one hundred birds in the eastern flyway; the first since the last nest was reported in Wisconsin in 1878. It is a priceless asset but it is not yet self-sustaining. We need unrelenting enthusiasm and continued support to ensure that Whooping cranes are disseminated enough to survive any single threat."

<http://operationmigration.org/InTheField/2017/09/20/harvey-and-the-whooping-cranes/>

Whooping Cranes are back!

If you look closely, you may see a Whooping Crane among the thousands of Sandhill Cranes that are migrating south this month across the United States. Whooping Cranes are quickly returning to their wintering areas in the southeastern United States and Texas, including the International Crane Foundation (ICF) project areas in Indiana, Alabama and the central Texas coast.

This winter ICF has a staff person both in Indiana and Alabama conducting outreach programs near the Whooping Cranes' wintering areas. The staff are reaching out to Audubon groups, community organizations, refuge visitors, and sportsmen and women to share information about Whooping Crane conservation and identification. Our goal is to develop communities that care about Whooping Cranes and take pride in having this endangered species as a neighbor.

To read more from the International Crane Foundation about the Whooper migrations, go here:

<https://www.savingcranes.org/whooping-cranes-are-back/>

Eastern Migratory Population Update – December 2017

In the last month most Whooping Cranes have migrated south. A huge thank-you to the staff of [Operation Migration](#), the Fish and Wildlife Service, the Department of Natural Resources, the [International Crane Foundation](#), and all of the volunteers who help us keep track of the cranes throughout the year. We appreciate your contribution to the recovery of the whooping crane eastern migratory population.

The current maximum population size is 111 (51 F, 57 M, 3 U). This includes two fledged 2017 wild-hatched chicks and the released parent-reared and costume-reared juveniles. As of 1 December, there are still 9 Whooping Cranes in Wisconsin, 6 in Illinois, 42 in Indiana, 6 in Kentucky, 2 in Tennessee, 14 in Alabama, 3 in Florida, and 1 in Louisiana. The remaining Whooping Cranes' locations have either not been confirmed during November or they've left Wisconsin but haven't been confirmed further south.

For a full report by the Whooping Crane Eastern Partnership and a distribution map, go here:

<https://www.bringbackthecranes.org/technicaldatabase/projectupdates/2017/01Dec2017.html>

And to learn more about the individual cranes go to the Journey North website, here:

<http://www.learner.org/jnorth/tm/crane/SurvivalResearch.html>

How to release "Parent-Reared" Whooping Cranes

Last year Operation Migration (OM) released juvenile Parent-Reared Whooping Cranes (hatched and raised in captivity by captive adult birds) near wild adults that were foraging. Ideally it is hoped that the adult birds form a bond with the young crane and ultimately serve as *alloparents* (wild cranes that serve as adoptive parents), eventually teaching the young crane the migration route. Unfortunately, this

approach met with varying degrees of success as some of the juveniles just didn't seem to have the flight stamina to follow the adult birds to where they roosted for the night.

According to Joe Duff of OM, "Cranes raised in captivity don't get to fly like wild birds. Once they are released, their poor flying ability could be under-developed muscles, a lack of experience, or a combination of both. Either way, it's dangerous for cranes to roost on dry land."

This season, OM attempted to release the Parent-Reared chicks where the adults were known to roost making it possible for the juveniles to practice flying while still having a safe place to roost at night in the company of adult cranes. The hope was that after a few days of associating with the adults the juveniles might then follow them to their foraging grounds, strengthening bonds that would carry over to traveling with them when they began their migration south.

To read more, go here:

<http://operationmigration.org/InTheField/2017/09/26/parent-reared-whooping-crane-releases/>

Parent-reared Whooping Crane #26-17 heads south

According to [Operation Migration](#), female Whooping Crane #26-17 was the first Parent-Reared bird to start the migration this fall. Based on her last known associates and the route she is taking south, they thought she was following "[Peanut](#)" ([#4-14](#)) and his friend, [#11-15](#).

On November 9, 2017 the trio left Grand River Marsh in Marquette County, Wisconsin and flew about 170 miles to LaSalle County, Illinois. By the following day they had flown over 200 miles and are just north of where Indiana, Illinois and Kentucky meet.

For more and a map of #26-17's progress go here:

<http://operationmigration.org/InTheField/2017/11/09/whooping-crane-26-17-is-progressing-south/>

Aransas-Wood Buffalo WHOOPERS

New telemetry helps track Aransas-Wood Buffalo Whooping Cranes

In August 2017 biologists captured a 3-month old juvenile Whooping Crane in Wood Buffalo National Park and fitted it with a new cellular-based telemetry unit. The young crane is now known as "7A." In a November update of the Aransas-Wood Buffalo population of Whooping Cranes, Wade Harrell, U.S. Whooping Crane Recovery Coordinator, focused on the migration of "7A" and its parents as they made their journey to Aransas.

In an earlier telemetry study, satellite-based telemetry was used, according to Harrell. "These devices provided 3-5 locations every 24 hours and communicated that via space satellite. Our new telemetry devices have the capability to provide significantly more data compared to our previously used devices. We are now using cellular-based telemetry devices, meaning they relay location data using ground-based cellular towers, just like your mobile phone does. The device is powered by a solar-charged battery. As long as the marked bird is in the range of a cellular tower, we receive a data download every day via internet. Each data download contains locations for the bird every 30 minutes over the past 24 hours. The new telemetry devices are also equipped with what is called an accelerometer, meaning we can determine the speed of the bird, indicating if it is in flight or on the ground."

"7A" and its family safely made it to Aransas after "a fairly normal fall migration, taking 52 days and a bit over 2,500 miles to complete." Their stopover "pit stops" recorded along the way were almost always at quality wetland and prairie habitats. "Protecting and restoring these types of habitats across the vast Great Plains of North America really is key to making sure Whooping Crane migrations are successful."

To read the complete article by Wade Harrell, go here:

<http://friendsofthewildwhoopers.org/wintering-whooping-crane-update-november-20-2017/>

Hurricane Harvey's impact on Aransas Wildlife Refuge

After a record breeding season for the Aransas-Wood Buffalo population, 63 juvenile Whooping Cranes migrated with the adults to spend the winter at the [Aransas National Wildlife Refuge](#). The juveniles will stay with their parents throughout the winter, learning to forage for wolfberries in the refuge salt marshes as well as how to find, kill and eat blue crabs. A staple in the Whoopers' winter diet it is not yet known to what extent the crabs may have been affected by the hurricane. Refuge wolfberry plants were covered by the storm surge inadvertently protecting them from damage by the 130 mph winds.

