

WHOOPING CRANE RECOVERY ACTIVITIES

MARCH-AUGUST, 2000

by Tom Stehn
USFWS Whooping Crane Coordinator

ARANSAS

The Aransas/Wood Buffalo flock equaled 187 in the spring of 2000, a net increase of 4 birds from last spring. Whooping crane departures from Aransas were documented on weekly aerial census flights. An estimated 148 cranes started the migration between March 31 and April 7. This was noteworthy in that so many birds left within the same week and about one week ahead of schedule. It is the largest number of cranes ever leaving in an 8-day period that I can recall. One chick separated from its parents prior to the migration. All cranes except one that over-summered had departed by April 22.

Two whooping cranes were confirmed present on the Platte River in Nebraska March 2 and 8. The first arrival was believed to be the subadult that wintered in West Texas. It presumably migrated with sandhills and followed the earlier migration schedule of its crane cousins. On March 19, one whooping crane was observed in southeastern Colorado in a huge flock of sandhills. One of the two whooping cranes on the Platte River in March apparently moved on to northwestern Minnesota at the end of March.

The first dates for confirmed observations of migrating whooping cranes recorded by Wally Jobman for the Cooperative Whooping Crane Tracking Project were March 1 in the U.S. and April 1 in Canada. The last sighting date was May 16. Sightings were reported from Kansas (3), Nebraska (2), Colorado (1), South Dakota (1), North Dakota (11), and Saskatchewan (22). With the exception of three early migrants, all of the U.S. sightings were reported between April 10 and 21. Favorable spring weather allowed the birds to migrate quickly.

On July 28, one white-plumaged whooping crane was sighted on San Jose Island by a TPWD endangered species biologist. A Rockport fishing guide also reported the crane in the same location east of Allyn's Bight on August 9. I believe this crane over-summered. I had found a single in mid-April about one mile north of Allyn's Bight, but did not see it on the final two census flights and may have overlooked it. On August 29, another TPWD biologist reported one whooping crane in flight about 2 miles north of the refuge headquarters, landing out of sight in the vicinity of Bauer's Pond. Could this be the same bird that earlier was on San Jose?

In mid-May, I completed a 56-page report titled Whooping Cranes at Aransas during the 1999-2000 Winter. Weekly reports throughout the spring migration were submitted to Journey North detailing crane departures from Aransas. This educational web organization posted the reports on the internet.

On May 23, I consulted with Jay Robeson of TPWD to coordinate their proposal to have the sandhill season in Zone C in Texas open December 30, one week earlier than in the past. This was requested because the season will be shortened by the special light goose conservation hunt that will start in Texas January 21 or 28, 2001. Regulations require that no hunting of other migratory birds take place during special snow goose season. The State has also asked the Flyway Council for an expansion of Zone C to include most coastal counties in Texas except for a designated zone around Aransas.

On June 20, the USFWS Texas Coast Ecosystem Team endorsed protection of the Johnson tract located on the Lamar Peninsula. The property adjoins the Lamar Unit of Aransas NWR. Whooping cranes have used the salt marsh portion of the Johnson tract annually since the early 1970's and is part of a crane territory. On June 21, a Texas Nature Conservancy representative and I met with the Johnsons to discuss options. A meeting of Region 2's Land Acquisition Review Committee was cancelled in mid-July so no further progress was made.

Subcontractor Kingfisher Marine completed placing cement mats along the Intracoastal Waterway at Welder Flats and Aransas to complete a three-year effort by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Work was funded by Section 216 of the 1970 Flood Control Act. One extra site 400 feet in length was added along Bludworth Island across from Dunham Bay. The refuge boat canal was dredged to facilitate response to an oil spill, and mats were placed along both sides to decrease siltation.

CANADA

Canadian biologists Brian Johns and Doug Bergeson located a record-tying 50 nests in May. In addition, seven pairs that had nested in 1999 were present but not nesting in 2000. The nesting area seemed to hold sufficient water, with levels slightly above average.

