March 2020

The Eastern Crane E-bulletin covers news about the Eastern Populations of Sandhill and Whooping Cranes, as well as general information about cranes and the continuing work for the protection of these birds and their habitats.

Search for, and conviction of Louisiana poachers continues

Since 2011 the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF) has partnered with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Geological Service, the Louisiana Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit and the International Crane Foundation in an effort to create a self-sustaining, non-migratory Louisiana flock of the endangered Whooping Cranes, part of a larger reintroduction effort.

The first cohort of 26 juvenile Whooping Cranes was brought to the White Lake Wetlands Conservation Area in Vermilion Parish in southwest Louisiana in 2011 from the Patuxent Wildlife Research Center in Laurel, Maryland. Every year since then a new cohort has been released at the White Lake Wetlands area as it is considered to be ideal coastal marsh habitat – critical habitat for the Whooping Cranes to successfully reproduce – shallow water on a fertile prairie. This is not something new for the species, as historically, Whooping Cranes graced this landscape. Southwest Louisiana’s coastal prairie habitat
coupled with an abundance of flooded crawfish and rice fields, is proving to be the ideal combination of habitat needed as breeding grounds for the reintroduced population.

Whooping Cranes can live 20-30 years in the wild but don’t reach sexual maturity until 3-5 years of age. When they do breed, the cranes lay two eggs, and only one chick may survive to fledge. The result is a low recruitment (addition of fledged juveniles) rate for the species. Thus, it was a milestone for the reintroduction efforts in Louisiana, when in April 2016, for the first time in the state since 1939, a pair of young Whooping Cranes successfully bred and hatched two wild chicks (one survived) in Jefferson County Parish. 

An important, key relationship in the effort, has been the one developed between LDWF and the rice and crawfish farmers and landowners in southwest Louisiana. Sara Zimorski, lead LDWF biologist in the Louisiana Whooping Crane project said that once the farmers saw that the Whooping Crane’s would not have a negative impact on their property, they became interested and engaged with what was happening with the project, helping grow concern for the well-being of the local Whooping Cranes – for the cranes nesting on their property, in their rice or crawfish fields. Farmers and landowners not only provide valuable habitat for the nesting cranes but serve as additional sets of eyes and will contact LDWF if anything seems amiss with the cranes.

Whooping Cranes are the most endangered of the world’s 15 crane species. While the Louisiana flock is designated as a non-essential, experimental population (NEP) under provisions of the Endangered Species Act, the cranes are protected under the federal Endangered Species and Migratory Bird Treaty Acts, as well as by Louisiana state law. Despite these protections, shootings are responsible for 24% of the deaths in the Louisiana non-migratory population of Whooping Cranes – the highest percentage of the three populations. (The other two are the wild Aransas-Wood Buffalo population that migrates between Canada and Texas each year and the reintroduced Eastern Migratory Population.)

Despite education and advocacy to protect the Whooping Cranes at least 43 are known to have been shot dead in North America since the U.S. government declared the species endangered in 1967, according to Lizzie Condon, Whooping Crane Outreach Coordinator for the International Crane Foundation in Baraboo, Wisconsin. 12 have been shot in nine incidents in Louisiana, more than in any
other state or territory. Texas is second, with eight cranes shot in seven incidents — including the shooting in Beaumont, Texas, of two cranes from the Louisiana flock. Five cranes have been shot and killed in Indiana, and three each in Alabama, Florida and Georgia, and two in Kentucky.

To date, 158 juvenile Whooping Cranes have been released in the southwest parishes of Louisiana, and an estimated 76 — including three chicks hatched in the wild — survive today. Although some mortality can be directly attributed to predators, powerline strikes, or injuries — Whooping Cranes continue to be shot and killed. A 2018 report by the ICF found that 72 percent of shooters identified since 1990 were not actively hunting at the time of their crime. Instead, the majority of perpetrators seem to have considered the cranes a nuisance, a threat to crops, or merely a convenient target.

As Whooping Cranes become increasingly visible on the Louisiana landscape, LDWF continues to do extensive public outreach to educate the public about the species’ presence with the hope of instilling in individuals a sense of “ownership” of the endangered cranes as well as of the reintroduction process.

A widely shared view among conservationists is that consistently applied tougher sentences are needed to send the message that these shootings will not be tolerated. Hefty fines and restitutions not only act as a deterrent but reflect the fact that a single Whooping Crane can cost more than $100,000 to hatch, raise, and monitor into adulthood. Unfortunately for the cranes, court rulings in poaching cases have varied and judgments are sometimes light.

For example, in 2018, 53-year-old Gilvin P. Aucoin, Jr. shot and killed a Whooping Crane with a .22 caliber semi-automatic rifle while working on a crawfish farm in Evangeline Parish, allegedly in an attempt to scare the bird away. In November 2019 a federal district court charged Aucoin with a misdemeanor violation of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) and sentenced him to 120 hours of community service and two years. He will face no jail time, no fines, and will not be asked to forfeit his firearms, though he will lose his hunting and fishing licenses while on probation.


How a Whooping Crane killing is prosecuted can have a significant effect on the severity of the sentence, though the exact punishments still vary widely. A Texas shooter charged with violating the Endangered Species Act (ESA) in 2016 for killing two Whooping Cranes from the Louisiana population, was fined $25,810 and sentenced to 200 hours of community service as well as five years’ probation. The sentence for a 2011 Alabama shooting tried under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) on the other hand, resulted in a mere $425 fine. A Department of Justice rule called the McKittrick Policy requires proof that a defendant was aware they were killing an endangered animal in order for them to be prosecuted under the ESA. It is extremely difficult to prove prior knowledge, but a sampling of the past decade’s Whooping Crane shooting cases show a pattern of harsher punishments for shooters tried under the ESA.

Read more here in a Focusing on Wildlife article: https://focusingonwildlife.com/news/a-whooping-cranes-killer-got-off-easy-frustrating-conservationists/

Update: May 2016 shooting deaths
On April 3, 2018, Kaenon Constantin, 25, and a juvenile were cited for allegedly shooting and killing two Whooping Cranes near the town of Rayne in Acadia Parish, Louisiana on May 20, 2016. Over the course of a two-year investigation, agents determined that Constantin and the juvenile shot the two Whooping Cranes with .22 caliber rifles while on an all-terrain vehicle (ATV), from a public road. The cranes, known to biologists as L3-15 (male) and L5-15 (female), had been released as juveniles as part of the December 2015 cohort.


In late January 2020, Constantin appeared at the Western District Court of Louisiana for his initial appearance and arraignment. He pled not guilty to a Lacey Act violation for transporting an endangered species as defined under the Endangered Species Act. His next court appearance has been scheduled for 31 March 2020.
Eighteen people, including representatives from Audubon Louisiana, the International Crane Foundation, Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, Acadiana Master Naturalists, Louisiana Ornithological Society, National Audubon Society and the Orleans Audubon Society, attended the proceeding to show their support for Whooping Cranes. The International Crane Foundation and Audubon Louisiana, along with these local partners in the state, will continue to be heavily engaged in this court case. The groups hope to continue working with the court system to create deterrence for this serious wildlife crime.