After Harvey and an estimated 9-foot storm surge at the refuge, concerns were raised that the resulting sedimentation of sand and silt from might have damaged the marshes, tidal creeks and inlands where the cranes search for food. Led by Dr. Elizabeth Smith, International Crane Foundation's senior Whooping Crane scientist, an assessment showed where erosion had occurred in the marshes and along shorelines (a loss of 26-feet of shoreline just along the San Antonio Bay area of the refuge). The assessment provided a better understanding of where the silt and sand may have been deposited and where deposits possibly blocked Blue Crabs from moving into the shallow marshes where the Whooping Cranes feed. In an effort to determine food availability, biologists plan to monitor the cranes' movements between areas on the refuge and to record the cranes' foraging success rate at each location.

Water wells drilled on both the Aransas National Wildlife Refuge and private land over the years have played a critical role during times of drought for the wintering Whooping Cranes, as they help replenish the freshwater ponds the cranes rely on. Historically, the wells were powered by windmills, but over the years, through a project called "[Water for Wildlife](#)," the wells were outfitted with solar panels, and since that time more solar-powered wells have been drilled as money became available. Most of the wells are shallow and were damaged when inundated by Hurricane Harvey's storm surge. Smith said the cranes can tolerate "moderately brackish water, but when it approaches saline, they cannot drink it."

Fortunately, thanks to a \$75,000 grant from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation at least 10-12 of the 20 damaged water wells were expected to be repaired by the end of November. According to Wade Harrell, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services' Whooping Crane recovery coordinator, the grant was part of a larger grant given to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to cover Harvey's damage to its southwest region. The [San Antonio Bay Partnership](#) is also one of a collaborative group assisting with repairs.

A game camera originally placed at the "Dry Hole" pond to monitor crane behavior during construction of a nearby oil well, proved to be doubly instrumental to biologists as photos captured by the camera during the hurricane document the extent of the surge in that habitat. The International Crane Foundation plans to mount additional game cameras at ponds the cranes have used in the past as well as at ponds not traditionally used – those farther inland that possibly escaped the storm surge and still contain freshwater. Smith said the use of these cameras is one of the ways they've monitored wintering Whooping Cranes for the past five years and is especially important now for understanding how to help the species continue to be successful.

To read more, for photos and to see a video of Dr. Elizabeth Smith and Wade Harrell, measuring the height of Hurricane Harvey's storm surge at the Aransas National Wildlife Refuge, go here:

<https://www.victoriaadvocate.com/news/2017/sep/21/scientists-measure-harveys-damage-to-species-habit/>

Fire and hurricanes affect endangered species

In a recent *New York Times* article, Dr. Bruce Stein, a conservation scientist at the National Wildlife Federation, said that Whooping Cranes "dodged a bullet" when Harvey made landfall at their winter spot in Aransas County, Texas. When Hurricane Harvey hit, the cranes were still on the Wood-Buffalo breeding grounds in Canada, but had they been in Texas, the species could have been wiped out.

The NYT article, "For an Endangered Animal, a Fire or Hurricane Can Mean the End" includes photographs by Joel Sartore. The article discusses the impact the recent California wildfires, and hurricanes Harvey, Irma and Maria had on several endangered species. Available here: <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/10/25/climate/fires-hurricanes-endangered-animals.html>

General news:

Indiana:

Whooping Crane Outreach in Indiana

James Kawlewski is the new Whooping Crane Outreach Program Assistant for Indiana. His work for the International Crane Foundation involves outreach and education programs across the state to raise public awareness of Whooping Cranes. As sightings of this endangered species become more common in Indiana, it is critical for local communities to recognize the importance of the species and to help protect the Whoopers for future generations. Kawlewski's main area of outreach will be the Goose Pond WMA in Greene County, but will extend to other areas of Indiana as well.

For those interested in learning more about the Indiana Whooping Crane outreach program contact:

James Kawlewski

Whooping Crane Outreach Program Assistant

INTERNATIONAL CRANE FOUNDATION

Office: [812-512-9051 ext.109](tel:812-512-9051) | Mobile: [218-371-9847](tel:218-371-9847)

Louisiana:

Louisiana Whooping Crane population update

In November 2017 two groups of juvenile Whooping Cranes were released into the wild as part of the ongoing collaborative effort started in 2011 to reestablish the Louisiana population after the cranes were extirpated from the Bayou State in 1950.

In mid-November, a cohort of 12 juvenile Whooping Cranes were released into the [Rockefeller Wildlife Refuge](#) on the Louisiana coast. Of the 12 cranes, seven were reared at [Patuxent Wildlife Research Center](#) in Maryland, two were raised at [Calgary Zoo](#) in Canada, and three were hatched from eggs collected from the wild in Wisconsin and reared at the [Freeport-McMoRan Audubon Species Survival Center](#) (FMASSC) in New Orleans. In the past, FMASSC sent a small number of fertile eggs to Patuxent or ICF to be hatched and incorporated into one of the reintroduction projects. This marks the first time that chicks have been hatched and reared at the center for release.

Then on November 21, another cohort of 11 juvenile Whooping Cranes were released from the [White Lake Wetlands Conservations Area](#) in Vermilion Parish. These juveniles were all from the [International Crane Foundation](#) in Baraboo, Wisconsin. With the addition of these cohorts there are now 72 Whooping Cranes currently on the southwest landscape of Louisiana. All cranes are closely monitored by the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF).

Help the LDWF by reporting all Whooping Crane sightings

To report your sighting, go here: <http://www.wlf.louisiana.gov/webform/whooping-crane-reporting-form>

2017 Wild-hatched Whooper doing well

Last year, for the first time in Louisiana in 75 years, a young pair of Whooping Cranes hatched and raised a chick. Then, this spring, three chicks were hatched to three different pairs. The chick named LW3-17 survived to fledge and is still with its parents and probably will be for another two months or so before it separates from the parents.

On October 30 LDWF biologists captured LW3-17 to band it, attach a transmitter for tracking purposes, and to conduct a general health check. Gender results show that wild-hatched LW3-17 is a female.

For a nice photo of the her along with parents L10-11 and L11-11 after fledging in August, go here:
<https://www.facebook.com/lawhoopingcranes/photos/a.734069523365830.1073741828.733006696805446/1224805877625523/?type=3&theater>

Wandering Louisiana Whooper heads back south

To the surprise of reintroduction program biologists, males L3-16 and L4-16 decided to head north to Canada in early May 2017 – both had been fitted with transmitters. Currently the whereabouts of L4-16 is unknown as his remote transmitter failed shortly after the two left Louisiana, and he was not reported to be with L3-16 in late August. From location data reported by L3-16's transmitter, a map of the crane's journey can be seen on the agency's Facebook site. On October 27, a Texas Parks and Wildlife Game Warden observed him with a large flock of Sandhill Cranes in the TX panhandle. Biologists are now waiting to see whether L3-16 eventually returns to Louisiana, completing his migration.

