

# Grus Americana

## Whooping Crane Conservation Association

Volume 54, Number 2

### Eastern Migratory Whooping Cranes Fly into the History Books

**T**welve cinnamon-colored colts and their adoptive parents flew into the history books this fall when the Whooping Crane Eastern Partnership began a new chapter in the quest to establish a wild migratory flock of Whooping Cranes in the eastern United States.

The 12 colts, 9 raised in captivity at the U.S. Geological Survey's Patuxent Wildlife Research Center in Laurel, Maryland, and 3 at the International Crane Foundation in Baraboo, Wisconsin, are the first cohort in which all of the young whoopers were raised by crane parents and released in Wisconsin into the company of adoptive crane parents who would, it was hoped, lead them on their inaugural migration south. *Continued on page 2*



**Brooke Pennypacker of Operation Migration cradles a young crane while Glenn Olsen, veterinarian at the U.S. Geological Survey's Patuxent Wildlife Research Center in Laurel, Maryland, gives it a health check before the bird was placed in a temporary pen prior to being released to the wild. Photo: Michael Kienitz**



1966-2016

Fifty Years of Whooping Crane Conservation

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### WCCA Helps in Purchase of Wintering Habitat

In November, the Whooping Crane Conservation Association assisted the Coastal Bend Bays & Estuaries Program (CBBEP) in the purchase of 720 acres on the Texas Gulf Coast. This tract is in the Mission River Delta

estuarine complex where the river empties into the Mission Bay extension of Aransas Bay. The property is significant for the protection and recovery of the endangered Whooping Crane. It includes 2.6 miles of tidal section of the Mission River, as

well as buffer around Mission Lake. Other partners in this purchase were the Coastal Impact Assistance Program and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Coastal Program.

*Continued on page 10*

## Whooping Cranes Fly into the History Books (continued from page 1)

It's a departure from the previous years, when most young whoopers released in Wisconsin had been raised in captivity by costumed caretakers, with some then following the wild flock on their first migration and others trailing behind an ultralight airplane piloted by a costumed pilot.

"Everyone is very hopeful it's going to work very well," says Glenn Olsen, the veterinarian at Patuxent. For the last three years, he has overseen experimental efforts at that facility to have Whooping Crane parents raise young whoopers for the Eastern Migratory Population, or EMP, before they are released in Wisconsin to adoptive crane parents, or "alloparents," to follow on their first migration.

"Whooping Cranes in the wild stay with their parents for the first year and there's a large learning curve. The big advantage of parent-rearing is these birds will have the experience of learning from parent cranes."

WCEP partners think the lessons learned from parent cranes will ultimately help the young birds be better parents in the wild and help build the flock into a self-sustaining population. Since reintroduction efforts began in 2001, the EMP population has gone from zero to over 100 birds and has achieved several milestones: the cranes are successfully migrating each year, selecting proper habitat, pairing with other Whooping Cranes, nesting and hatching fertile eggs, but chick mortality has been a limiting factor and the flock is not yet considered self-sustaining.

This year, the Whooping Crane Eastern Partnership is using the parent-rearing and release technique Olsen and his staff experimented with over the last three years. Olsen has already seen anecdotal evidence that the release method can make cranes better parents.

A male whooping crane at Necedah National Wildlife Refuge that had served as an adoptive parent in 2013 and 2014 with different mates apparently learned a lot from that experience: in 2015, he and a mate had their own chick that successfully fledged.

"I wanted to use them again because they were great adoptive parents, but apparently they had learned so much that they were able to successfully rear a chick of their own," he says.

The young cranes from Maryland arrived in Wisconsin September 14 and were transferred into temporary pens before they were released to the wild. The three young cranes from the International Crane Foundation joined them in targeted release areas later (colt 71-16 was released on September 30, 69-16 was released on October 7, and 70-16 was released on November 16 after recovering from a wing injury).

In addition to all the captive birds for the EMP being parent-reared, some elements of the actual release were different, says Kim Boardman, curator of birds for the International Crane Foundation.

"The Direct Autumn Release program used in past years (DAR for short) focused on having a cohort of costume-reared birds, six to eight individuals, released as a group or in slightly smaller groups. This year, the parent-rearing approach has focused on releasing 1 to 2 chicks with 1 to 2 adults, more family like. The thought is it's more natural for chicks to be reared as individuals than as a group." (Whooping cranes lay up to two eggs, and often only one will survive.)