$11,000 in rewards for tips leading to convictions in two shootings

**November 2, 2018, shooting death of L21-16**

Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF) Enforcement Division agents are still looking for leads, and a reward of $6,000 is being offered for information leading to the arrest and conviction of the person or persons responsible for the illegal shooting of endangered Whooping Crane L21-16. The crane was found with a broken wing on 2 November 2018 between Crowley and Rayne off of Monceaux Road in Acadia Parish. It was taken to a vet where it had to be euthanized due to its injuries. A necropsy determined it to have been shot in the wing. L21-16 had been released as a juvenile as part of the December 2016 cohort. **Anyone with information should call 1-800-442-2511.**

**November 15, 2019, shooting death of L11-18**

The Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF) Enforcement Division is seeking information on the shooting death of an endangered Whooping Crane in Jefferson Davis Parish in November 2019. Agents said the dead crane was found in a rice and crawfish field in the town of Elton, off Elton Drive in Jefferson Davis Parish on November 15, 2019. However, a necropsy determined that it had been killed by gunshot a day or two before being found. Known to biologists as L11-18, the 1.5-year-old male Whooping Crane had been released as part of the December 2018 cohort.

The Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries is offering a $5,000 reward (contributed by LDWF, LDWF Operation Game Thief Program, the Whooping Crane Conservation Association, and the International Crane Foundation) for information leading to the arrest and conviction of the person or persons responsible for the fatal shooting death of this Whooping Crane, said Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries spokesperson, Adam Einck. **Anyone with information should call 1-800-442-2511.**

Anyone witnessing suspicious activity involving Whooping Cranes is advised to call the LDWF’s Enforcement Division at 1-800-442-2511 or use the tip411 program, which may offer a cash reward for information leading to arrests or convictions. To use the tip411 program, citizens can text LADWF and their tip to 847411 or download the "LADWF Tips" iPhone app from the Apple iTunes store.
store free of charge. Citizen Observer, the tip411 provider, uses technology that removes all identifying information before LDWF receives the text so that LDWF cannot identify the sender.

Eastern Migratory Population of WHOOPERS

Eastern Migratory Population WHCR Update – March 1, 2020

In the last month Whooping Cranes have started migrating north. A huge thank-you to the staff of the Fish and Wildlife Service, the Departments of Natural Resources of flyway states, the International Crane Foundation, and all 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. This report is produced by the International Crane Foundation for the Whooping Crane Eastern Partnership. Near real-time locations of Whooping Cranes in this population can be seen at map.bringbackthecranes.org

Eastern Migratory Population Estimate

The current estimated population size is 85 (41 F, 41 M, 3 U). 14 of these 85 individuals are wild-hatched and the rest are captive-reared. To the best of our knowledge, as of 1 March, 38 are in Indiana, 11 are in Illinois, 6 are in Tennessee, 7 are in Kentucky, 11 are in Alabama, 2 are in Georgia, and 2 are in Florida. There was also one Whooping Crane from the Louisiana Non-migratory Population in Morgan County, Alabama this month. The remaining birds' locations have not been confirmed in the last month. Many birds are currently moving north, so these locations change on a daily basis.

2019 Cohort:

- W1-19 (F) was seen during November with parents 12-11 and 5-11 in Gibson Co., Indiana, and this family group was not seen during December, January or February.
- W14-19 (F) is with parents 12-03 and 12-05 in Knox Co., Indiana.
• W19-19 (U) is with parents 9-05 and 13-03 in Greene Co., Indiana.
• 79-19 (F) left Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge in Morgan Co., Alabama, and is currently in Lawrence Co., Tennessee, with adult Whooping Cranes.
• 80-19 (F) is still in Greene Co., Indiana with adult Whooping Cranes.

2018 Cohort
• W3-18 (F) is still in Greene Co., Indiana with other Whooping Cranes.
• W1-18 (F), W5-18 (M), W10-18 (U), and W6-18 (M) have returned to Indiana and are in Sullivan Co., with 69-16 (F), W10-15 (U), and 2-17 (F).
• 73-18 (F) and 74-18 (M) are still in Jasper Co., Indiana with their parent 16-11 (M).
• 75-18 (M) is still in McLean Co, IL.
• 77-18 (M) is still in Highlands Co, FL.

Mortality or Long-term missing
None known during February 2020.

5-12 (M) has not been seen since February 2019 and is now considered long-term missing and is removed from the population estimate above. He was last seen on the wintering grounds last winter, but in spring 2019 his mate showed up on their territory without him and nested with another male that year.

For the monthly Whooping Crane Eastern Migratory Population updates that include population estimates, reproduction, wild-chick updates, cohort updates and mortalities, go here: http://www.bringbackthecranes.org/project-updates/

To follow where the reintroduced eastern population is, go here: http://map.bringbackthecranes.org/

To learn more about the individual cranes in the eastern population, go here: http://www.bringbackthecranes.org/emp-whooping-crane-biographies/

Data courtesy of Whooping Crane Eastern Partnership (WCEP)

UL = Ultralight (Chicks were captive-hatched, then raised by costumed handlers and taught to follow an ultralight for their first migration to Florida); DAR = Direct Autumn Release (Chicks are captive-hatched then released in the fall in the company of adult cranes from whom they will learn the migration route); PR = Parent Reared (Chicks are captive-hatched and raised by captive Whooping Cranes, then released near a wild crane pair in hopes the pair will “adopt” the juvenile and lead it on migration); W = Wild hatched to a wild Whooping Crane pair that then teach the migration route to the juvenile.

To report a banded Whooping Crane sighting, go here: https://www.savingcranes.org/report-whooping-crane/

Aransas-Wood Buffalo WHOOPERS

Whooping Crane Updates
The refuge posts Whooping Crane Updates while the cranes are on the Texas coast, their winter home. Updates provide the most recent information from aerial surveys and cover a variety of topics that relate to whooping cranes in the survey area, including habitat conditions, management challenges and successes, helpful links, and more.

The refuge begins posting updates once the birds begin arriving (around mid-October) and posts information frequently until the birds leave for their summer home in Canada (near the end of March). Once the birds have left their wintering grounds and the data have been fully analyzed, the refuge prepares the Aransas-Wood Buffalo Whooping Crane Abundance Survey, a full report on the season.
Wintering Whooping Crane Update

According to the February 6, 2020, update by Wade Harrell, U.S. Whooping Crane Recovery Coordinator at Aransas NWR, the annual Whooping Crane abundance survey at Aransas was completed the first week in February, with biologists able to fly three primary surveys and two secondary surveys. Areas surveyed stretched along the Texas coast from Matagorda to Port Aransas. In addition to an overall estimate of the winter population size, the survey provides biologists an estimate of how many juveniles were “recruited” (addition of fledged juveniles) into the population last summer. Better juvenile recruitment this past year in Canada (37 cranes) compared to 2018 (24 cranes) should result in a larger population this year. For more information on the wintering abundance survey, click here.

