



# Whooping Crane Eastern Partnership News Release

*For Immediate Release*

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## Whooping crane killed by bobcat

Crystal River, FL - The Whooping Crane Eastern Partnership (WCEP) announced today that a whooping crane which was part of a migratory reintroduction study was killed by a bobcat yesterday.

A U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service biologist monitoring the birds discovered that the bird referred to as number four (4) had been killed by a bobcat during a routine check on the birds Monday morning. All the birds had been accounted for during the previous afternoon check.

The crane was located approximately 40 yards outside the protected pen. The other six whooping cranes were found safe inside the pen. A necropsy performed by Dr. Marilyn Spalding, University of Florida veterinarian, indicated the death was consistent with a bobcat kill and that bird #4 was otherwise in good health and condition.

“Every effort has been made to provide for the safety of these birds,” said Jim Kraus, refuge manager for the Chassahowitzka National Wildlife Refuge where the birds are located, “and while it is unfortunate we lost a bird, it does not come as a surprise. Predation has always been a possibility and is part of the natural order. It is also why we went to great lengths to provide as safe an enclosure as we could, while still allowing the birds to develop their independence and wildness.”

The pen is constructed with eight-foot high mesh fencing that is partially buried to prevent predators from digging under the fence, and is surrounded by two rows of electric fencing to “discourage” predators from approaching the enclosure. Bird #4 was found outside of this enclosure.

USFWS biologist Richard Urbanek and International Crane Foundation biologist Marianne Wellington are monitoring the site during the birds’ winter stay at the refuge.

A bobcat was successfully live trapped at the site earlier today and relocated to reduce the danger to the remaining birds.

The whooping crane reintroduction study is a cooperative effort of WCEP public and private partners and aims to re-establish a migratory flock of cranes back into the eastern North America landscape. In the first phase of the study, ultralight aircraft are being used to lead young chicks south from their fledging area at the Necedah National Wildlife Refuge in central Wisconsin to suitable wintering grounds at the Chassahowitzka National Wildlife Refuge along Florida’s central-west coast. The ultimate goal of the project is to reintroduce enough birds to the fly-way to establish a self-sustaining flock containing at least 25 adult, breeding pairs.

– WCEP –

For more information on the project and its partners visit the WCEP website at  
<http://www.bringbackthecranes.org>