Other differences in release methods include a change in where the parent-reared colts were released. None were released at Necedah National Wildlife Refuge, where they were released during the experimental phase, but at several sites in central Wisconsin where adoptive parents have established territories.

Most of the prospective adoptive parents nested earlier this year but did not produce chicks that survived. (Twenty-three EMP Whooping Crane chicks hatched in wild this year, but none survived. — Ed.) That means they would still have the right hormones flowing in their systems to make them want to continue parenting and bond with the colts placed with them.



**Operation Migration's Joe Duff removes boxes that held two Whooping Crane colts before they were transferred to the temporary pen where they stayed while biologists looked for adult cranes in the area to show up and exhibit attentiveness to the young. This year, all the birds raised in captivity were reared by adult cranes, not costumed caretakers, and were released into the company of adult cranes to follow them on their first migration. Photo: Michael Kienitz**

The colts flown from Maryland spent a day or more in a holding pen and received a health check, and had color bands placed on their leg and were outfitted with a radio-transmitter, both to aid future monitoring of the birds.

Temporary pens were built in territories occupied by prospective adoptive parents. The individual colts were moved to the temporary pens and watched closely for several days to see if the adoptive parents attempted to bond with them. Although colts of this age are old enough to find their own food, the parents may still feed them once a day or so as part of the bonding process.

In the parent-rearing approach, “We watch for parent birds to visit the colt,” Olsen says. “In the last three years [during the experimental phase], we’ve seen parental birds excited to see the chick and feed the chick right away. Other times, there is less interaction. We like to see it where they adopt the chick.”

Once they see the parent visiting the chick and trying to feed it or exhibiting other adoptive behaviors, the door to the pen is opened and the colt is free to leave.

Biologists continue to monitor the behavior and whereabouts of each new family group until they leave for points south. “The ideal scenario is the adult parent in the wild will adopt the chick and lead it on migration and defend it from predators,” Olsen says. If the adoptive parents don’t visit the colt and fail to bond with it, the colt will be moved to another potential adoptive parent.

Boardman says the release is part of the research-based, adaptive management approach so important to achieving the partnership’s goal of establishing a self-sustaining Whooping Crane population east of the Mississippi River to help secure the future of Whooping Cranes in North America.

“We’ve moved around the landscape and changed our techniques,” Boardman says. “You learn something new from every trial. We are constantly asking, what else can we change in the equation?”

“We believe our goal of a self-sustaining population of these remarkable birds is achievable but it will take time to know if this parent-rearing and release approach is successful, and time to allow it to work.”

**Article by Lisa Gaumnitz, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, with contributions from Trina Soyk, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Division of Ecological Services. Both Lisa and Trina are members of the Communication and Outreach Team, Whooping Crane Eastern Partnership. An earlier version of this article appeared in *The Unison Call* newsletter (vol. 27, no. 1).**

Parent-reared Class of 2016 — Where are they now?	
Crane no.	Status (as of Dec. 12)
29-16 (M)	Dyer County, TN
30-16 (M)	Associating with adults 4-12 and 3-14, in Floyd County, GA
31-16 (M)	Crittendon County, KY
32-16 (F)	Predated near release site soon after release
33-16 (F)	Meigs County, TN
34-16 (F)	Predated near release site soon after release
37-16 (M)	Predated near release site
38-16 (M)	Crittendon County, KY
39-16 (M)	Dyer County, TN
69-16 (F)	Morgan County, Alabama (probable winter destination)
70-16 (M)	Portage County, WI
71-16 (F)	Jackson County, WI

Upon release, at least one of the crane colts (30-16) formed an association (apparently a lasting one) with a target pair of adult Whooping Cranes. Other colts joined groups of Sandhill Cranes, while some colts remained solitary. In the next issue of *Grus Americana*, we will provide a full account of how all the birds fared on their first fall migration. Information from ‘Whooping Crane Fall Migration Update’ of Operation Migration ([www.operationmigration.org](http://www.operationmigration.org)). — Ed.

## Louisiana Whooping Crane Update – Spring & Summer 2016



Adults L6-12 & L8-13 with wild-hatched juvenile LW1-16 in Jefferson Davis Parish on 28 June 2016. LDWF/Eva Szyszkoski.