The secondary survey (on the edges of the core wintering range) is crucial in determining future expansion areas for the growing population. Biologists are getting reports of Whooping Cranes in a variety of places outside the primary survey area this year, including a pair near Matagorda, Texas, three adults in Port Aransas, and marked birds in Colorado County, Texas. A juvenile Whooping Crane banded last summer in Wood Buffalo National Park stopped migrating in Kansas, and as of February 19 was still with a flock of Sandhill Cranes at Quivira National Wildlife Refuge (NWR). Efforts to trap and mark Whooping Cranes at Aransas NWR for its ongoing telemetry study, saw the addition this winter of 6 Whooping Cranes marked with cellular telemetry devices. With these devices providing locations every 15 minutes, biologists are able to understand daily movements (night and day) and habitat use at a level that was not available even a few short years ago.
Habitat Management on Aransas NWR:
Unseasonably wet weather delayed prescribed burns at Aransas. The end goal is to burn approximately 13,000 acres of the refuge in 2020, the majority of which is Whooping Crane habitat. Currently, the completed prescribed burns total 1,600 acres on the Blackjack Peninsula with the plan to burn at least another 900 acres.

Fire crews responded to a wildfire on Matagorda Island in early December 2019 that, while not planned, provided immediate and long-term benefits to both Whooping Cranes and other wildlife there. Part of the area that burned was scheduled to be burned this winter to improve habitat for wildlife. Whooping and Sandhill Cranes will both feed in “blackened” or freshly burned habitat and burning woody/brush species around freshwater ponds removes cover for predators. Fire also maintains coastal prairie habitat that benefits Aplomado Falcons and other prairie-dependent species.


General News

Congress Acts to Restore Vital Protections for Migratory Birds

On January 8, 2020 Representative Lowenthal (D-CA) with 18 bipartisan original co-sponsors introduced the Migratory Bird Protection Act (H.R. 5552) to restore longstanding protections for migratory birds against industrial take – that is, unintentional but predictable killing of birds. Bird populations in North America are plummeting – a stunning 3 billion birds have disappeared from the continent since 1970 – and federal law is essential to conserving and recovering these populations.

The Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) one of our nation’s first conservation laws, was enacted to implement our international treaty commitments to protect populations of migratory birds. Unfortunately, the current administration has crippled the MBTA by declaring that it no longer protects migratory birds from unconstrained incidental take by oil and gas developers and other industries.

The Migratory Bird Protection Act reaffirms the MBTA’s intent to protect migratory birds from industrial activities and provides regulatory certainty to responsible developers in managing incidental take, so long as they follow best management practices to avoid bird deaths. This important and reasonable approach gives industry clear and consistent expectations for protecting birds without jeopardizing our international commitments and conservation legacy.
“As the dual crises of climate change and biodiversity loss accelerate, the strength of our bedrock environmental laws is more critical than ever,” said Katie Umekubo, a senior attorney at the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC). “The Trump administration’s reckless actions threaten irreversible loss of birds. With the Migratory Bird Protection Act, Congress can reassert the longstanding balance between conservation and industrial activity that will, if done carefully, help ensure the survival of our precious avian species.”

To read the entire NRDC press release, go here: https://www.nrdc.org/media/2020/200108-2

Alabama:

Wheeler Festival of the Cranes recap
The 2020 Festival of the Cranes at the Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge was a success despite severe weather churning through the area on Saturday. Braving the elements, approximately 500 people came out as refuge staff closely monitored the weather. Despite a power outage at the Visitor Center from noon until 5:00 p.m. that day, speakers were accommodating and continued with their presentations as scheduled.

Highlighting Wheeler’s great habitat, approximately 5,000 Sandhill Cranes, as well as several Whooping Cranes, were visible for all to see from the observation building. With the improved weather on Sunday over 2,000 people attended festival activities. The four-day Festival of Cranes attracted 4,500 attendees. While down by 1,500 from previous attendance, refuge staff was nonetheless pleased.

After a century of recovery Sandhill Cranes targeted
For the first time since 1916 when the unrestricted hunting of Sandhill Cranes was banned by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, the cranes are again under fire. Listed as a game species, many central U.S. states, Canadian provinces, and Mexico have been hunting Sandhill Cranes for more than 50 years with populations remaining stable or increasing. The subspecies of Greater Sandhill Cranes migrates through the eastern United States, and Alabama now follows Kentucky and Tennessee in implementing a Sandhill season.

Sandhills prefer wetland habitat with emergent vegetation and often feed in harvested grain fields. The majority of migratory Sandhill Cranes in Alabama are found in the Tennessee River Valley with some birds wintering in Weiss Reservoir on the Coosa River. The hunt zone for this inaugural “experimental,” split season is restricted to northern Alabama. Both state and federal wildlife refuges are closed to Sandhill Crane and waterfowl hunting. 400 permits and 1,200 tags (limit of three cranes per permit) were issued. Approximately 300 Sandhill Cranes were killed.

Canada:

Editor: The following is a bit of history included here because it gives insight into the turn of the century, before natural history museums, when the only opportunity for most of the public to see unusual or “exotic” animals and birds, including Whooping Cranes, came by visiting taxidermy shops.

Edward Darbey, taxidermist – Winnipeg shop’s clientele included sportsmen, naturalists and scientists
At the turn of the century, both federal and provincial governments needed immigrants to “settle and tame Canada’s vast, rich, untrammeled West.” Stuffed and mounted wildlife was considered symbolic of the area’s “superabundance,” and thus integral to strategies for attracting immigrants to Canada. Taxidermy displays were featured at provincial, national and international exhibitions, and taxidermists were kept busy supplying mounts. By about 1902, George Atkinson, Alex Calder, Edward Darbey, George Grieve,
Abel Hine and his three sons, and William White were noted Winnipeg taxidermists, all with shops on Main Street. Winnipeggers “eagerly attended” these shops and exhibitions because, until 1932, the city had no permanent public museum to exhibit natural history specimens.

By 1902 Darbey already had the distinction of being “official taxidermist to the Manitoba government,” as appointed by Premier Rodmond Roblin. It required him to provide taxidermic mounts to beautify public buildings. Two of his bison mounts long stood guard inside the front entrance of the legislature. The honor bestowed by Roblin, plus Darbey’s fine reputation, convinced collectors far and near to submit specimens, even rare Whooping Cranes, for taxidermy.

