

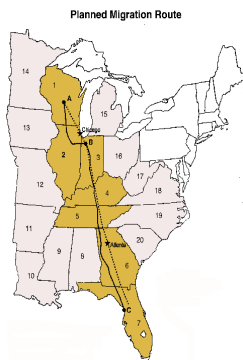
Whooping Crane Reintroduction Update

Endangered Species Facts



Whooping cranes are one of the best known endangered species. They symbolize the struggle to maintain the vanishing creatures of our world. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, along with cooperating organizations, is taking steps to reintroduce a migratory population of whooping cranes east of the Mississippi River, nesting in Wisconsin.

Project Summary



About 1,400 whooping cranes existed in 1860. Their population declined because of hunting and habitat loss until 1941, when the last migrating flock dwindled to an all-time low of 15 wild birds. Since then, the wild population has slowly increased to over 170 on recent migrations. This flock winters in Aransas National Wildlife Refuge on the Gulf coast of Texas and migrates to Wood Buffalo National Park in Canada. This flock is the only naturally occurring wild population in the world. Scientists have long recognized the risk of having all of the wild whooping cranes using one wintering and breeding location. With the cranes concentrated in one area, the population could be wiped out by disease, natural disaster, or human impacts. Whooping crane survival depends on additional, separated populations.

The International Whooping Crane Recovery Team, and an extensive group of federal, state and private partners called the Whooping Crane Eastern Partnership, is reintroducing a second, migratory flock of whooping cranes into the eastern United States. This flock is expected to nest in central Wisconsin, after release at the Necedah National Wildlife Refuge, and they will migrate to Chassahowitzka National Wildlife Refuge in Florida.

The "Class of 2002" Whoopers in the Eastern United States!

A total of seventeen whooping crane chicks were shipped this month from their hatching place at the USGS Patuxent Wildlife Research Center in Maryland to the Necedah National Wildlife Refuge in central Wisconsin. These new chicks represent the "Class of 2002" whooping cranes who will learn to fly at the refuge following an ultralight aircraft. Although seven of these chicks are slightly older than the others and arrived at the refuge two weeks earlier, trainers hope to have all seventeen birds flying together for their aircraft-led migration south this autumn. Meanwhile, costumed pilots and handlers intend to divide the birds into three groups based on age. The groups will be raised and trained at different sites on the refuge to help ensure successful social development of all of the chicks.



The demand for accommodations at the refuge is high due to the age difference among this year's chicks. Refuge staff met this demand by constructing a new, additional site for use this summer. With a large inundated roosting area, project staff expect this site to be a success, and consider it a job well done.



Successful training has already begun with this year's seven oldest chicks. The trainers are excited to witness healthy, normally functioning chicks, who are learning the unique traits of wild whooping cranes quickly and eagerly.

**"Class of 2001"
Whoopers are making
history!**



The "Class of 2001" flock of five whooping cranes who returned to the marshes of central Wisconsin on April 18, 2002 are doing well. Since returning, all five cranes have been frequenting the refuge. All of these birds are demonstrating wild behavior and are being monitored at safe distances by crane biologists. When autumn approaches, biologists will monitor the five whooping cranes as they migrate south for the first time on their own. The completion of that migration will mark the success of one full unassisted migration cycle for these birds, and the first for any whooping cranes east of the Mississippi River in over 100 years.

**For Additional
Information...**

Thanks to the efforts of organizations involved in the Whooping Crane Eastern Partnership, endangered whooping cranes will again be seen in the eastern part of the United States, after a century long absence.



Check out these web sites:

www.bringbackthecranes.org
www.operationmigration.org
www.savingcranes.org

Or contact the Necedah National Wildlife Refuge at:
W7996 20th Street West
Necedah WI 54646
608-565-2551