**Reproduction** – Five pairs (all on privately owned land) produced nine nests with eggs during the third year of nesting by the Louisiana flock. One pair that had laid eggs in 2015 was not documented nesting this year. See table for individual pair information. (\*denotes first-time nesters)

Female	Male	Nest #	End reason	Egg information	Parish
L3-11	L1-13	1	Past full term	Dead embryo (2-2)	Allen
L3-11	L1-13	2	Past full term	Dead embryo (1); unknown (1)	Allen
L7-11	L8-11	1	Past full term	Infertile (2-2)	Avoyelles
L7-11	L8-11	2	Past full term	Infertile (1); unknown (1)	Avoyelles
L6-12*	L8-13*	1	Successful	Hatch (2-2)	Jefferson Davis
L13-11	L2-11	1	Human disturbance	Dead embryo (1-1)	Allen
L13-11	L2-11	2	Abandoned - unknown cause	Infertile (1); unknown (1)	Allen
L11-11*	L10-11*	1	Unknown (full term)	Unknown (1-1)	Jefferson Davis
L11-11	L10-11	2	Past full term	Infertile (1-1)	Jefferson Davis

**Wild-hatched chicks** – Pair L6-12 and L8-13 hatched out two chicks on 11 and 13 April 2016, respectively. LW2-16 disappeared at approximately one month of age. LW1-16 was observed with a left wing deformity at 44 days old. After reaching fledging age, LW1-16 has been observed making at least one flight of over 100 m; however, it has not yet been observed doing higher-altitude flying and we are still unsure if the left wing deformation will affect its long-term flying abilities.

**Mortalities** – Mortalities from March through August included two juvenile males and one juvenile female, one 3-year-old male and one 4-year old female in Louisiana. Additionally one long-term missing female was removed from the population totals. Two of the deaths (juvenile male and juvenile female) were due to gunshot in Acadia Parish. The remaining three were found dead on the White Lake WCA, Vermilion Parish.

**Movements to Texas** – A handful of cranes again flew into Texas and stayed for an extended period of time. Female L8-12 made a short trip in early April, returned briefly to Louisiana and then flew up to the Dallas area in late April where she remains.

A group consisting of L10-13, L12-14 & L13-14 flew to Jefferson County, southwest of Beaumont, on 7 May and remain in this general area. This is the first time we have documented female L10-13 in Texas; however, both L12 & L13-14 have been to this location previously.

Pair L2 & L14-12 left Louisiana on 16 August and have apparently settled in Kaufman County, Texas, where L14-12 has spent time previously. This is the first time female L2-12 has been documented in the state.

**Current Population Size** – As of 31 August 2016, the Louisiana non-migratory population consisted of a maximum of 37 cranes (14 males, 22 females and 1 unknown).

*Contributed by Eva Szyszkoski, Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries*

**A further update from Eva, as of 30 November 2016:**

*LW1-16 is alive and well. We haven't been able to confirm whether or not he can fly very far or very high, but the family is moving around quite a bit now, so it appears he's pretty mobile!*

*As for this year's captive-reared cohort, we have already received 4 cranes that were raised at the International Crane Foundation. We got them on 9 November and they've already been released. We are getting 10 more tomorrow and 8 more early next week, all from Patuxent. Three that were supposed to come to us have been held back pending more blood work, and we may or may not receive them. So a total of 22 for sure!*

Note: Eva refers to LW1-16 as “he”, but its sex has not yet been determined. Eva suspects LW1-16 is a male because of its large size (male cranes tend to be larger than females). LDWF hopes to capture the bird soon for banding, at which time blood will be drawn to check its health and determine its sex. — Ed.



## Aransas—Wood Buffalo Whooping Crane Update

Breeding pair surveys in May 2016 detected 78 nests (an additional nest was inferred based on observation of a pair with offspring during August surveys), 15 of which were outside the area designated as critical habitat and seven of which were outside Wood Buffalo National Park; 18 pairs without nests were also observed. Surveys in August detected 45 juveniles; 43 pairs had one juvenile each and one pair had two juveniles. Annual productivity was 0.57 juveniles per nest, well above than the 20-year average of 0.48 but within the long-term natural range of variation.