The USFWS Partanavia aircraft piloted by Jim Bredy helped Brian Johns do production surveys in Wood Buffalo June 11-15. I assisted with locating cranes and reading bands. Twenty-nine chicks were located, including two sets of twins. On the 15th, only 28 chicks remained, with one set of twins. The spring weather had been noticeable cool which may have hurt survival of twins. Water levels were starting to drop. USFWS photography specialist Al Cilurso, USFWS Albuquerque, was unable to photograph portions of the nesting grounds due to the camera malfunctioning. Instead, some test video was shot.

In August, Brian could only find 11 chicks surviving. Water levels observed were receding but did not seem to provide an explanation for the high mortality of the chicks. On average, about 46% of nesting pairs fledge a chick. Based on below-average production in 2000, the Aransas/Wood Buffalo population is at best expected to show only a small increase this winter, hopefully reaching 190 birds.

The Canadian House of Commons introduced the Species at Risk Act (SARA) in April. This legislation would provide protection for wildlife, species at risk, threatened and

endangered species and their habitats on all lands throughout Canada, and would ensure no species becomes extinct as a result of human behavior. Over \$180 million over five years was planned for carrying out actions. SARA would build on the Accord for Species at Risk, and would encourage cooperation among federal, provincial, and territorial governments. It would also provide the necessary incentives to protect critical habitat through voluntary stewardship activities. Hopefully this legislation will pass this fall.

ADMINISTRATION

A report on whooping crane recovery activities between September, 1999 and February, 2000 was completed in March.

On March 6-8, I traveled to Wyoming to the technical section of the Central Flyway Technical Committee meetings and gave an update on recovery efforts. The group wants to be kept informed and be involved with planning if whooping cranes reintroduced in the east show up into the Central Flyway. The contingency plan was updated and a draft sent to Region 2 in mid-August.

I obtained the necessary USDA and CITES permits, and on August 29 helped the Calgary Zoo staff export three juvenile whooping cranes from the Calgary Zoo through Chicago to the International Crane Foundation. The birds will be socialized with others to form a cohort of eight and then transported for release in Florida. I applied to renew the CITES import permit at the end of August. I also applied for a general export permit and then a specific permit to export one whooping crane from Lowry Park in Tampa, Florida to Calgary for breeding purposes.

In August, I revised the Canada/U.S. MOU on the whooping crane and urged Patuxent to review the draft. This five-year agreement expires in October, 2000.

Arrangements were made with retired whooping crane coordinator Dr. James Lewis to combine and update the U.S. and Canadian Recovery Plans into a single document. The Whooping Crane Conservation Association is providing funds for this effort. My thanks go to the WCCA and to Jim Lewis for their help.

Preliminary arrangements were made and dates set for the Whooping Crane Captive Management (January 22-24) and Recovery Team (January 24-26) meetings in New Orleans.

I met with Regional Director Nancy Kaufman in Albuquerque on August 29. Topics discussed included the eastern reintroduction, the 2002 national whooping crane budget proposal, cost sharing between regions for recovery actions, the Patuxent crane review, the MOU, and the proposal for continuing experimentation in the Rocky Mountains.

On May 9, a conference call was held on the joint whooping crane budget initiative by USFWS Regions 2, 3 and 4. Modifications were made to the draft. The final document was signed by all three Regional Directors and by the Director.

Cooperative agreements for the International Crane Foundation and Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission were re-written and executed.. These five-year agreements are necessary before monies can be expended. USFWS funds are sent annually to ICF and Florida to carry out recovery actions. A contract amendment was prepared for the National Wildlife Health Center to pay for disease testing of cranes. Disbursement of funds for the current fiscal year was made difficult since whooping crane funds did not reach the field until March 26, halfway through the fiscal year. Laboratory supplies were purchased for researcher Ken Jones at the University of Illinois at Chicago. Ken supports the recovery program by doing genetic tests on chicks as well as other research.