To read more about this interesting bit of Winnipeg’s history, go here: https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/local/edward-darbey-taxidermy-and-the-last-buffaloes-566714401.html

Edward Dabney taxidermy shop, Main Street Winnipeg Canada, November 1911. Photo by L.B. Foote.

Colorado:

Colorado Crane Conservation Coalition scholarships available

As in previous years, the Colorado Crane Conservation Coalition invites high school seniors in Routt and Moffat counties to submit original writings or artwork inspired by the Greater Sandhill Cranes that migrate through the region. $5,000 in scholarships will be awarded this year. Categories include:

- Writing - An essay (non-fiction) or story (fiction) of 750 to 1500 words
- Poetry - Collection of three poems
- Other artistic media - Painting, music, digital art or photography

The work must be original and accurately reflect the physical characteristics, behavior and habitat of the Rocky Mountain Greater Sandhill Cranes. Deadline for submission is March 25, 2020. All entries must be submitted to cranecreativeartscontest@gmail.com. For more information and complete submission rules, visit http://coloradocranes.org/creative-arts-contest-2020/.

To learn more about the Colorado Crane Conservation Coalition, go here: https://coloradocranes.org

Indiana:

Whooping Crane juvenile released at Goose Pond doing well

Whooping Crane #80-19 was 5-months old when released in November 2019 at the Goose Pond Fish and Wildlife Area in Greene Co., IN. The female juvenile was part of the International Crane Foundation’s (ICF) “Parent-reared” (PR) program in which chicks are hatched and reared by captive Whooping Cranes at the Foundation’s headquarters in Baraboo, Wisconsin. In the fall, juveniles are then released near adult Whooping Cranes that are part of the Eastern Migratory Population (EMP). Biologists hope that the adult cranes will “adopt” the juveniles and show them the migration route south.
Due to an injury, #80-19 – formerly known as “Arya” while in Wisconsin – wasn’t able to be released in the fall as planned. When recovered, ICF decided to crate and transport her to Goose Pond FWA for release where a number of the EMP Whoopers now overwinter each year. Her release at Goose Pond marks the first juvenile Whooping Crane raised in captivity to be released in Indiana by the International Crane Foundation.

Help Whooping Cranes by donating tax refunds

Indiana residents can help the state's Whooping Cranes, Spotted Turtles, bats and other wildlife by donating to the DNR's Nongame Wildlife Fund when they file their 2019 state taxes. The Nongame Wildlife Fund supports the DNR Division of Fish & Wildlife's nongame management programs. There are more than 750 nongame and endangered wildlife species in the state. No state tax dollars are used to manage nongame wildlife. Recent projects have included research on endangered turtles, an outreach campaign to conserve Whooping Cranes, and surveys of summer bat populations on state fish & wildlife areas. Complete program details are at wildlife.IN.gov/2356.htm.

Direct donations can also be made anytime online at on.IN.gov/nongamewildlifefund or by mail to: Nongame Wildlife Fund; 402 W. Washington St., Room W273, Indianapolis, IN 46204.

Louisiana:

The Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF) is working with a number of partners to restore the Whooping Crane in Louisiana. This remarkable bird, while historically found in Louisiana, disappeared from the state’s landscape in 1950 due to mechanized agriculture and unregulated hunting. This month marks the 9th year of the Whooping Crane reintroduction program. Currently, there are 76 Whooping Cranes in the population. The goal of the Louisiana project is to establish a self-sustaining Whooping Crane population, estimated to require approximately 120 individuals and 30 productive pairs.

Power Lines marked at White Lake WCA will help keep Whoopers safe

As the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF) works to re-establish a self-sustaining population of Whooping Cranes, one of the obstacles to success is the birds inadvertently hitting power lines. Power lines are much more prevalent on the landscape than they were 70 years ago when Whooping Cranes last lived in Louisiana and a number of the reintroduced birds have died in collisions with them.

But SLEMCO, a southwest Louisiana power company based in Lafayette, has come to the aid of Whooping Cranes. Last fall, SLEMCO placed visible markers with florescent reflective and long-lasting glow tape on a two-mile stretch of power lines on the White Lake Wetlands Conservation Area (WCA) where many of the cranes live and spend time. Three cranes have died in collisions with those particular power lines, so it was determined to be a high-risk area and a high priority to mark.

“We approached SLEMCO about this particular stretch of line and they were very receptive and interested in working to make this area safer for the cranes,” said Sara Zimorski, a LDWF biologist who works on the Whooping Crane project. “We fully understand that power lines are everywhere, and they can’t all be marked but this is an area where several cranes have died and one that continues to be used by a number of cranes. SLEMCO understood and went to work to assist us.”

Thank you SLEMCO!
To read more about SLEMCO’s part in keeping Whooping Cranes safe, and to see the new “diverters” placed on the lines, go here:

Following are several stories from the LDWF – Whooping Cranes Facebook page. Go there for all the updates, including photos on the Louisiana Whoopers: https://www.facebook.com/lawhoopingcranes

December 17, 2019
Cranes are usually very predictable so when L4-17 left the Holla Bend National Wildlife Refuge in Arkansas and headed east several weeks ago we were pretty confident she was headed to the Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge Complex in Alabama where she spent last winter. Sure enough, data from her transmitter indicated an ALMOST straight path between the two refuges! She missed the turn south and flew an extra 36 miles east before somehow apparently realizing she’d gone too far and corrected her course to fly southwest and reach Wheeler. She was observed there on 4 December along with thousands of wintering Sandhill Cranes and about a dozen wintering Whooping Cranes from the reintroduced eastern migratory population.

December 19, 2019
We are excited that LF1-98, the 21-year-old female crane previously a member of the Florida reintroduction project and moved to Louisiana last February, has recently been seen with 2.5-year-old male L21-17! We hope that this relationship sticks and that they nest this upcoming spring! We hope to still try and catch and move a few of the remaining Florida cranes over here but some of the logistics are proving difficult.

December 27, 2019 at 6:45 AM
Our plans for managing the new chicks at the release pen didn’t go exactly as planned this year! The trio of adults that we posted about several weeks ago were aggressive to the chicks, especially the male, L17-16. As a result of his aggression and some of the management changes we had to make, the chicks abandoned the site and began using other areas of the WLWCA property. Unfortunately, L5-19 was killed by predators, which happens but is extra sad since it had only been a few weeks since they were released. The rest of the chicks are doing well, they are all together and have been spending time with or in the vicinity of 13 different older birds.

January 15 at 6:30 AM
Louisiana female L4-17 remains at the Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge Complex in northern Alabama with Sandhill Cranes and Whooping Cranes from the eastern migratory population! Folks at the refuge have been keeping an eye on her for us, and we greatly appreciate their assistance! Editor: She was also photographed on February 25, 2020 at Wheeler NWR.
Nesting update! Pair L5-14 and L12-16 may have kicked off nesting season extra early this year, but most of the pairs have been taking their time! We currently have four confirmed nests and one suspected nest, including one by a new breeding pair! So far, nests are spread out over 5 different parishes.