*The above are preliminary results from the Canadian Wildlife Service, contributed by Mark Bidwell, Species at Risk Recovery Unit, Canadian Wildlife Service Prairie and Northern Region*

Summary of Aransas—Wood Buffalo Population Breeding Surveys for 2013-2016

	2013	2014	2015	2016
<b>No. of nests detected at WBNP (May)</b>	74	82 <sup>†</sup>	68	78
<b>No. of fledged chicks detected (Aug)</b>	28 <sup>*</sup>	32 <sup>**</sup>	23 <sup>*</sup>	45 <sup>***</sup>
<b>Average no. of chicks per nest<sup>#</sup></b>	0.38	0.39	0.34	0.57
<b>Additional territorial pairs (non-nesters)</b>	21-25	43	20-24	18
<b>Estimated total no. of birds at Aransas NWR within the primary survey area<sup>‡</sup></b>	304 (95% CI 260-354)	308 (95% CI 267-350)	329 (95% CI 293-371)	—
<b>Estimated no. of juveniles at Aransas NWR</b>	39 (95% CI 32-42)	39 (95% CI 33-46)	38 (95% CI 33-43)	—

<sup>†</sup>The most nests ever recorded. <sup>\*</sup>All family groups had a single offspring; <sup>\*\*</sup>two families with twins; <sup>\*\*\*</sup>one family with twins

<sup>#</sup>20-year average is 0.48 chicks per nest

Wood Buffalo National Park (WBNP) 2013 data are from Harrell and Bidwell (Oct. 2014), *Report on Whooping Crane Recovery Activities*; WBNP 2014 data are from *Northern Journal* (norj.ca), Sept. 1, 2014, quoting Mark Bidwell; WBNP 2015 data are from Bidwell and Conkin (March 2016), *Recovery and Ecology of Whooping Cranes: Monitoring of the Aransas-Wood Buffalo Population during the Breeding Season 2015 Report*. WBNP 2016 data are preliminary results from the Canadian Wildlife Service, with thanks to Mark Bidwell.

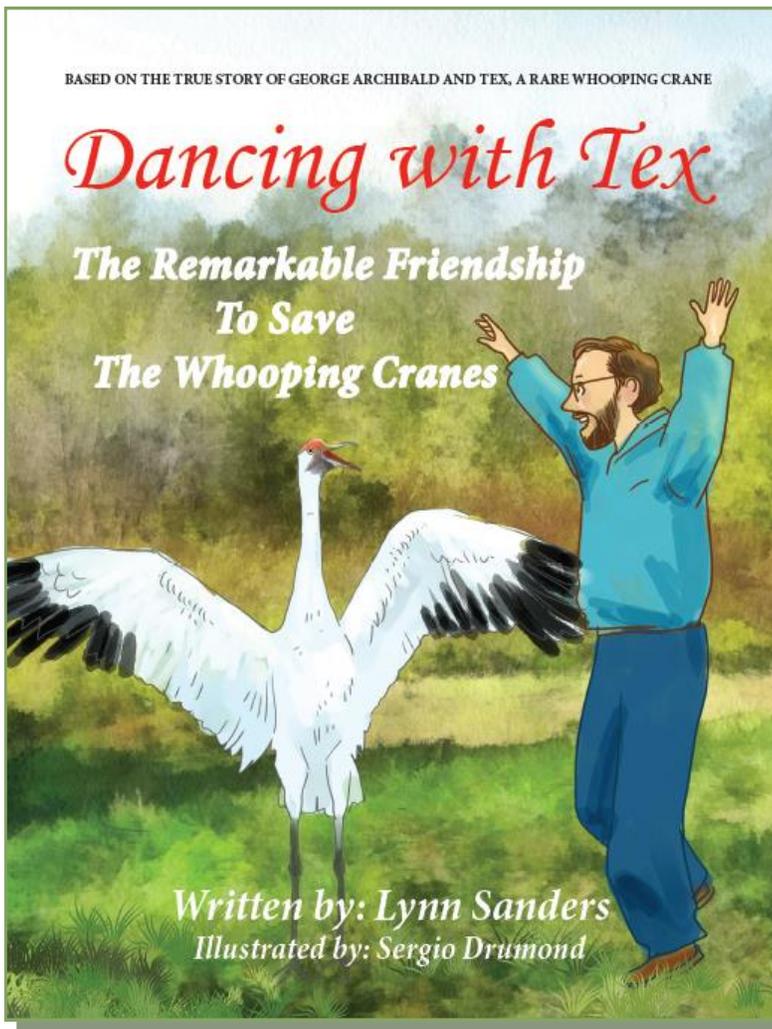
Aransas NWR winter counts are from 'Whooping Crane Updates' at the ANWR website.