SPECIMENS

A master list with all whooping crane specimens available for placement was updated in April and August, and then sent out to a dozen museums and universities. Specimens placed in the past six months were an adult that struck a power line in spring, 2000 in Colorado that went to Yellowstone National Park, a captive adult that went to Patuxent NWR for outreach programs, and eggs, 1-day and 90-day-old chicks that went to the USFWS National Conservation Training Center Laboratory for a display.

FLORIDA

Florida was noticeably dry throughout the spring and summer from a continuing drought now in its third year. This led to hard times for the 78 Florida whooping cranes as marshes shrunk and some dried up completely.

An experiment by Dr. Ellis of Patuxent of 1 on 1 releases of juvenile whooping cranes was not carried out when no suitable candidate flocks were found. Instead, on March 10, the three juveniles were released together. On March 11, the three juveniles were chased off the roost by other subadult whoopers and were killed at the same location by a bobcat later that same night, their second night away from the release pen.

In the 1999-2000 winter, in addition to the trio in March, 30 juvenile whooping cranes were released in Florida. Twenty-three of these are still surviving, with bobcats and, in a few cases alligators, taking their toll. Between March-August, two adults were lost. A 3-year-old male was taken by a bobcat while in a flightless molt. A 6-year-old female died from unknown causes, possibly from a disease since she went in to deep cover and died.

In 1999, two Florida pairs laid eggs for the first time but both nests were destroyed by natural causes. In 2000, three pairs produced eggs with one nest successful. The second pair's nest was destroyed. In the third pair's nest, one egg was laid, but the female was a poor incubator and the egg did not hatch. More of the 15 pairs observed presumably would have nested if not for the drought.

On March 16, the **first whooping crane chick in Florida hatched** with a "twin" hatched two days later. This was a significant milestone resulting from the reintroduction in

Florida of non-migratory whooping cranes that started in 1993. This event demonstrated that costume rearing of captive chicks can lead to proper sexual behaviors. The hatching led to much interest, press releases, and briefing of many wildlife officials. These were the first whooping crane eggs hatched in the wild in the United States in 60 years. The pair consisted of a 1995 Patuxent male with an ICF female, both hatched in 1995.

One of the twin chicks was lost prior to March 29. It was not known if the larger or smaller of the twins was lost, or the cause. The adults continued to take excellent care of the remaining chick, feeding it copious amounts of food, and sticking tight to the nesting marsh in good cover. This chick survived nearly to fledging and was captured and radioed on May 22 at age 66 days. The family was forced to move to a deeper marsh from the nest marsh which was reduced to two inches maximum water depth. Prior to moving, the family in the nest marsh was eating mostly small fish, perhaps because preferred items such as snakes, amphibians, sirens, and crayfish had all been consumed. The chick at age 68 days was apparently killed by a bobcat during a movement between marshes on May 25. The drought may have been a factor in making the chick more vulnerable to predation. The chick was in fair to poor condition and had not eaten recently. The necropsy found a very high white blood cell count, possibly a sign of an ongoing infection or injury such as a snake bite, with the chick mounting an immune response to it.

Two of the Florida whooping cranes dispersed in early April and were reported May 11-14 near Sandoval **in central Illinois**. The pair was photographed and the transmitters were clearly visible. The female had traveled extensively around central Florida before pairing. The male had made only limited movements. The pair in Florida was believed to have dispersed in response to the widespread drought. The pair formed in spring of 1999 and consisted of birds hatched at Patuxent in 1995 and 1996. The pair had previously moved little from Lake County since pairing.

The pair was last sighted in Illinois on May 14. The Illinois Department of Natural Resources organized radio telemetry searches. Following an unconfirmed report near Lodi, Wisconsin, Terry Kohler of Windway Corporation also did aerial searches of central Wisconsin with telemetry equipment. The pair had apparently outrun all pursuit.

The whoopers were next seen in Michigan by a local farmer on May 15th, one day following the last sighting in Illinois, although the Michigan sightings were not reported to anyone until July 17. This was in Sanilac County in the thumb of Michigan about 80 miles north of Detroit. Much work went into notifying biologists, and the company on whose property the bird landed put out a national news release.