**Report Whooping Crane Violations to 800-442-2511**
LDWF knows that the sportsmen and farmers here in Louisiana only want the best for our wildlife and the habitat they utilize. As conservationists of our state resources, you have high regard for our Sportsman's Paradise, not only for your pleasure, but so your children and grandchildren can share in its enjoyment. Unfortunately, a small group of individuals threaten that reputation by poaching. Please help by reporting all illegal activity to our law enforcement office at 800-442-2511.

**Support the Whooping Crane Project**
LDWF is working cooperatively with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the U.S. Geological Survey, the International Crane Foundation and the Louisiana Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit to restore the Whooping Crane in Louisiana. Project funding is derived from LDWF species restoration dedicated funds, federal grants and private/corporate donations. LDWF’s budget for the initial year of the project was $400,000. The project costs escalate in year two and beyond as the project expands. LDWF estimates that it will be necessary to raise $3 to 4 million private dollars to help fund a portion of this 15-year project.

*Help support Whooping Crane restoration in Louisiana by doing one of the following:*
- Donate to the Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries Foundation and designating your gift as “in support of The Whooping Crane Project;”
- Purchase an Endangered Species License plate featuring a Whooping Crane;
- Purchase a print of the R.C. Davis painting "Taking Flight."

*To access the above, go here:*

**Help LDWF by reporting all Whooping Crane sightings**
Anyone encountering a Whooping Crane is advised to observe the bird from a distance and to please report your sighting to the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries by using the following link: [http://www.wlf.louisiana.gov/webform/whooping-crane-reporting-form](http://www.wlf.louisiana.gov/webform/whooping-crane-reporting-form)

Anyone witnessing suspicious activity involving Whooping Cranes is advised to call the LDWF's Enforcement Division at 1-800-442-2511 or use the tip411 program, which may offer a cash reward for information leading to arrests or convictions. To use the tip411 program, citizens can text LADWF and their tip to 847411 or download the "LADWF Tips" iPhone app from the Apple iTunes store free of charge. Citizen Observer, the tip411 provider, uses technology that removes all identifying information before LDWF receives the text so that LDWF cannot identify the sender.

*For LDWF updates on the Louisiana non-migratory population of Whooping Cranes, go here:*
[https://www.facebook.com/lawhoopingcranes/](https://www.facebook.com/lawhoopingcranes/)

**Maryland:**

**Sandhills wintering in the northeast**
During the Point Lookout Christmas Bird Count, in California, Maryland in late December 2019, one of the observers recorded Sandhill Crane(s) bugling. It’s unclear if there was more than one crane. The location was in the farm fields at the end of Harry James Road in Ridge/Scotland. This is basically the same
location where one to three birds have spent the winters of 2017/2018 and 2018/2019 and now 2019/2020. Editor: eBird has photographs of a single crane from the first half of January 2020.

Habitat Matters!

Canada:

Metro Vancouver adds lands to Minnekhada and Codd wetland

Metro Vancouver, British Columbia announced in January of this year that it had acquired two new park land properties near the Pitt River Valley – adding nearly 39.5 acres to Minnekhada Regional Park and 138 acres to the Codd Wetland Ecological Conservancy Area – at a cost of $2 million and $7.3 million, respectively. Located on both sides of the Pitt River Valley, the two parcels protect ecologically diverse wildlife habitat and present opportunities to develop future trails, lookouts and other park amenities in some of Metro Vancouver’s fastest-growing sub-regions.

The land added to Minnekhada Regional Park is in the northeastern, upland portion of the park, and fills a gap between the regional park and the Pitt Addington Marsh Wildlife Area. Of note is a hillside of maturing Douglas fir that provides foraging as well as hibernation habitat for Western Toads, a species of special conservation concern.

Located on the east side of the Pitt River Valley, the Codd Wetland Ecological Conservancy area protects a wetland home to a wide variety of plants, birds, fish, mammals and amphibians. Over 160 species of birds inhabit the wetland and it is one of only a few areas in the Lower Mainland where Sandhill Cranes have been observed nesting. Initially acquired in 2004, the acquisition of additional lands around Codd Wetland will help Metro Vancouver realize its goal of creating a large and resilient park complex in the northeastern part of the region.

Colorado:

Colorado Parks and Wildlife celebrates 30 years of the North American Wetlands Conservation Act

In 2019 Colorado Parks and Wildlife celebrated 30 years of the North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA). Signed in December 1989, the conservation act provides financial support for waterfowl habitat that in turn supports a multitude of other wetland-related wildlife species. NAWCA provides matching grants to wetlands conservation projects in the United States, Canada, and Mexico. In the past two decades alone, NAWCA has funded over 2,950 projects totaling $1.73 billion in grants. More than 6,200 partners have contributed another $3.57 billion in matching funds to affect 30 million acres of habitat. Since it began 30 years ago, NAWCA funds have contributed $25 million to Colorado’s wetlands.

“Colorado Parks and Wildlife’s Colorado Wetlands for Wildlife Program has been able to leverage annual grant funding from Great Outdoors Colorado to expand the scope of projects in Colorado that are eligible for matching grant funding under NAWCA,” said CPW Wetlands Program Coordinator Brian Sullivan. “These funds are critical to our ability to conserve wetlands in Colorado.”

“Funding from the North American Wetland Conservation Act was critical to the success of our Rio Grande Initiative to protect 25,000 acres of private ranchland along the Rio Grande and its tributaries,” said Allen Law, Executive Director of the Rio Grande Headwaters Land Trust.
“Conservation easements on these ranches helped our agricultural community while permanently protecting thousands of acres of Colorado’s most resilient and important wetlands.”

The following are examples of NAWCA-funded projects in the state:

**Elliott State Wildlife Area Shallow Water Wetlands – Completed September 2018**
Elliott State Wildlife Area (SWA), adjacent to the South Platte River near Brush, Colorado is a complex of numerous shallow wetlands that are flooded in the spring and fall, utilizing Union Ditch water rights for migratory bird habitat and fall public recreation. Unfortunately, many of the basins contained deep, scoured areas that tended to pool deep water, which then limits the capacity of the entire flow-thru complex and greatly hampers bird and hunter use. Ducks Unlimited, Inc. (DU) utilized their professional expertise to engineer and regrade 15 of the existing basins, amounting to roughly 200 acres of wetlands.

**Cross Arrow Ranch Conservation Easement - Completed September 2009**
At the confluence of the Rio Grande and Conejos Rivers, the Cross-Arrow Ranch conservation easement held by the Rio Grande Headwaters Land Trust (RiGHT) protected 3,238 acres of productive ranchlands along with senior water rights. Over 2,000 acres of this property are wetlands, which provide habitat for a wide variety of migratory birds like waterfowl, Sandhill Cranes, and the endangered Southwestern Willow Flycatcher.