To see the map of Male L3-16's tracking data showing his flight path after leaving Louisiana in early May 2017 until November 3, 2017, go here:

<https://www.facebook.com/lawhoopingcranes/photos/a.734069523365830.1073741828.733006696805446/1296448207127956/?type=3&theater>

Whoopers don't miss a beat over hurricane

Did hurricane Harvey affect the Louisiana population of Whooping Cranes? The Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries announced in a post on September 1, 2017 that transmitter data showed all the cranes were well. At the time of the hurricane, none of the Louisiana Whoopers were in molt and were able to fly to higher ground if needed. Interestingly, the Whooping Cranes from the Louisiana population reported in Texas all spring and summer were in locations hardest hit by the flooding caused by Hurricane Harvey. Despite that, the cranes did not leave and remained basically in the same areas they were using prior to Harvey.

For updates on the Louisiana non-migratory population of Whoopers, go here:

<https://www.facebook.com/lawhoopingcranes/>
[@lawhoopingcranes](#) (search for @lawhoopingcranes on Facebook or in Messenger to easily find the page)

Report Whooping Crane violations and all illegal activity to the LDWF law enforcement office at 800-442-2511.

Massachusetts:

Whooping Crane arrives at Stone Zoo

As part of the International Whooping Crane Recovery Plan, a joint effort between Canada Wildlife Service and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, [Sunflower](#), a 4-year old female Whooping Crane hatched in 2013 at the Calgary Zoo was recently moved to the [Stone Zoo](#) in Stoneham, Massachusetts. There she joined Alec, a male Whooping Crane who has lived there in the Alfred Huang North American crane

exhibit since 2014. Together the two cranes will act as ambassadors for their species, educating guests not only about Whooping Cranes, but the important, ongoing conservation work being done to preserve the species in the wild.

[Zoo New England's](#) Conservation Committee helped contribute to the International Crane Foundation's recovery efforts following the devastating effects of Hurricane Harvey along the Texas coast where the Texas Whooping Crane program is based. ZNE has also supported Operation Migration, as well as the Association of Zoos and Aquarium's SAFE: Saving Animals From Extinction initiative. SAFE is a commitment to harness the collective resources of zoos and aquariums, and is focused on specific endangered species to save them from extinction by restoring healthy populations in the wild.

Michigan:

Natural Resources Chairman responds to Sandhill Crane hunting resolution

In October 2017, House Resolution 154 passed. HR154 was introduced in an effort by some to add Sandhill Cranes to the Michigan game list based on the claim that the growing crane population in the state is causing problems for farmers. In response to, and to clarify "next steps," Michigan Natural Resources Chairman John Matonich issued the following statement.

"There seems to be some misinformation as to the status of Sandhill Cranes in Michigan. I want the public to know that this commission has not added Sandhill Cranes to the game species list. Before this commission considers proceeding forward, it would be beneficial for us to know more about the agricultural conflicts and all available strategies that can be implemented to effectively reduce those conflicts.

Furthermore, please know that this decision does not rest solely with the NRC. Since Michigan's Sandhill Cranes are part of the Eastern Population of greater Sandhill Cranes, their management falls within the purview of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, with recommendations from the Mississippi Flyway Council, a formal advisory council comprised of 17 states.

Before any hunting season could occur in Michigan, the DNR would have to indicate their intention to hold a hunt to the Mississippi Flyway Council. The Council then would discuss and make a quota recommendation to the Fish and Wildlife Service based on the harvest of cranes in other Mississippi Flyway Council states. The Fish and Wildlife Service would then either accept that recommendation or modify it to assure harvest does not negatively impact crane populations.

If this commission ever considers adding Sandhill Cranes to the game species list, and then subsequent to that, considers hunting, it will do so only after a thorough consideration of the science and a complete exploration of all effective alternatives that might be used singly or in combination to resolve concerns."

<http://www.wilx.com/content/news/Natural-Resources-Chairman-responds-to-sandhill-crane-hunting-resolution-457237323.html>

Mississippi:

Refuge population gains four Sandhills

On November 21, 2017, four juvenile Mississippi Sandhill Cranes raised at [Audubon Nature Institute's Freeport-McMoRan Audubon Species Survival Center](#) were released at the [Mississippi Sandhill Crane Wildlife Refuge](#) in Gautier, Mississippi. Since the mid-1990s the center has worked closely with the refuge, releasing 200 Mississippi Sandhill Cranes there. Today there are 120 Sandhills in the non-migratory population. *To watch the release of the Sandhill Cranes, go here:* <http://dai.ly/x6a7q99>

Nebraska:

IBA NEWS: Nebraska Crane Country

(Shared with permission from the Birding Community E-bulletin - November 2017)

Largely because of the lack of submitted data, there are only four globally Important Bird Areas (IBAs) in Nebraska. This situation was at least somewhat improved last month with the announcement that after negotiations with the National Audubon Society, the Crane Trust was certified as a globally Important Bird Area (IBA). This designation was approved because of the huge abundance of Sandhill Cranes that visit the Trust properties along the Platte River every year, and because of the regular migratory visitations of Whooping Cranes there. The land ownership and associated easements through the Crane Trust permanently protect 31 miles of the Platte River channel that will never be further developed. In September, the United States IBA Committee confirmed that the appearance of 208,300 Sandhill Cranes and 8 Whooping Cranes in one day in March meant that the Crane Trust clearly qualified for IBA status.

Most of the lands under the Trust's oversight are on the north side of the river. Without the Crane Trust's protection, these might very well be developed into homes, gravel pits, or any number of other developments. A key piece of the conservation mix is still missing, however. The largest crane roost in the world contains five miles of river channel currently unprotected on the south side of the river.

For information on this encouraging new IBA development in Nebraska, see here:

<https://cranetrust.org/IBA/>

For additional information about worldwide IBA programs, including those in the U.S., check the National Audubon Society's Important Bird Area program web site at:

www.audubon.org/bird/iba/

You can access all the past Birding Community E-bulletins on the National Wildlife Refuge Association (NWRA) website:

<http://refugeassociation.org/news/birding-bulletin/>

New Mexico:

35th Anniversary celebration at [Rio Grande Nature State Park](#) - Ribbon cutting ceremony for Sandhill Crane viewing platform

Rio Grande Nature Center State Park, Albuquerque, NM celebrated its 35th anniversary Friday with a ribbon-cutting ceremony to officially open the new Sandhill Crane Viewing Platform, display newly acquired artwork, and call attention to the improved design and landscape of the overflow parking there. The 38-acre park had over 218,000 visitors last fiscal year.