<sup>‡</sup>Estimated numbers of birds **outside** the primary survey area in 2013, 2014, and 2015 were 6, 6, and 9, respectively. (95% CI means 95% confidence interval) — Ed.

## Florida Resident Whooping Crane Update

The Florida resident Whooping Crane population numbers 15 birds (5 males, 8 females, 2 unknowns), including 5 pairs as of the writing of this update (2 September 2016). Milestones for this population include longevity and productivity records. We can report that one of the first birds released in Florida is still alive and well in August 2016. This female hatched in May 1993 and was released in central Florida during December of that same year. She and her mate (hatched in May 2000) have nested three times over the past eight years, but their chicks have not survived to fledging age. On the other hand, our most productive female turned 18 years old in April and she continues to produce chicks. Although her breeding age ties another individual for oldest breeder, this female has had 24 nests and produced 9 fledglings over the last 14 years (if only all of the released individuals had survived so well and been as productive). She and her mate have fledged one chick in each of the past two years, and this year the pair fledged two chicks. Her twins surviving to fledging age is another first for this population. The previous record of 3 weeks in 2010 was shattered as these five-month-old colts continue to grow.

*Contributed by Tim Dellinger, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission*



*New this year!*

*Dancing with Tex* is a children's book by Lynn Sanders, based on the true story of a remarkable bond between a man (George Archibald) and a special Whooping Crane named Tex. Superbly illustrated by Sergio Drumond.

"This unusual story...is an example of the many efforts needed to help endangered species survive the impacts of modern humans."

— George Archibald

And, for older craniacs, a must-see video — "George & Tex" — in which George recounts the story of Tex and also the heroic efforts to save her single offspring, Gee Whiz.

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=fsDYhdaJL98](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fsDYhdaJL98)

Shop at Amazon.com via the WCCA website ([www.whoopingcrane.com](http://www.whoopingcrane.com)) and the Association receives a small commission.

## JEFFERSON COUNTY MAN SENTENCED FOR KILLING WHOOPING CRANES

**BEAUMONT, TEXAS (25 October 2016)** – A 19-year-old Beaumont, Texas man has been sentenced for federal wildlife violations in the Eastern District of Texas, announced Acting U.S. Attorney Brit Featherston.

Trey Joseph Frederick pleaded guilty on May 23, 2016 to a violation of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and was sentenced to five years of federal probation today by U.S. Magistrate Judge Zack Hawthorn. As part of his probation, Frederick is prohibited from owning or possessing firearms, ammunition or any other dangerous weapon. He is also prohibited from hunting or fishing anywhere in the United States. In addition, Frederick has been ordered to pay restitution to the International Crane Foundation and the Texas Parks and Wildlife Foundation in the amount of \$25,815.00. Frederick must also perform 200 hours of community service.

According to information presented in court, on Jan. 11, 2016, a Texas Game Warden received two calls reporting two whooping cranes had been shot on Blair Road in Jefferson County. Further investigation revealed the defendant had been seen in the area with a hunting rifle and had claimed to be hunting geese. Federal agents contacted Frederick at his home on LaBelle Road where he admitted to killing the cranes. Whooping cranes are migratory birds and are protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act making it unlawful to capture, kill, or attempt to capture or kill in the United States.

Acting U.S. Attorney Featherston stated, "Protecting our environment and wildlife is vital to making sure that future generations have the opportunity to enjoy the true beauty and excitement of nature."

"The loss of these cranes is not simply a loss for the species. It is a loss for the community, for taxpayers and for future generations deprived of an opportunity to see these magnificent birds thriving in the wild," said Southwest Region Special Agent in Charge Nicholas E. Chavez of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. "Moreover, the killing of these two whooping cranes is not an isolated incident. Over the past five years, more than 20 whooping cranes have been shot and killed in the U.S. By bringing criminals who perpetrate crimes against wildlife to justice, we hope to prevent future tragedies like this from occurring."

"Justice was served here in no small part due to the strong partnership between Texas Parks and Wildlife Department game wardens and the United States Fish and Wildlife Service special agents, whose thorough and collaborative investigation of the heinous crime illustrates their commitment to protecting our shared natural resources, particularly endangered species like the whooping cranes," said Colonel Craig Hunter, TPWD Director of Law Enforcement. "The fact that this act of senseless cruelty was universally condemned by the local community, who along with landowners played a vital role in this case being solved quickly, sends a strong message to future game law criminals; your actions will not be tolerated, nor will they go unpunished. We also appreciate the assistance from the United States Attorney's Office and Assistant United States Attorney Joe Batte for making this case a priority."