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**Indiana:**

**Muscatatuck NWR added to state birding trail**
Muscatatuck National Wildlife Refuge located just east of Seymour, Indiana, has been added to the Indiana Audubon Society’s Indiana Birding Trail. The trail, which was completed in December 2019, is a network of 64 sites to view birds in five regions throughout the state.

Established in 1966 as Indiana’s first National Wildlife Refuge, Muscatatuck’s 7,724 acres of forest, wetlands and grasslands were purchased as habitat for migratory waterfowl using funds from the sale of the USFWS Federal Migratory Waterfowl Stamps – the Federal Duck Stamp." The refuge continues to be a magnet for migratory birds and other wildlife. Named for the Muscatatuck River that forms its southern boundary, which means “land of winding waters.” [In the early 20th century, the name of the river was “Muscakituck”. It is believed that the original white name was “Musakituck”, written in 1812 by a man named Tipton. Some believe the name comes from the Munsee words for “swamp” and “river”.

Over the course of the year refuge organizers hold multiple bird events, including monthly bird walks, bird counts, festivals such as “A Celebration of Cranes” and “Wings Over Muscatatuck.” A January 10, 2020, bird count tallied 40,120 Sandhill Cranes on the refuge.

**Editor:** Looking back to 2001 when the first cohort of juvenile Whooping Cranes was led by Operation Migration ultralights from Wisconsin to Florida, the Muscatatuck refuge was used as a stopover site for the group. Early the following morning an excited, somewhat awe-struck group of “craniacs” waited in the cold for the historic flyby of ultralights leading the young birds southward. As one lucky enough to be present that morning, it was truly an amazing sight to witness!

To learn more about Muscatatuck NWR, go here: https://indianaaudubon.org/places/united-states/indiana/indianapolis/birding-guide/muscatatuck-national-wildlife-refuge/
Michigan:

ACRES Land Trust Protects First Michigan Property

With the recent acquisition of 78-acres of the Kauffman Nature Sanctuary, ACRES Land Trust in Allen County has its first foray into protecting land in Michigan. The Hillsdale County property brings the number of acres protected by the land trust to 7,230 across three states.

“We’re excited to respond to people’s desire to protect local land,” says Jason Kissel, executive director of the nonprofit founded in 1960. “After 60 years of success in Indiana and Ohio, with Kauffman Nature Sanctuary, ACRES is able to demonstrate our work in Michigan, ensuring a local living legacy for generations. We’re eager to engage Michigan folks who want to help.”

The USDA’s Wetland Reserve Program was able to restore broken drainage tiles on the land in 1988, allowing restoration of five pre-settlement wetlands, where Green Heron and Sandhill Cranes have nested. The back of the property contains a cold-water stream that leads to Lake Erie.

To read more about and see photos of the Kauffman Nature Sanctuary, go here: https://acreslandtrust.org/kauffman/

Missouri:

Loess Bluffs National Wildlife Refuge

Established as a national wildlife refuge on August 23, 1935 by President Franklin D. Roosevelt, Loess Bluffs National Wildlife Refuge (formerly known as Squaw Creek National Wildlife Refuge), in northwest Missouri, provides habitat for migratory birds and other wildlife. The refuge includes 7,440 acres of wetlands, grasslands, and forests along the eastern edge of the Missouri River floodplain.

The loess bluffs habitat is a geological formation of fine silt deposited by the past glacial period – “loess,” in German, means fine wind-blown soil particles. These unique hills stretch from about 30 miles south of St. Joseph, Missouri, to extreme northern Iowa. Remnant pockets of native plants, once common on what had been vast prairie grasslands, can still be found on the refuge, including Indian grass, Big bluestem, Blazing Star, Yucca, Beard tongue, and Skeleton plant.

A refuge roadway tour gives visitors access to the various habitats, while observation towers and platforms allow for an elevated view over water-filled pools. Approximately 30 species of mammals, 40 species of reptiles and amphibians, and more than 300 species of birds have been documented there.

The refuge was officially named one of America’s top 500 Globally Important Bird Areas by the National Audubon Society in 2001. The Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network designated the refuge a “Site of Regional Importance” in 2007.

For more information, go here: www.fws.gov/refuge/Loess_Bluffs/

Nebraska:

Platte River Recovery Implementation Program extended

On December 30, 2019, the U.S. Department of Interior announced that U.S. Secretary of the Interior David Bernhardt had signed an amendment to the Platte River Recovery Implementation Program Cooperative Agreement, along with the governors of Colorado, Nebraska and Wyoming, committing resources to extend the program through Dec. 31, 2032. Begun in 2007, the program is managed by a
governance committee comprised of representatives from Colorado, Nebraska and Wyoming, water users, environmental groups and the Department of the Interior’s Bureau of Reclamation and U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service.

The Platte River Recovery Implementation Program provides compliance with federal and state-provided financial resources, water and scientific monitoring and research to support and specifically protect four threatened and endangered species (under the Endangered Species Act) – the Piping Plover, Interior Least Tern, Whooping Crane and the Pallid Sturgeon – that inhabit areas of the Central and Lower Platte rivers in Nebraska while allowing for new and continued water and hydropower project operations in the Platte River Basin. Examples of existing water related projects include the Bureau of Reclamation’s Colorado Big-Thompson Project on the South Platte River in Colorado and the North Platte Project in Wyoming and Nebraska.

“Serving the threatened and endangered species of the Platte River Basin as well as the people who live here.” To learn more please visit the Platte River Recovery Implementation Program.

Texas:

Deepwater Horizon settlement money aids in coastal land purchases

Using money from a settlement tied to the decade-old Deepwater Horizon oil rig disaster, the Texas Parks and Wildlife Commission has approved purchasing 1,100 acres on Matagorda Peninsula as part of a wider nature preservation effort along the Gulf of Mexico.

Texas Parks and Wildlife commissioners on Thursday ordered the agency’s staff to move forward with negotiations for a pair of 553-acre tracts near the west end of Matagorda Peninsula. “It’s a conservation focal area,” Ted Hollingsworth, land conservation program director for the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, told the American-Statesman. “There’s a great deal of biological value and it’s a great opportunity to protect the bay and the peninsula in perpetuity.”

The land has dunes 10-15 feet high, lagoons, waist-deep grasses, and wildflowers; the bay side features a wide band of marsh fingered with oyster reefs and seagrass beds. “It looks a lot like Galveston Island looked 200 years ago,” he said.

At least 150 projects in Texas are in the works or completed involving Deepwater money, according to the site Deepwater Horizon Project Tracker, which follows projects funded by oil spill settlements, fines and other payouts in the Gulf of Mexico.