In 2014 Albuquerque was named an [Urban Bird Treaty City](#). This prestigious designation is part of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's [Urban Conservation Treaty for Migratory Birds](#). Albuquerque has abundant local, state, and federal protected land that supports wildlife and serves as ideal habitat for resident, breeding, and migratory birds. The Rio Grande, the fourth longest river on the continent, flows through the heart of urban Albuquerque and is part of the Rio Grande flyway, one of the most important flyways for migratory waterfowl in North America.

Members of the Albuquerque Urban Bird Coalition were on hand to highlight the migration of cranes into the park and to describe the importance of places like Albuquerque and surrounding areas as stopover sites for migratory birds as well as year-round avian residents.

Tennessee:

Sandhill Cranes to be hunted statewide in Tennessee this season

Beginning in 2013, the Tennessee Sandhill Crane hunt has been centered in the southeast zone of the state, especially the area surrounding the Hiwassee Refuge. However, this year, based on counts indicating an increase in the Greater Sandhill Crane population in the Mississippi Flyway states, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service gave the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency (TWRA) latitude to extend the hunt statewide. The agency states that it will continue to closely monitor the crane hunt and will require hunters to know how to differentiate between Sandhill Cranes and federally protected Whooping Cranes; to report harvests within 24 hours by mailing a check-in portion of their tag to TWRA; and to complete a post-hunting survey within 10 days of the season closure.

“This was the first time TWRA has issued tags for statewide hunting,” TWRA migratory game bird program leader Jamie Feddersen said. “Hunters who receive a white tag (1 crane) can hunt anywhere in the state open to hunting, while those issued blue tags (3 cranes) must stay within the designated southeast zone.”

Hunters with statewide tags can hunt in the southeast zone, but not during the closed portion of the zone’s split season. Statewide, Sandhill Crane hunting begins December 2 and ends January 28. The Southeast Crane Zone has a split season. The hunt is suspended for three days for the annual Tennessee Sandhill Crane Festival, January 13-14. The first segment is December 2 – January 11 and the second segment January 15 –28. Daily hours for hunting are from a half-hour before sunrise until 3:00 p.m. EST.

TWRA seeks public input for Sandhill Crane 2018-19 season

The Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency is soliciting comments for its 2018-19 waterfowl and other migratory bird hunting regulations, including Sandhill Cranes. This is an opportunity for the public to provide ideas and share concerns about hunting regulations with TWRA staff. The comment period is open until December 30, 2017.

Due to changes in the timing of the federal regulation process, waterfowl and other migratory game bird hunting seasons are now proposed to the Tennessee Fish and Wildlife Commission at its January meeting and voted upon at its February meeting.

Public comments will be considered by TWRA’s Wildlife Division staff and may be presented as proposals for regulation changes. Comments may be submitted by mail to: 2018-19 Hunting Season Comments, TWRA, Wildlife and Forestry Division, P.O. Box 40747, Nashville 37204; or emailed to twra.huntingcomments@tn.gov. Please include “Waterfowl Season Comments” on the subject line of emailed submissions.

Texas:

[Texas Whooper Watch](#)

As surge levels from Hurricane Harvey reached the wintering habitat of the Aransas Whooping Cranes, it is possible that they may use new areas other than the [Aransas National Wildlife Refuge](#) to forage and roost. With that in mind, biologists have asked that the public be alert to the presence of this endangered species and help track the cranes by reporting sightings to the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department’s [Texas Whooper Watch](#), a citizen-science based reporting system. Observations help biologists identify new migration and wintering locations of the cranes as well as the associated habitats.

Additional information about Whooper Watch, including instructions for reporting sightings, can be found online at www.inaturalist.org/projects/texas-whooper-watch.

Please report any Texas migration sightings via email: <mailto:whoopingcranes@tpwd.state.tx.us>
Or, by phone: (512) 389-TXWW (8999)

Wisconsin:

New panels added to [International Crane Foundation](#) Whooping Crane exhibit

The interpretive panels encourage viewers to consider the costs and benefits of preservation and conservation. The new graphics also identify the many species that artist [Victor Bakhtin](#) featured in his mural *Paradise Lost*, a lush representation of a long-ago Wisconsin wilderness.

The panels were developed and installed with support from a [C.D. Besadny Grant](#), which provides funds through the Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin. To see the panels, go here: <https://www.savingcranes.org/new-interpretive-panels-in-whooping-crane-exhibit/>

Updated range maps for all 15 species of Cranes now available

Where do cranes live? Cranes live on five of the seven continents – Africa, Asia, Australia, Europe and North America. For all interested in keeping tabs on these amazing birds, the International Crane Foundation just announced that they have released current range maps for all 15 species of cranes.

“Building upon decades of research, we have created current range maps for the 15 species of crane on behalf of the IUCN Species Survival Commission [Crane Specialist Group](#). The maps represent the combined knowledge of experts throughout each species’ range. The data have been gathered through direct observations by researchers and nature reserve staff, satellite and cell phone tracking of individual cranes, color banding studies, reports from local people and, of course, much discussion among the researchers and our staff.

The last time we completed a comprehensive set of crane maps was 1994. Over 20 years have brought new information to refine these historic range maps and help us focus our conservation efforts. The new maps have been prepared as part of an updated global Crane Conservation Strategy that will be published in 2018.”

To view the maps, go here:

<https://www.savingcranes.org/announcing-new-range-maps-for-all-15-crane-species/>

Or here: <https://www.savingcranes.org/where-do-cranes-live/>

Habitat Matters!

Alaska:

Potter Marsh grows by two acres

Created in 1917 with the construction of the Alaska Railroad embankment, Potter Marsh marks the southern reach of the [Anchorage Coastal Wildlife Refuge](#). The marsh covers 564-acres [0.9 sq. mi. or 228 hectares] situated at the base of the Chugach Mountains that border the city of Anchorage. Because it is one of the last places in the area to freeze each winter, it attracts large numbers of waterfowl as well

as Sandhill Cranes during migration. The large variety of species has made the marsh a birding hotspot that draws 150,000 visitors annually to the refuge.

Unfortunately, land surrounding Potter Marsh is privately owned increasing the threat of development. When an opportunity to purchase two acres of land adjoining the marsh presented itself, community members in Anchorage rallied together to help protect one of the most popular birding spots in the city.

The Alaska Department of Fish and Game did not have money to buy the land until a federal grant came through in the Spring, so [the Conservation Fund](#) stepped in to help. After the property owners agreed to lower the price private donors helped finalize the sale. A staggering 20 tons of trash and another 50 tons of recycled steel was removed from woods surrounding the marsh before the acreage changed hands.