The pair moved into an nearby peat bog where the female molted and presumably went through a flightless period. The pair may have built two nest platforms, but this clearly was not a full attempt to nest. The pair had never nested before. They were first sighted by an employee of the Michigan Peat Company around June 1 who monitored the pair. Michigan Peat was most excited and cooperative with the presence of the whoopers , monitored the pair daily, and put in place special protective measures to insure the birds

would not be disturbed in the bog. A sandhill was usually closely associated with the whooper pair. Starting in mid-July, the pair started moving frequently back to wheat and soybean fields where they had been first seen May 15. Dr. George Archibald viewed the pair on August 24. Two public presentations were given at the public library by a local teacher using materials loaned by the International Crane Foundation. There was much speculation as to future movements of the pair. Will they return to Florida, and will they return to Michigan to nest next summer? There was some discussion about whether the Florida whooping cranes which are designated experimental nonessential become endangered once they leave Florida. Since the pair is clearly banded and came from Florida and is not in an area frequented by Aransas/Wood Buffalo whooping cranes, it is generally felt the pair remains as experimental nonessential. The pair was still using the same area at the end of August.

Other whoopers in Florida also dispersed due to the drought. A trio was found at the end of July near St. Augustine, Florida, far north from the central part of the state.

On June 5, a five-year-old female whooping crane was found in Florida weak and unresponsive. It was captured and placed in captivity at the vet school in Gainesville. The bird had a high white blood cell count and an enlargement of the neck. Puncture wounds on the neck made it probable that this bird had escaped an attack by a bobcat. The bird got stronger and regained its weight. A trial release was unsuccessful on August 29 with the bird still unable to fly. After being returned to Gainesville, the whooper was transported to Lowry Park Zoo in Tampa on September 7 where it will be kept in a top-netted pen in order to give it a chance to strengthen its flight muscles. It may have a vertebrae problem in the neck that could be a permanent neurological problem. If it never fully recovers, it will be a candidate for captive breeding.

Recovery Team member Steve Nesbitt has won The Wildlife Society's 2000 Special Recognition Service Award that honors a person who has made an outstanding contribution to wildlife management. During his 28-year career as a biologist with the State of Florida, he has published over 90 papers, and is widely recognized as a world-class biologist and conservationist. He has made a significant contribution to the biology and conservation of avian wildlife in Florida, with special emphasis on cranes.

ROCKY MOUNTAINS

In an interesting note on March 4, USFWS biologist Bill Howe observed huge flocks of about 12,000 sandhills migrating north over Albuquerque. In amongst them were three whooping cranes. The first two whoopers were seen about five minutes apart; the third 20 minutes later. Also, one albinistic sandhill was observed.

One of the three Rocky Mountain whooping cranes was killed on March 15 in a collision with a power line at Monte Vista NWR. The necropsy by the National Wildlife Health Lab indicated no sign of disease. This whooping crane, a cross-fostered female from 1982, wintered at Bosque del Apache NWR and summered in Yellowstone. She had for years been negotiating the low power line that is next to the main highway through the

Monte Vista refuge. The power company did put additional marking on the line after the crane death. However, USFWS has requested that this line be placed underground since many cranes cross it annually. However, this would be very expensive. Yellowstone National Park requested the specimen to put on display since the bird had summered in Yellowstone. The National Wildlife Health Center shipped the crane to Yellowstone at the end of June.

In the spring, the two remaining Rocky Mountain whooping cranes were sighted in the San Luis Valley (cross-fostered bird with metal band), and at Ouray NWR (ultralight crane from 1997 with yellow bands on both legs present one day only on March 15). The one at Ouray had been sighted in Jensen, Utah about 35 miles from Ouray last October. The cross-fostered adult arrived at Red Rocks about April 14. The ultralight whooper was seen April 17 about 11 miles northwest of Soda Springs, Idaho, just north of where it was raised. How's that for navigating? The bird spent the summer in that same area.