**News release (edited), U.S. Department of Justice, Eastern District of Texas. Contact: Davilyn Walston, Public Information Officer**

## TEXAS JUDGE'S DECISION A WIN FOR WHOOPING CRANES

**BEAUMONT, TEXAS (25 October 2016)** – In an unprecedented decision, Federal District Court Magistrate Judge Zack Hawthorn handed down a heavy sentence for Trey Joseph Frederick, a 19-year-old Beaumont man who admitted to shooting and killing two endangered Whooping Cranes. The International Crane Foundation (ICF), a nonprofit organization working on behalf of Whooping Cranes internationally, assisted in the case and hopes this decision will be a sobering reminder that these animals desperately need protection. As of today, only 450 of the rare birds exist in the wild across North America.

Frederick's sentence includes: \$25,815 in restitution to be shared among Texas Parks & Wildlife Foundation and ICF; 200 hours of community service (the most ever ordered by this court) — this time is to be spent with Texas Parks & Wildlife and/or the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; the maximum of five years' probation; an order that Frederick turn over all firearms; the rescinding of Frederick's hunting license for the next five years in all states.

“This ruling has set a powerful precedent for the future of Whooping Crane conservation,” said Rich Beilfuss, President and CEO of the ICF. “This was not hunting. This was an act of criminal vandalism, and we are encouraged that Judge Hawthorn treated it as such. We hope the decision will be a strong deterrent to anyone considering a similar crime.”

While ICF is encouraged by the overall ruling, the nonprofit is disappointed that Judge Hawthorn did not require a higher restitution amount. ICF previously recommended a fine of \$113,886 per bird, based on the cost of raising a Whooping Crane in human care and reintroducing it into the wild in Louisiana, where the birds originated. The U.S. Probation Office supported this assessment and recommended the amount to the Judge as well.

“The shooter did not just illegally kill two birds; he stole an intensive monetary investment by federal and state governments and nonprofit organizations in the United States and Canada, as well as saddened and outraged the public through this thoughtless and brazen act,” wrote Liz Smith, Texas Program Director of the ICF, in a letter to Judge Hawthorn.

Despite the reduced amount, ICF looks forward to sharing the ordered restitution and working alongside Texas Parks & Wildlife Foundation in the future on Whooping Crane conservation efforts. Aside from working to secure coastal habitats for Whooping Cranes in Texas, and rearing cranes for release in Louisiana and Wisconsin, ICF and its conservation partners are engaging local communities and encouraging involvement in protecting this iconic species.

“Protecting a species like Whooping Cranes takes commitment and support from the community, and we hope people recognize that if we can’t save Whooping Cranes, we all lose,” said Beilfuss.

**Press release (edited) of the International Crane Foundation. ICF contact: Sara Gavney Moore**

## WCCA STATEMENT

The Whooping Crane Conservation Association condemns the premediated actions of Trey Joseph Frederick to purposely kill endangered Whooping Cranes. WCCA supports the conviction and the penalties handed down, and it thanks those responsible for bringing the culprit to justice. WCCA used money from its Reward Account to pay \$500 to each of two informants who provided essential information that led to the conviction of the perpetrator.

## ***Ruffled Feathers***

For in-depth reporting on the Frederick case, please see the article *Ruffled Feathers* by Sonia Smith, which appeared in the September issue of *Texas Monthly*. I requested permission to reproduce the article here, but it’s a lengthy piece and the magazine preferred that it be accessed through the *Texas Monthly* website: [www.texasmonthly.com/articles/whooping-cranes-texas/](http://www.texasmonthly.com/articles/whooping-cranes-texas/)

*Ruffled Feathers* is a very well-written and highly informative article that tells of the events surrounding the premediated, vandalistic shooting deaths of two Whooping Cranes of the Louisiana flock on January 11, 2016 in southeast Texas. Smith first introduces us to the two ill-fated birds as chicks at Patuxent Wildlife Research Center where they were raised, and then follows them to Louisiana where they were released into the wild as members of the 2014 cohort. Why some Louisiana whoopers have a penchant for Texas, no one knows, but to southeast Texas these two birds did go. Smith describes the shooter’s disturbing behavior in the days leading up to the killings, his clumsy attempts to divert attention away from himself afterwards, the investigation and arrest, and the opprobrium heaped onto the shooter by local residents. — Ed.