Florida:

Osceola Parkway extension threatens wildlife preserve

In November 2017, the Central Florida Expressway Authority is expected to consider whether to extend the Osceola Parkway east through the Split Oak Forest. The Osceola County Expressway Authority suggested that route. Proposals in the past, however, called for a southern loop in the road to bypass the forest — an environmentally friendlier alternative.

The land at issue, the [Split Oak Forest Wildlife and Environmental Area](#), is a roughly 1,700-acre property straddling the Orange and Osceola county lines east of Narcoosee Road and southeast of Orlando International Airport. It was purchased in 1994 for \$6.4 million by Orange and Osceola counties and the Florida Communities Trust under the state land acquisition program known as [Preservation 2000](#). Since then, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) has been managing the property — removing invasive plants, conducting prescribed burns and helping to relocate threatened Gopher Tortoises there.

The Split Oak Forest is a natural oasis in a larger area destined for more development. It has miles of trails for hiking and viewing wildlife like Sandhill Cranes, Red-headed Woodpeckers, Gray Foxes and other species. It is one of the only known viable habitats for endangered Florida Scrub-Jays in Orange and Osceola counties, according to Audubon of Florida. It's a critical corridor for other wildlife in the region. It's part of the Lake Hart Basin, the northernmost watershed for the Everglades.

Running the parkway straight through the forest would inhibit or eliminate prescribed burns on the property, which are essential for maintaining habitat for Gopher Tortoises, according to the FWC. Gopher Tortoise borrows provide shelter for hundreds of other animals, so degrading their habitat would damage the forest's entire ecosystem.

<http://www.orlandosentinel.com/opinion/os-ed-split-oak-preserve-20171031-story.html>

Illinois:

Brierwood Nature Preserve to benefit Monarchs and other wildlife

When the village of Hawthorn Woods in Lake County, Illinois decided to create a Monarch Butterfly sanctuary, officials looked at some of its land holdings. What they found was a 12-acre parcel of basically inaccessible land that had never been farmed and included a complex of trees similar to that found in oak savannah, wetlands and a mixture of hydric soils and upland forest. Further research revealed that the wetland there is part of an 18-acre wetland complex including two tributaries that come to a confluence in the middle of it. This was to become the future Brierwood Nature Preserve.

With a \$20,000 grant from the Canadian National Railroad and \$30,000 of its own funds, Hawthorn Woods worked to remove invasives, planted native plants and bushes and created public walking paths.

Ongoing work will focus on moving the wetland from its current monoculture of cattails to a more diverse habitat in order to attract a wider variety of species. The day of the dedication a pair of Sandhill Cranes were seen feeding on the Preserve.

Indiana:

Sandhill spectacular at Jasper-Pulaski FWA stopover

Each year during migration it is possible to witness tens of thousands of Sandhill Cranes at the Jasper-Pulaski Fish and Wildlife Area, near Medaryville, Indiana. The Jasper-Pulaski FWA is located in a region once famous for the vast Kankakee Marsh. These wetlands consisted of more than one million acres of reeds, ponds and bogs. In the 19th and early 20th centuries, the marsh was drained to make way for agriculture leaving only several thousand acres.

Sandhill Cranes have found the ideal stopover habitat in the fish and wildlife refuge – a perfect combination of nearby fields in which to forage for food as well as safe areas for roosting. The habitat is so good that the migrating cranes often spend several weeks “staging” in the area with numbers building to tens of thousands as more cranes join them from the north. According to Jim Bergens, property manager of Jasper-Pulaski, these Greater Sandhill Cranes are migrating from Wisconsin, Minnesota and Canada, with the first big push occurring in late October and a high-peak count by mid-November.

The best place to view the Sandhills is from the handicapped accessible observation towers, next to an area known as Goose Pasture. Although cranes can be seen throughout the day, the best time to witness the highest numbers is a few hours after dawn and at sunset. Information, including daily migration numbers is updated weekly and can be found online here: <http://www.in.gov/dnr/fishwild/3109.htm> or by contacting Jasper-Pulaski FWA at 219-843-4841.

Kansas:

Whooping Cranes welcome at Kanopolis Lake

[Kanopolis Lake](#) is a reservoir in Ellsworth County in the Smoky Hills of central Kansas. The lake was formed by Kanopolis Dam and was completed in 1948 as a flood control and water conservation project of the United States Army Corps of Engineers. The Corps oversees 11,000 acres (45 km²) of land around the reservoir and conducts prairie restoration, prescribed burning, and tree planting in order to conserve soil and benefit wildlife.

[Friends of the Wild Whoopers' \(FOTWW\)](#) President Chester McConnell, visited the lake in mid-November as part of FOTWW's ongoing "[Stopover Habitat](#)" program. Originally evaluating potential Whooping Crane habitat on military bases, McConnell is now evaluating habitat potential on Corps' lakes and making recommendations to protect and improve where needed.

A good indication that the U.S. Army Corps habitat and wildlife management program is working was the recent sighting of 8 Whooping Cranes (5 adults and 3 juveniles) as they used Kanopolis Lake for a migration stopover on November 18-19, 2017.

To support the crucial habitat work done by FOTWW on behalf of the Aransas-Wood Buffalo population of Whooping Cranes please consider becoming a supporter of the Friends of the Wild Whoopers by going here: <http://friendsofthewildwhoopers.org/support-fotww/>

Texas:

Boat damage within Aransas Refuge prompts waterway closures

Aransas National Wildlife Refuge contains interior lakes and miles of navigable waterways within its 115,000 acres. However, on August 22, 2017, Aransas refuge staff, [FlatsWorthy](#) (a movement that pledges to abide by a basic list of boating/angling behaviors referred to as the “[Code of Angler Respect](#)” in an effort to promote harmony and a greater sense of community among anglers) volunteers and airboat captains posted about 50 signs throughout the eastern edges of the main refuge to mark boundaries and to establish closed waterways. Boats of all types are now prohibited on refuge waterways and wade fishing is no longer allowed.

Airboats traditionally stay out of the refuge during winter when endangered Whooping Cranes are there. However, a recent series of boating incidents involving man-made shortcuts through the Blackjack Peninsula severely damaged refuge habitat. Some of the habitat destruction had been ongoing for some time. Upon inspection, Refuge Superintendent Joe Saenz took official steps to protect the refuge by posting the waterway closures.

FlatsWorthy denounced boaters who carved new pathways through Spartina grass altering sensitive habitat. These manmade channels reroute water movement and promote or hasten erosion. Aquatic vegetation — whether seagrass below the surface, mangroves or cordgrass fringing islands — helps maintain a more viable ecosystem and stabilizes the bay bottom. Gouging seagrass with a propeller and flattening aquatic vegetation with any type of vessel were already against Refuge regulations.