The July newsletter of the WCCA reported on efforts by Wild Friends to present a petition with 4,362 signatures to U.S. Senator Pete Domenici calling for Congressional intervention to continue the ultralight method of introducing whooping cranes in the Rocky Mountains. Wild Friends is a network of more than 650 students, teachers, and friends who support wildlife programs under the auspices of the University of New Mexico Center for Wildlife Law. The event was cancelled when the Senator was unable to attend due to illness.

Kent Clegg met with the Director and Assistant Director of USFWS-Region 2 and in August presented an updated proposal to continue experimentation with whooping cranes in the Rockies. I discussed this proposal with the Regional Director and will send it to the Recovery Team for review.

STAGE BY STAGE MIGRATION (First 3 paragraphs written by Dr. David Ellis)

In Autumn 1999, twelve sandhill cranes were transported south from west-central Utah to the Gila River, Arizona, and flown at 26 km intervals along the way. At Gila Bend they were released one-by-one into a wild flock. Then in early November, three were recaptured and transported north to see if they would go south immediately. After a month delay, they did go south, to the exact latitude of the Gila River release site albeit 100 km east. Come spring, all of our cranes went north, but they went part way with the wild flock. They seemed to realize they were on the wrong route, wandered a few weeks, then in April 9 came back to the wintering grounds and settled in. After three weeks, David Ellis captured seven and took them to Fish Springs NWR, the northern terminus of our stage-by-stage migration. Three were left on the Gila River to see what they would do in 120 F heat.

Then six of the seven at the northern terminus left Fish Springs and flew to Utah Lake (80 km east) around 1 June. The three near Gila Bend then disappeared, BUT when I did a pre-migration check at Utah Lake in late August, I found five of the seven cranes

trucked north in April and two of the birds that I had left at Gila Bend. Yes, these two flew on their own and found their flock mates at Utah Lake, nearly 800 km away.

So what does it all mean? We now know that stage-by-stage birds want to migrate, can make long treks, and seem to be able to find the general area of our chosen termini. They are able to find the exact latitude of the termini. Perhaps a stage-by-stage technique can be perfected.

On June 28, 2000 Dr. David H. Ellis of Patuxent was honored as the 111th member of the Academy of Ghengis Khan. This honor and the honorary degree that goes with it were bestowed for Dr. Ellis' pioneering work on the ecology of the saker falcon in Mongolia (1994-present) and his conservation efforts (1997-present) to build artificial aeries in an effort to offset harvest of these birds for falconry.

WISCONSIN

Following the selection in September, 1999 of central Wisconsin as a release site for reintroduction of whooping cranes into the east, a very fruitful partnership has evolved and worked hard throughout the spring and summer. A pilot project to test rearing techniques for endangered whooping cranes got underway at the Necedah National Wildlife Refuge in central Wisconsin. Project researchers are using sandhill crane chicks and ultralight aircraft in an effort to develop successful rearing and migration techniques that can be used with whooping cranes. Crane costumes are used to ensure the young birds do not imprint on humans

On March 14-16 in Madison, Wisconsin, meetings were held with many project partners in attendance. A follow-up conference call was held April 25 with 20 participants. On April 13-14, Congressional, USFWS Directorate, and NFWF briefings were held in Washington, D.C. Presenters included John Christian (USFWS-Region 3), Barbara Zellmer (Wisconsin DNR), George Archibald (ICF), Joe Duff (Operation Migration), Cheree Petersen (NFWF) and Noreen Walsh (USFWS-R4).

Thirty-three sandhill crane eggs were collected from wild nests in Wisconsin May 2-3 using a Windway Corporation helicopter operated by Terry Kohler. Most eggs were found on private lands connected with cranberry operations. Nine eggs stayed at Necedah NWR and 24 went to Patuxent, transported by a Windway Corporation jet. At Patuxent, 18 of the 24 eggs hatched (6 were bad). Fourteen survived in good health and were trained to follow an ultralight. Training was done daily at Patuxent and then continued at Necedah. The chicks were transported to Necedah by the Windway Corporation jet on June 30.