## Whoopers forgo trip north, summer at Aransas

Three juvenile whooping cranes skipped their migration to Canada this year, instead spending their summer on the Aransas National Wildlife Refuge. A fourth bird is believed to have stayed on San Jose Island.

While the only wild flock of endangered whooping cranes typically nests at Wood Buffalo National Park in Canada and winters on the Texas Coast, this is not the first time birds have played hooky from the 2500 mile trip, said Whooping Crane Recovery Coordinator Wade Harrell. "There's been instances since the '50s, even, when we've had an occasional bird stay the summer," he said. "It's hard to say exactly why they stay."

The three that are on the refuge are believed to be younger birds that have not yet reached the age to breed. That may be part of the reason they decided to forgo the long journey north, where adult pairs have babies. In the past, birds have stayed because they were recovering from some sort of injury. But there's no indication that the three have any kind of injury, Harrell said. One of the three on the refuge has an active radio transmitter, which has made it easier to follow the movements of the small group. While Harrell has a probable report of a fourth bird on San Jose Island, it's been difficult to verify.

Excerpts from an article by **Sara Sneath** in *The Victoria Advocate*, published August 29, 2016

## WCCA Helps in Purchase of Wintering Habitat (continued from page 1)

Earlier in 2016, CBBEP acquired another 261 acres in the same area (see map on next page). These estuarine habitats are in Refugio County, near the town of Bayside, about 15 miles west of Aransas National Wildlife Refuge. Wade Harrell, Whooping Crane Coordinator for the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, said "This is an area that we have seen increasing winter use by Whooping Cranes as the population continues to expand." Conservation of priority habitat areas is a key strategy in moving the species toward full recovery. Other species of concern also benefit from the purchases. Mottled Ducks nest in the area and Reddish Egrets feed in the shallow lakes and wetland fringe.

Protection of wintering habitat for the Whooping Cranes is one of the primary goals of WCCA. In the last five years, our Association spent \$291,700 to help protect 1000 acres of wintering habitat through perpetual easements or by direct purchase.



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The views expressed in *Grus Americana* are those of the individual contributors and do not necessarily represent the positions of WCCA.



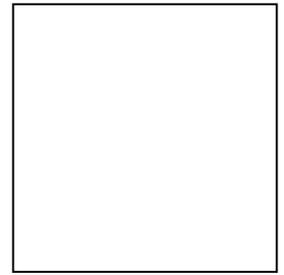
The photos on pages 10, 11 and 12 show areas of the Mission River Delta estuarine complex purchased in November 2016 ('720 acres' tract on the above map) by the Coastal Bend Bays & Estuaries Program and now preserved as habitat for Whooping Cranes wintering on the Texas Gulf Coast near Aransas National Wildlife Refuge. Others involved in the purchase were U.S. Department of the Interior, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Texas General Land Office, Whooping Crane Conservation Association. Photos: Jake Herring, CBBEP. Google Earth map courtesy of Corpus Christi Caller-Times.

## An Opportunity for Association Members

You can help us as we continue to cooperate with other conservation groups in preserving winter habitat for Whooping Cranes! The owners of two additional tracts, containing 200 and 400 acres, have indicated they are willing to sell their properties in 2017. Both tracts are used by cranes and the smaller tract has supported a Whooping Crane pair since the winter of 2007-08. Coastal properties are expensive. The cost of the 720 acres acquired in November 2016 was slightly over one million U.S. dollars or \$1,389 per acre. We welcome any amount of money that you are able to donate toward purchase of habitat. When you donate, please indicate that you are contributing for the purchase of habitat. Funds can be donated through our website <http://whoopingcrane.com> or by sending a check to the Whooping Crane Conservation Association, 2139 Kennedy Avenue, Loveland, Colorado, 80538. WCCA is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) corporation with the purpose of advancing conservation, protection, and propagation of Whooping Cranes. The Association is able to receive funds by gifts, bequests, legacies or transfers and to administer such funds for the benefit of cranes. Donations from U.S. citizens are tax deductible. Thank you for your help for these marvelous birds.

**Whooping Crane Conservation Association  
2139 Kennedy Avenue  
Loveland, Colorado, 80538**

**Return Service Requested**



Members—please update your address if the one shown above is incorrect. Send to the return address above.

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