Refuge managers have an obligation to restrict or prohibit any public use that undermines the refuge’s mission. Therefore, if the (refuge) superintendent sees damage to the Whooping Crane’s critical habitat within the refuge boundaries, he is required, as outlined in the refuge’s [Comprehensive Conservation Plan and Environmental Assessment](#), to take action to prevent it from continuing.

To read the USFWS Aransas National Wildlife Refuge Complex Comprehensive Conservation Plan, go here: [Comprehensive Conservation Plan and Environmental Assessment](#)

To read more about the closings in an article by David Sikes of the Corpus Christi Caller-Times, go here: <http://www.caller.com/story/sports/outdoors/2017/09/08/access-denied-revisited/642613001/>

ENVIRONMENTAL impact issues:

Nebraska:

Climate change affects timing of migration, food distribution, habitat

“Anybody who works with Whooping Cranes in the Central Flyway knows that their migration has changed,” said Joel Jorgensen, a biologist with the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission. But no one had published an official study on the topic until he and Mary Bomberger Brown, a shorebird researcher at the University of Nebraska, teamed up to collaborate on a study of Whooping Crane migration. They analyzed data from the [Cooperative Whooping Crane Tracking Project](#), run by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, that includes all confirmed Whooping Crane sightings in the Central Flyway between 1942 and 2016—a total of 2,806 observations. Combined, these observations tell the story of the population’s migrations between their Canadian breeding grounds and wintering areas along the Gulf of Mexico. The database showed where birds were at a given time, and indicated when a mass exodus took place. The duo then compared these changes to average monthly temperature data from the [U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration](#). The work was published last month in *Waterbirds*.

What the researchers found was significant. Over the past 75 years, Whooping Cranes' migration window has expanded by six weeks. The birds gain three weeks on either end of the migration. They began their northbound spring migration in 2016 approximately 22 days earlier than they did in 1942, while their southbound fall migration started approximately 21 days later.

Average temperatures in the Central Flyway during spring increased during the same period, which points to a link between climate change and crane migration. "For a long time, ornithologists thought that they primarily migrate with day lengths," Bomberger Brown says. But days haven't grown longer in the past 75 years. "They seem to be responsive to temperature," she says.

The birds eat a diverse diet that includes reptiles, amphibians, and waste grains during migration. These foods provide the energy and nutrition they need both to migrate successfully and to breed. If climate change alters the distribution of food the birds rely upon, there may be positive or negative consequences that could affect the species' recovery, the researchers said.

To read Alex Furuya's article in Audubon, "Whooping Cranes Take Wing Earlier in Spring Thanks to Climate Change," go here:

<http://www.audubon.org/news/whooping-cranes-take-wing-earlier-spring-thanks-climate-change>

Audubon's Birds and Climate Change Report: 314 Species on the Brink (published 2014)

The Audubon Society's model predicts that 314 North American bird species are seriously threatened by climate change by the end of this century. It separated those 314 species into two groups: climate threatened (may lose over 50% of its current range by 2080) and climate endangered (may lose over 50% of its current range by 2050).

To see both "Climate Endangered" and "Climate Threatened" birds, go here:

http://climate.audubon.org/all-species?field_bird_category_tid=All&field_bird_category_tid=All

For the Sandhill Crane range map:

<http://climate.audubon.org/birds/sancra/sandhill-crane>

For the Whooping Crane range map:

<http://climate.audubon.org/birds/whocra/whooping-crane>

To read "Audubon's Birds and Climate Change Report, 314 Species on the Brink," go here:

<http://climate.audubon.org>

Science News:

Dispersal patterns and pairing behaviors of non-territorial Sandhill Cranes

Matthew A. Hayes^{1,2,3,4} and Jeb A. Barzen^{1,5}

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Abstract: We determined home range size and natal dispersal distance for radio-tagged, non-territorial Sandhill Cranes in Wisconsin. Sandhill Cranes gradually focused on smaller regions located near natal areas as they aged. Average minimum convex polygon home range size decreased from second year (197.3 km²) to third year (54.0 km²) and fourth year (28.3 km²). Average percent overlap in home range area used between years decreased as birds aged. Average natal dispersal distances were highest for second year birds (females: 22 km, males 11 km) and smaller for third year (females: 12 km, males: 4 km) and fourth year birds (females: 11 km, males: 3 km). On average, third year males and females were paired, but associations were short-term (2.5 months) and none persisted into a breeding pair. It may be important for young birds to form ephemeral pairs to practice behaviors that will be important as birds seek a long-term mate. Interactions between non-territorial and territorial birds are important in population management because dispersal behavior may alter population genetic structure at different geographic

scales. Additionally, determining movement patterns of adult plumaged, yet non-breeding, Sandhill Cranes can allow better estimation of breeding success for local populations by only calculating estimates for known breeding birds.

A full-text PDF download available from Jeb Anthony Barzen at:

<https://www.researchgate.net/publication/312191165> Dispersal patterns and pairing behaviors of non-territorial Sandhill Cranes

Timing of family dissociation does not affect long-term survival estimates of Sandhill Crane chicks

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Abstract: Sandhill Crane (*Grus canadensis*) chicks depend on their parents beyond fledging, but timing of chick separation from their parents has rarely been reported. We color-banded and radio-tagged Sandhill Crane chicks on known natal territories in south-central Wisconsin and monitored family groups to determine age of chick independence. Using a Cormack-Jolly-Seber open population model in program MARK, we estimated survival for chicks that dissociated from their parents prior to fall migration, over-winter, and following spring migration. Of 96 chicks with a known timing of dissociation from their parents, 11 (12%) became independent from their parents in the fall before migration during their hatch year, 76 (79%) became independent over-winter, and 9 (9%) returned from spring migration with their parents and then became independent. Average age at independence varied between 146 days (fall), 248 days (off breeding areas), and 335 days (spring). Season of chick dissociation did not affect whether a chick was philopatric or dispersive in its first year. Lifetime survival estimates were high (92%) and did not generally differ based on marking scheme (radio-tagged vs. color-banded), sex (male or female), or timing of dissociation (fall, off breeding areas, or spring). Chicks that did not migrate with their parents likely learned migratory routes and behaviors from conspecifics. More research on interactions between parents, their offspring, and other conspecifics off breeding areas (winter and migratory stopover areas) could provide insight into dissociation patterns and the mechanism of separation that occurs on these areas.

A full-text PDF download is available from Jeb Barzen at:

<https://www.researchgate.net/publication/312538906> Timing of family dissociation does not affect long-term survival estimates of Sandhill Crane Chicks [accessed Dec 07 2017].