Projects include:

- $20.6 million to restore rookeries in Galveston Bay and East Matagorda Bay;
- $309,000 for a study on oyster reef rehabilitation in Galveston Bay;
- $10.7 million to build campsites, equestrian facilities, restrooms and showers at Galveston Island State Park;
- $26.5 million for 17 miles of dune ridge restoration near Sea Rim State Park;
- $1.9 million to acquire Big Tree Ranch, an 80-acre tract in Aransas County that’s prime Whooping Crane habitat;
- $4.9 million to restore wetlands in Bessie Heights Marsh located within the Lower Neches Wildlife Management Area in Orange County.

Volunteers sweep coastal waters for abandoned crab traps

In a recent story by the Victoria Advocate, volunteers took part in the annual crab trap cleanup program overseen by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Commission (TPWC). Beginning in 2001, TPWC has had the authority to close crabbing for 10 days, starting the third Friday in February during the cleanup process.
Crab traps left in the water during this time frame are considered trash. Abandoned or lost, volunteers retrieve them from the waters and throw them in designated dumpsters. More than 32,700 traps have been removed from Texas waters by volunteers since 2002, according to TPWC.

When traps are left, lost or abandoned they continue to attract marine life in what is known as "ghost fishing" – where blue and stone crabs, and sometimes endangered species such as the diamondback terrapin, get caught in the trap and eventually die. Eliminating this needless waste increases the dietary resources available to the wintering Aransas-Wood Buffalo population of Whooping Cranes.

In 2019 almost 800 of traps were removed from in and around the West Matagorda Bay shoreline, Powderhorn Lake, Espiritu Santo Bay and East San Antonio Bay, where the San Antonio Bay Partnership organizes volunteer efforts. It was thought that this year’s pickup would surpass 1,000 abandoned traps.

Use of new mobile technology aids in location of the traps. Information such as where the trap was found, how it was retrieved, tag information and buoy numbers and whether there was “biodiversity” in the trap are all recorded. This data helps authorities identify crabbers, who are then encouraged to collect their traps rather than face steep fines.

ENVIRONMENTAL impact issues:

Legal action attempts to stop construction of Keystone XL pipeline that threatens people and endangered species

In a February 13, 2020 press release by the Center for Biological Diversity, it was announced that conservation and environmental groups had filed notices of their intent to sue the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Bureau of Land Management and the companies behind the Keystone XL pipeline for failing to consider the effects of the pipeline – including likely oil spills – on endangered species, including Whooping Cranes and Pallid Sturgeon.

Previously the U.S. District Court in Montana ruled that the Trump administration violated bedrock environmental laws when officials approved a federal permit for the pipeline, including by failing to adequately address the risks of oil spills on listed species.

“The Trump administration continues to ignore the catastrophic impacts of Keystone XL as it attempts to ram this dirty fossil fuel project down America’s throat,” said Eric Glitzenstein, the Center for Biological Diversity’s litigation director. “History shows that oil spills are going to occur, and yet the agencies failed once again to analyze how spills might harm waterways and, subsequently, people and endangered species.”

To read the entire press release, go here:
Science News:

Sandhill Crane foraging behavior and damage estimates in cornfields during spring

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Abstract: Damage to corn in the spring caused by greater sandhill cranes (Grus canadensis tabida) has increased concurrent with growth of the Eastern Population of cranes. Our study was designed to: 1) describe foraging rates and food acquisition behavior where damage was likely and 2) estimate damage in corn fields treated and untreated with a taste deterrent: 9,10-anthraquinone (AQ: Avipel®). Our 6,251.6-ha study area was located near Briggsville, Wisconsin, and we sampled 415 ± 13.2 individuals/survey (x ± SE), of which 36 ± 1.7% used corn fields. During 10-30 May 2009, 121 observation bouts of 33 marked cranes that foraged in 20 corn fields were collected. Observation bouts averaged 21 ± 1.32 minutes of which 10.2 ± 0.75 minutes consisted of active foraging by cranes. Individuals swallowed an average of 6.08 ± 0.68 items/active minute. Only 10.4% of 6,445 items consumed were identified and 9.7% of items were corn kernels (93% of identified items). Ingestion rates for all foods in fields treated with AQ (6.44 items/min) and non-treated fields (6.21 items/min) did not differ (t = −0.15, P = 0.88), but corn kernels consumed in non-treated fields were ingested at more than 3 times the rate measured from treated fields (F = 3.84, P = 0.05). Jab/probe ratios did not differ between treated and untreated fields (F = 0.12, P = 0.72), so foraging behaviors were similar even though different foods were consumed. We estimated that all sandhill cranes in this study area consumed 71,245 kernels/day (478 kernels/crane/day) and, over the period that planted corn was potentially vulnerable, consumed a maximum of >2.9 million kernels or 41.0 ha of planted corn (3.8% of all corn planted in the study area). Crane damage could be widely scattered, and thus insignificant, or it could be locally severe as non-territorial individuals congregate in 1 field and concentrate damage, making the distribution of severe damage unpredictable. Though effective at alleviating crane damage, treating planted corn must either be applied uniformly or applied based on previous experience with crane foraging patterns and planting phenology in relationship to other fields.

PROCEEDINGS OF THE NORTH AMERICAN CRANE WORKSHOP 14:67-80

A full-text PDF download is available from Jeb Barzen at:
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/329686548_SANDHILL_CRANE_FORAGING_BEHAVIOR_AND_DAMAGE_ESTIMATES_IN_CORNFIELDS_DURING_SPRING

The dilemma of pest suppression in the conservation of endangered species

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Abstract: In the conservation of endangered species, suppression of a population of one native species to benefit another poses challenges. Examples include predator control and nest parasite reduction. Less obvious is the control of blood-feeding arthropods. We conducted a case study of the effect of native black flies (Simulium spp.) on reintroduced Whooping Cranes (Grus americana). Our intent was to provide a science-driven approach for determining the effects of blood-feeding arthropods on endangered
vertebrates and identifying optimal management actions for managers faced with competing objectives. A multiyear experiment demonstrated that black flies reduce nest success in cranes by driving incubating birds off their nests. We used a decision-analytic approach to develop creative management alternatives and evaluate trade-offs among competing objectives. We identified 4 management objectives: establish a self-sustaining crane population, improve crane well-being, maintain native black flies as functional components of the ecosystem, and minimize costs. We next identified potential management alternatives: do nothing, suppress black flies, force crane renesting to occur after the activity period of black flies, relocate releases of cranes, suppress black flies and relocate releases, or force crane renesting and relocate releases. We then developed predictions on constructed scales of 0 (worst-performing alternative) to 1 (best-performing alternative) to indicate how alternative actions performed in terms of management objectives. The optimal action depended on the relative importance of each objective to a decision maker. Only relocating releases was a dominated alternative, indicating that it was not optimal regardless of the relative importance of objectives. A rational decision maker could choose any other management alternative we considered. Recognizing that decisions involve trade-offs that must be weighed by decision makers is crucial to identifying alternatives that best balance multiple management objectives. Given uncertainty about the population dynamics of blood-feeding arthropods, an adaptive management approach could offer substantial benefits.

