



## **Whooping Crane Eastern Partnership**

*Dedicated to reintroducing a migratory population of the whooping crane to eastern North America*

### **Mid-March 2009 Project Update**

#### **Spring Migration!**

Many whooping cranes have already begun spring migration, with the first bird confirmed in Wisconsin on March 8. In past years, we have had a large proportion of the population back in Wisconsin by the end of March. All birds are expected to begin migration over the next few weeks, and we ask that you quickly pass on any sightings you receive. We encourage everyone to use our reporting web site: <http://www.fws.gov/midwest/whoopingcrane/sightings/sightingform.cfm>

#### **March 2009 Population Status**

As of mid-March 2009 there are 85 birds in the Eastern Migratory Whooping Crane population, consisting of 50 males and 35 females. Two other birds not included in the above total are missing and probably dead, but this has not yet been confirmed. The most recent known locations of all birds are shown in the map below. Approximately 1/3 of the population is currently migrating north, including at least 5 of the 12 potential breeding pairs.

#### **2008 Ultralight Cohort**

The 14 young cranes led to Florida behind ultralight aircraft have been doing well in their winter quarters, with 7 birds at St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) and 7 at Chassahowitzka NWR. The birds will continue to be monitored throughout the winter, until they depart on their own for the migration back to Wisconsin. At that time, the Tracking Team will also leave Florida and closely monitor the young cranes on their first northward migration. Based upon our experience from previous years, we expect departure to occur some time in late March or early April.

#### **2008 Direct Autumn Release (DAR) Cohort**

Of the surviving birds released using the DAR technique this year, all continue to associate with older whooping cranes. The latest information indicates four birds located in Tennessee, and one bird in Florida.

#### **Reporting Sightings**

Please forward any sightings you receive to us through the whooping crane reporting web site we have established for that purpose: <http://www.fws.gov/midwest/whoopingcrane/sightings/sightingform.cfm>

The link above provides a public reporting form on a site maintained by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS). When a report is submitted, the information goes simultaneously to multiple partners including the biologists who are tracking the birds, FWS, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, International Crane Foundation, and Operation Migration.

This update is a product of the Whooping Crane Eastern Partnership. To access our previous project updates and additional information on the project visit our web site at <http://www.bringbackthecranes.org/>.

## Eastern Migratory Whooping Cranes Mid-March 2009 Locations

Population ~ 85  
50 Males 35 Females