Veterinary Students team with ICF to ensure healthy cranes

Each year, a group of UW-Madison Veterinary Medical students volunteer their time to support the [International Crane Foundation \(ICF\)](#) husbandry and veterinary staff team in conducting their annual health checks of its captive breeding flock. These health checks, are not only integral in providing the best care possible for ICF's cranes, but one that provides a unique opportunity for the students to get first-hand experience working with an endangered species. Under the oversight of Dr. Barry Hartup, Director of Conservation Medicine at ICF and Clinical Instructor, UW-Madison the students learn about conservation and avian medicine firsthand, and how to take what is learned in veterinary school and apply it to both a captive population as well as birds in the wild.

For a video of vet students assisting with health checks of the ICF cranes, go here:

<https://youtu.be/crI-rtH0Uo>

Development of the whooping crane tracking project geographic information system

Martha **Tacha**, Andy **Bishop** and Justin **Breil**. (2010)

Abstract: The highest losses in the Aransas-Wood Buffalo whooping crane population occur during migration. Conservation and recovery of the endangered whooping crane requires understanding of migration patterns to identify important stopover areas and potential sources of mortality or disturbance. We converted the Cooperative Whooping Crane Tracking Project database, containing more than 3 decades of data on whooping crane sightings, to a geographic information system (GIS) to allow coarse scale spatial analyses of whooping crane migration patterns in the United States portion of the Central Flyway. At this writing, the geodatabase contains point data for 1,981 confirmed whooping crane sightings through the spring migration of 2008. Limitations and appropriate uses of the sighting point data are discussed. We compared the distribution of confirmed whooping crane sightings using a flyway-wide analysis and state-specific analyses. State-specific analyses showed substantial differences in distribution of whooping crane sightings between states, illustrating potential differences in habitat availability between states. However, differences in whooping crane distribution between states are confounded to an undeterminable degree by observer bias, illustrating the need for information on whooping crane migration patterns that is less dependent on the distribution of observers qualified to confirm whooping crane presence.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE WHOOPING CRANE TRACKING PROJECT GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION SYSTEM. Available from:

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/280661896_DEVELOPMENT_OF_THE_WHOOPING_CRANE_TRACKING_PROJECT_GEOGRAPHIC_INFORMATION_SYSTEM

Temporal migration shifts in the Aransas-Wood Buffalo Population of Whooping Cranes (*Grus americana*) across North America

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Mary Bomberger **Brown**, Tern and Plover Conservation Partnership, School of Natural Resources, University of Nebraska, 3310 Holdrege Street, Lincoln, Nebraska, USA

Waterbirds September 2017: Vol. 40, Issue 3, pg(s) 195- 206

<https://doi.org/10.1675/063.040.0302>

Abstract: Birds are altering the phenology of critical life history events, including migration, in response to the effects of global climate change. Whooping Cranes (*Grus americana*) are one of the most critically endangered birds in the world. Their remnant population, referred to as the Aransas-Wood Buffalo Population, numbers between 300–400 individuals and migrates between the U.S. Gulf of Mexico coast and north-central Canada twice each year. Previous analyses suggested Whooping Crane migration was temporally constant in spring and fall. New analyses of observations spanning 1942–2016 show Whooping Crane migration is now occurring earlier in spring by approximately 22 days and later in fall by approximately 21 days. Spring temperatures have also increased in the migration corridor during the same period; however, there is no apparent temperature pattern during the fall. In spring, earlier migrating Whooping Cranes stopped over for longer periods of time compared to late-migrating cranes. This result may be partially explained by single Whooping Cranes migrating with earlier migrating Sandhill Cranes (*Antigone canadensis*). These results have important conservation implications as the timing of Whooping Crane migration and availability of the habitat and foraging resources, including those associated with agriculture, on which this species relies will be increasingly affected by climate change.

Kudos:

Co-founder of international Crane Foundation finalist for international Award for Conservation Excellence

George Archibald, Ph.D., co-founder of the International Crane Foundation in Baraboo, Wisconsin is one of five finalists for the inaugural [Award for Conservation Excellence \(ACE\)](#) presented by the Banovich Wildscapes Foundation and sponsored by Cabela's Outdoor Fund, the Cabela Family Foundation, and Bass Pro Shops.

The mission of ACE is to honor and appreciate a legacy of conservation through recognition of men and women who share their passion to conserve the great outdoors and have made extraordinary contributions to the sustainability of nature and wildlife. The award recognizes a conservationist's long-term commitment to making our planet a better place, and empower people in both local and international communities to advance wildlife conservation.

To read the press release from the International Crane Foundation, go here:

<https://www.savingcranes.org/co-founder-of-international-crane-foundation-finalist-for-international-award-for-conservation-excellence/>

To watch a wonderful 2006 video prepared when the Indianapolis Prize was first awarded to International Crane Foundation Co-founder Dr. George Archibald for his life-long dedication to crane conservation, go here: <https://youtu.be/rh6FJpBjQOA>

Fabulous volunteers repair hurricane damaged Whooper pen at St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge, Florida

Every year since 2008, [St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge](#) Manager, Terry Peacock, has invited the public for a work day in autumn to help refuge staff prepare a 4-acre fenced, open-topped pen with good roosting inside that serves as a safe winter roost for migratory Whooping Cranes. While it is never known how many Whoopers will choose to roost in the safety of the pen the cranes know it is there. As an example, adult male #5-12 has returned to St. Marks every winter of his life and roosted in the pen. During winter 2016-2017 only 8 cranes chose to use it.

In September, and then again in early October 2017 hurricanes Irma and Nate caused heavy damage to the crane pen fencing leaving sections doubled over where PVC support posts snapped. After a damage assessment, Refuge Manager Peacock put out a call for volunteers to help make repairs and got an immediate response came from U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service staff, Refuge Friends and Photo Club, community volunteers, and the FSU Environmental Service Program. With everyone's help the pen was made secure in time to welcome the returning cranes this fall migration.

To read more about this great group of volunteers and their work on behalf of the Whoopers, go here:

<http://operationmigration.org/InTheField/2017/11/10/first-aid-for-the-whooping-crane-pen-at-st-marks-national-wildlife-refuge/>

Or, to see a slide show of the pen site by Journey North, go here:

<http://www.learner.org/jnorth/tm/crane/sl/17StMarks/0.html>

Sanders Honored with Conservation Author of the Year Award

The Illinois Conservation Foundation announced the selection of Lynn Sanders as its 2017 Conservation Author of the Year for her book [Dancing with Tex: The Remarkable Friendship to Save the Whooping Cranes](#). The story is about ornithologist George Archibald's multi-year quest to successfully breed an

endangered Whooping Crane is written as an inspirational conservation story for 6 to 9-year old children and includes educational content.