Field work for the Wisconsin reintroduction project was carried out by Operation Migration, USFWS biologist Richard Urbanek, and by crane caretakers from ICF and Patuxent. Pens and blinds were constructed and then modified as the project took shape. The ICF veterinarian provided excellent health care for the birds. Patuxent supplied a truck outfitted as a mobile veterinary hospital for the migration. Weekly conference calls

were held by the Bird Team and partners to solve problems and keep partners updated. ICF's Vice President Jim Harris helped facilitate team interactions and project direction. Wisconsin hired a whooping crane project coordinator, Steve Sisbach, who was appointed Bird Team leader at the end of August.

Problems developed with lack of airplane time for training the 3rd cohort of sandhills raised at Necedah. One of the ultralights was damaged when hitting a soft spot on a landing strip adjacent to the third cohort and was out of action for a while. The landing strip was subsequently seeded but was not usable until the grass grew. Alternate plans were made for use of the third cohort in one by one releases into flocks of wild sandhills. One unforeseen event was that cohorts 1 and 2 started flying off and joining wild flocks in mid-August and subsequently had to be kept in flight-netted pens throughout the day when not being flown or exercised. Despite a notably cool summer and limited good weather for training flights, two sandhill cohorts made excellent progress in flights behind the ultralight. Birds were radioed and banded by September. Bill Lishman and volunteers started to plan the migration route, then flew to Florida and identified 35 potential landing sites. Sites had to have a grass/dirt landing strip, be isolated, and hopefully be adjacent to crane habitat.

Plans were made in three separate events for donors, the press, and the public to view the sandhills flying behind the ultralight the third week in September. The migration is scheduled to begin about September 26. Updates will be posted on the Operation Migration website, <http://operationmigration.durham.net>.

On May 9, a conference call was held to decide on the project direction teams that will make policy decisions for the proposed eastern reintroduction. The Wisconsin DNR, ICF, Operation Migration and USFWS - Regions 2 and 3 will be represented for the northern subteam. Work was done to organize the southern end. On June 7-8, meetings were hosted by Chassahowitzka NWR to organize the involvement of Regions 2, 3 and 4 in the reintroduction effort and to develop plans for arrival and wintering of the cranes in Florida.

Work done by the USFWS Ecological Services office in Green Bay continued throughout the spring and summer writing the draft Environmental Assessment and Experimental Nonessential (10j) Rule. A tremendous work load is required coordinating the many aspects of the National Environmental Policy Act and choosing alternatives for the environmental assessment. One point involving much discussion was the issue of hunting closures and whooping cranes. The project from the beginning assured the states that hunting programs would not be affected by the reintroduction of whooping cranes. After two conference call discussions between USFWS Regions 2, 3, and 4, draft wording of "no mandated closures" because of whooping cranes was agreed to. Even on a National Wildlife Refuge, it is proposed that a Refuge Manager would have to get concurrence from the State before a closure could be done. This need for closures is not anticipated since the eastern flyway minimizes the potential conflict of whooping cranes and hunting of look alike species. A closure would only be considered in exceptional circumstances.

CAPTIVE FLOCKS

In 2000, captive production available for the Florida reintroduction totaled 38 birds. Five cohorts are scheduled to be shipped to Florida between November 29, 2000 and February 21, 2001 for release. It is hoped this will bring the Florida population to about 100 birds in the wild.

In August, the Whooping Crane Health Advisory Team updated EEE vaccination guidelines for captive whoopers.

International Crane Foundation

Seven females at ICF laid 26 eggs, but many of the eggs were infertile due to allowing new young pairs to copulate naturally. One of the females laid for the first time. A total of 5 chicks fledged and are being socialized with 3 chicks from Calgary to form a cohort that will be released in Florida this winter.

On March 21, ICF shipped a subadult (McFuzz) to New Orleans to increase numbers at the newest facility slated to become a captive breeding center for whooping cranes. On August 29 in Chicago, a designated port of entry for endangered species, ICF picked up the chicks raised in Calgary.