A full-text PDF download is available from Jeb Barzen at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/329445493_The_dilemma_of_pest_suppression_in_the_conservation_of_endangered_species

KUDOS

Rod C. Drewien earns lifetime achievement award — lauded for work with cranes

Blackfoot, Wyoming, resident Rod C. Drewien was recently recognized with a lifetime achievement award on behalf of the Northern Rockies Conservation Cooperative and the Meg and Bert Raynes Wildlife Fund. The award acknowledges Drewien's commitment and dedication to the conservation of wildlife in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem.

The Northern Rockies Conservation Cooperative (NRCC) advances conservation for the common good by generating knowledge, fostering leadership, and enabling innovation. NRCC’s community of research associates and resident experts work in science communication, environmental education training, writing, storytelling, ecological monitoring, community conservation and management. Meg and Bert Raynes Wildlife Fund initiates, augments, and funds projects to help maintain viable and sustainable wildlife populations into the future, through support of research, education, habitat protection and habitat restoration.

Over the course of a 54-year career, Drewien worked to ensure the protection of many bird species but is best known for his work with Sandhill and Whooping Cranes. From 1969-2016, he studied Sandhill Cranes in the Rocky Mountain region, documenting their year-round ecology. He refined capture and marking methods and developed fall population and recruitment surveys which are now conducted annually by federal and state agencies.

He also supervised the Whooping Crane cross-foster experiment (the Grays Lake Project; where Sandhill Cranes incubated WHCR eggs and acted as surrogate parents) in the Rocky Mountains from 1975-94. Drewien was a member of the U.S. Whooping Crane Recovery Team from 1976-94, and the U.S. representative for 12-years (1977-88), working with the Canadian Wildlife Service to develop a capture and marking program for wild, juvenile Whooping Cranes in Wood Buffalo National Park, Canada. His studies of crane mortality on nesting, wintering, and migration stopover areas have been integral to the establishment of protective measures — used by managers for Sandhill and Whooping Cranes – for fences and powerlines. His marking efforts led to over 15,000 documented re-sightings of Sandhill Cranes.
Drewien’s knowledge of crane behavior, migratory traditions, and seasonal habitats gained acknowledgment worldwide. As a result, he was invited to study crane habitat in China and provided advice to the Chinese government as to the protection and management of its cranes and habitats.

“My object in life is to unite my vocation and avocation as two eyes make one sight.” – Robert Frost

To read more of Drewien’s contributions, go here: https://www.postregister.com/chronicle/news/drewien-earns-lifetime-achievement-award/article_59de5b39-a52c-5d16-a078-63eec2fe591c.html

Upcoming Events:

Editor: The COVID-19 pandemic has led to the cancelation of many events. Check about individual events before planning to attend.

2020 Marsh Madness Sandhill Crane Festival
Dates: Friday, February 28 – Saturday, February 29, 2020
Location: Goose Pond Fish and Wildlife Area
Greene Co. Indiana, near Linton

Join Friends of Goose Pond for its annual Sandhill Crane Festival. At the festival there will be special presentations about Indiana raptors, snakes and bats; bus tours of the amazing wildlife management area and art displays, crafts and kid activities—something for everyone interested in our natural world. Festival admission tickets are required for some of the cabin presentations and activities.

For a map of Goose Pond FWA, go here: https://www.in.gov/dnr/fishwild/files/fw-gpfwa_waterfowl_draw_map.pdf

Learn more about the conservation, restoration and education work by Friends of Goose Pond group here: http://www.friendsofgoosepond.org/
https://friendsofgoosepond.org/marsh-madness/

Monte Vista Crane Festival – Where CRANES meet the MOUNTAINS
Dates: March 6-8, 2020
Location: San Luis Valley
Monte Vista, Colorado
The annual Monte Vista Crane Festival celebrates the spring arrival of some 25,000 Sandhill Cranes to the San Luis Valley. Registration opened January 2, 2020.

For schedule information and tickets, visit mycranefest.org or call 720-940-7561.
Go HERE for the last festival schedule, tickets and more information.

Audubon’s Nebraska Crane Festival
Dates: Friday March 20 – Saturday March 21, 2020
Location: Kearney, Nebraska

For festival information, go here: https://ne.audubon.org/crane-festival
On-line registration began December 9, 2019 and will include Saturday meals, access to all speakers and a free t-shirt. Student and child discounts available.

In its 50th year, Audubon’s Nebraska Crane Festival brings together hundreds of crane lovers from around the country to Kearney, Nebraska, to interact with a wide range of environmental speakers, take part in incredible birding trips, and experience the world’s largest gathering of Sandhill Cranes. Saturday’s keynote speaker is George Archibald, co-founder of the International Crane Foundation, speaking on "How Climate Change Threatens Cranes Worldwide."
For a listing of the 2020 festival speakers, go here:
https://ne.audubon.org/birds/2020-crane-festival-speakers

If you have trouble with registration, please call our Spring Creek Prairie Office @ 402-797-2301 and ask for Kevin Poague. To receive periodic e-mail updates on festival news and activities, please write nebraska@audubon.org.

If you can’t make the festival but still want to see the Sandhill Cranes, check out Rowe Sanctuary’s website, https://rowe.audubon.org/birds or by calling Audubon's Rowe Sanctuary, (308) 468-5282, to learn about more crane viewing options.

2020 Othello Sandhill Crane Festival
Dates: Friday March 20 - Sunday March 22, 2020
Location: Columbia National Wildlife Refuge, Othello, Washington

This is the 23rd annual Othello Sandhill Crane Festival. Founded in 1998, the festival highlights the spring return of Sandhill Cranes to the greater Othello area and Columbia National Wildlife Refuge.

For more information and the 2020 schedule, go here: othellosandhillcranefestival.org
Online and telephone registration opened February 1, 2020: (509) 989-5606.
Or here: https://www.othellosandhillcranefestival.org/2018-registration
For the festival brochure, click here.

Stikine River Birding Festival
Date: April 30 – May 3, 2020
Location: Wrangell, Alaska

Wrangell is the gateway community for the Stikine River Delta, where the arrival of thousands of bald eagles creates the largest springtime concentration in North America. The festival is the perfect opportunity for adventurous birdwatchers to observe millions of shorebirds, which migrate to the delta each spring. The Stikine River and its tributaries are located within the Stikine-LeConte Wilderness Area of the Tongass National Forest. The festival is sponsored by the Tongass National Forest and U.S. Forest Service International Programs.

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