Japanese woodcarver created Whooper puppet heads

Haruo Uchiyama sculpts intricate, life-size birds to teach the world about evolution and extinction. “I have been working as a volunteer, making contributions to the community such as “Touch Carvings” for the blind, preservation activities by making decoys of Short-tailed Albatross and other species, designing hand puppets for hand-raising chicks, conducting wood carving classes for children, and more. My main work is as a wood inlay artist; however, my passion is to help people connect with wild birds through wood carvings and taking action to save their habitat.” – Haruo Uchiyama

The Japanese woodcarver, who learned the trade from his father, has devoted more than 35 years to sculpting life-size birds that are accurate down to the individual feather. “Blind people can hear the voices of crows and sparrows every day, but they don't understand how they look or their shape or size,” Uchiyama says. Uchiyama's menagerie aids educators and [conservationists](#) alike. Uchiyama has also [made puppets](#) for scientists at the International Crane Foundation to help facilitate hand-rearing Whooping and Siberian Crane chicks in captive-breeding programs. The beaks are so carefully crafted that they can be used to pick up a pen.

Uchiyama's [current venture](#) has him carving male-female pairs of 40 Hawaiian honeycreeper species—which have [evolved in a tremendous diversity](#) of sizes, shapes, and colors—for Hawaii's [Bishop Museum](#).

To read more, go here:

<http://www.audubon.org/magazine/fall-2017/this-japanese-woodcarver-helps-blind-see-birds>

And from a 2012 post on the International Crane Foundation Facebook page:

“Conservation Hero! Mr. Haruo Uchiyama, a master carver from Japan, creates the beautiful hand puppets that ICF staff use to raise our Whooping Crane chicks for release. As chick rearing season approaches, Mr. Uchiyama has finished several new puppets that we will use this spring. Mr. Uchiyama began developing puppets for wildlife conservation in 1994 and has carved turkey vultures, storks, Siberian Cranes and Whooping Cranes (see photos). Mr. Uchiyama, we thank you for your artistry and support! “

To see the photos of the hand puppets and the post, go here:

https://www.facebook.com/pg/savingcranes/photos/?tab=album&album_id=323408921056909

Upcoming Events:

2017 Crane Fest

Date: December 9, 2017

9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.

Location: Mississippi Sandhill Crane National Wildlife Refuge
Visitor Center and Headquarters
7200 Crane Lane, Gautier, Mississippi

Celebrating 42 years of conservation, visitors are invited to join refuge staff in special activities to learn more about how we manage the refuge for the Mississippi Sandhill Crane as well as numerous other species that make their home in the pine savanna habitat found on the refuge.

For more information call 228-497-6322 ext. 101

Or, go here:

https://www.fws.gov/refuge/Mississippi_Sandhill_Crane/visitor_activities/40th_Anniversary_Celebration/

Holiday with the Cranes on Galveston Island

Dates: December 9-10, 2017

Location: Galveston Island, TX

Holiday with the Cranes is presented by the Galveston Island Nature Tourism Council, a nonprofit volunteer organization that helps connect people with nature experiences and outdoor adventures, and promotes the value of natural habitats and resources in the Galveston Island area.

For more festival information and to register for fieldtrips please go here:

<http://www.galvestonnaturetourism.org/holiday-with-the-cranes/>

Or here: GalvestonNatureTourism.org

<https://www.galveston.com/blog/696/galveston-welcomes-the-return-of-the-sandhill-cranes/>

Wheeler Festival of the Cranes

Date: January 13 - January 14, 2018

Saturday 6:30 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

Sunday 7:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

Location: Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge

3121 Visitors Center Road

Decatur, AL 35603

Over 14,000 Sandhill Cranes, along with a growing number of Whooping Cranes from the eastern migratory population, now spend the winter at Wheeler NWR. Festival attendees are able to view the cranes from an enclosed, heated observation tower. Some festival events and activities will include:

- Auburn raptor show
- [Brian "Fox" Ellis](#) will appear as John James Audubon
- [David Akoubian of Bear Woods Photography](#) (professional wildlife photographer)
- [Michael Graham Allen](#) (flutist and builder of ancient flutes of North America and band [COYOTE OLDMAN](#))
- A guest speaker from the [International Crane Foundation](#)
- Bird walks lead by the [Alabama Ornithological Society](#) and [Tennessee Valley Audubon](#)
- Children's activities
- Sunrise breakfast/birding walk with Dwight Cooley

28th Tennessee Sandhill Crane Festival

Dates: January 13-14, 2018

8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. daily

Location: Hiwassee Wildlife Refuge

Birchwood, Tennessee

Along with the star of the weekend, the Sandhill Crane, many types of waterfowl, Bald Eagles, Golden Eagles, White Pelicans and even Whooping Cranes are spotted each year. Free buses run the short distance from the Birchwood Community Center to the Hiwassee Refuge and Cherokee Removal Memorial. Both the memorial and refuge provide great birding opportunities, with views of the Hiwassee. Volunteers with scopes will be at each location to help novice birders or curious visitors.

For more information, go here: <https://www.tn.gov/twra/article/sandhill-crane-festival>

Sandhill Crane Cruises

Monday January 15, 2018

For more information and to register for the cruise, go here:

<https://community.tnagua.org/events/member-programs/winter/2017/sandhill-crane-cruise-1-15-18>

Kentucky Nature Watch Weekend: Sandhill Cranes

Dates: January 19 - January 21, 2018
January 26 - January 27, 2018

Location: 1149 State Park Road
Barren River Lake State Resort Park
Lucas, KY 42156

Tours January 20, 21, 27; Senior tours on Wednesdays January 17 and 24. Limited space available so registration is required. Adults \$45; Seniors \$40; Children \$30

For more information and to register, call [\(270\) 646-2151](tel:2706462151)

Or, for more information and to download a registration form, go here:

<https://www.kentuckytourism.com/events/details/nature-watch-weekend-sandhill-cranes/81334/>

22nd Annual Whooping Crane Festival – 2018

Dates: February 22-25, 2018

Location: Port Aransas and Mustang Island, TX

Hurricane Harvey tried its best to cancel the festival but didn't succeed! This is expected to be a [record winter](#) for Whooping Cranes in the Coastal Bend so make plans to attend because you won't want to miss this year's festival!

For more information go here: <http://www.whoopingcranefestival.org/>

Or, call 800-45-COAST, or 361-749-5919

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The Eastern Crane Bulletin is issued quarterly (March, June, September and December).

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Southeastern Avian Research

Specializing in Winter Hummingbird banding

www.southeasternavianresearch.org

The Tennessee Ornithological Society

www.tnbirds.org

routledges@bellsouth.net

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

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

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