Patuxent

In 2000, 8 females laid 51 eggs at Patuxent, with 32 chicks that survived. Some extraordinary work was required by veterinarian Dr. Glenn Olsen and the crane staff to help some of the chicks hatch and survive. With four chicks held back, 28 birds were raised and slated for release in Florida. Patuxent also hatched the shipment of 24 eggs from wild Wisconsin sandhill nests which fledged 14 birds.

On March 23, White Oak shipped its one whooping crane to Patuxent to become part of the breeding flock. With the death of an adult crane at Calgary, the planned shipment of one bird from Patuxent to Calgary was cancelled.

One 10-year-old female "Clip" died in August as a result from a self-inflicted wound related to her history of feather-plucking. The specimen was given to the Patuxent National Wildlife Refuge for use as a taxidermy mount for public presentations.

Calgary

Four whooping crane pairs in Calgary laid 21 eggs with 6 chicks hatched. Three chicks survived and were shipped commercially on August 29 to ICF for socialization and eventual release in Florida.

A subadult female (Susan) was shipped to New Orleans May 22 to become paired. The shipment had two false starts when the airlines provided incorrect information on the size

shipping crate that would be acceptable. Depending on the juggling of airplanes, only certain flights on certain days are able to accommodate whooping cranes. Cathy Dubreuil in the Calgary office did a masterful job with permits as the routing had to be changed and different inspectors lined up.

One 7-year-old male whooping crane (Anthony) in Calgary died from white tongue disease and complications of aspergillosis. This loss resulted in changes being made from the agreed upon pairings and shipments at the last Recovery Team meeting. Thus, Calgary did not receive a crane from Patuxent. Permits were applied for to ship one male at Lowry Park Zoo in Tampa, Florida to Calgary to be added to the breeding flock. I visited Lowry Park on June 8 to meet the folks there taking care of their one whooper. This is a bird with limited flight ability that was removed from the Florida release program.

San Antonio

The two pairs of whooping cranes at San Antonio produced six eggs in 2000, five from one pair and one from the other. Despite artificial insemination, only two of the eggs were fertile. The two chicks were isolation reared in an off-exhibit area. The chicks have access to a pond and visual contact with adult whooping cranes. They are scheduled to be shipped to Patuxent in September for socialization and eventual released in Florida.

The new whooping crane exhibit has been completed and provides a much improved place with more space and more water for the one pair of whoopers on exhibit. The second pair is kept off-exhibit.

New Orleans

After receiving a bird from Calgary, the Audubon Institute Center for Research on Endangered Species (AICRES) in New Orleans currently has four whooping cranes. Two of the birds are not yet paired due to the male showing too much aggression and has to be kept separated. Plans call for three more pairs to be moved to AICRES during the next several years. This facility is needed as a breeding facility to support ongoing and future reintroduction projects.

WHOOPING CRANE NUMBERS / September 05, 2000

Wild Populations

| Location | Adults | Young | Total |
|----------------------------|--------|-------|-------|
| Aransas/Wood Buffalo NP | 187 | 0* | 187* |
| Rocky Mountains | 2 | 0 | 2 |
| Florida (includes 2 in MI) | 56 | 22 | 78 |
| Subtotal in the Wild | 245 | 22 | 267 |

* Does not include 11 young fledged in August, 2000 since entire population is not counted until winter.

Captive Populations

| Location | Adults | Young | Total | Breeding Pairs |
|--------------------------------------|--------|-------|-------|----------------|
| Patuxent WRC, Md. | 47 | 32 | 79 | 9 |
| International Crane Foundation, Wis. | 29 | 5 | 34 | 6 |
| Calgary Zoo, Alta. | 19 | 3** | 22 | 2 |
| San Antonio Zoological Gardens, Tex. | 4 | 2 | 6 | 2 |
| Lowery Park Zoo, Tampa, Fla. | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| Audubon Institute, New Orleans, La. | 4 | 0 | 4 | 0 |
| Subtotal in Captivity | 104 | 42 | 146 | 19 |

** These three young were shipped to ICF on August 29, but are listed here since they were produced in Calgary.

TOTALS (Wild + Captive) = 413

September 18, 2000 Tom Stehn