



Friends of the Louisiana Whooping Cranes

Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries
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Since You Last Read...an Update on the 2011, 2012, and 2013 Louisiana Whooping Cranes

What a great time of year fall is....cooler temperatures are starting to set in and so is the preparation for a new group of Louisiana whooping cranes. We are anxiously awaiting our new group of birds that are tentatively scheduled to arrive on Thursday December 4, 2014. The new group will consist of fourteen individuals; six males and eight females. We are excited to receive this new group of birds and look forward to their release into Louisiana.

Previously released LA whooping cranes have originated from eggs produced at four of the five captive breeding facilities but all the birds were hatched and reared at Patuxent Wildlife Research Center (PWRC) (it's easier to ship eggs than birds) but this year four of our birds were hatched and initially reared at the International Crane Foundation (ICF). These birds were originally slated to be part of the reintroduced eastern migratory population though ICF's direct autumn release (DAR) project but as the size of the DAR cohort shrank due to the loss of several chicks it was deemed too small of a group to successfully release. Discussions began among various individuals about what to do with these birds and what would be the best use of them. It was eventually decided to incorporate them into the cohort of birds coming to LA. On 11 September the birds were shipped from ICF to PWRC so they could be socialized with the LA birds already being reared at PWRC. As a precaution birds shipped from one facility to another have to be in quarantine for one month so the ICF birds were housed away from other birds and had to undergo a few additional medical tests. Once out of quarantine and as pen space became available they were moved to a 'pond pen' next to some of the other LA birds and on 29 October Brian Clauss reported that they were spending the day with 8 of the other LA birds and that it was going fairly well thus far. The staff at PWRC will closely monitor and observe the birds to make sure everyone is getting along and eventually they will be left together overnight and unsupervised and then all that's left is to get the two oldest PWRC/LA birds into the group – apparently they're a bit aggressive, but hopefully they have settled down and soon all 14 will be living happily together.

In regards to our 2011-2013 birds, regrettably, we recovered the remains of L13-12. He was a solitary male who had been utilizing ag fields in N Calcasieu and S Beauregard Parishes for several months. We suspect that he collided with a powerline as his carcass was found not far from a structure.

Louisiana Whooping Crane Survival as of October 2014:

A total of 50 birds have been released in Louisiana since the project began in 2010. Out of those 50 birds, a total of 27 individuals are currently alive for a survivorship of 54%. Beginning with the 2011 cohort, birds received for the Louisiana project were younger in age compared to those received in the 2010 cohort. LDWF strongly believes that has helped increase the survival percentage of the individual cohorts. Reported below are the survival rates for the 2011-2013 cohorts.

<u>Cohort Year:</u>	<u>2011</u>	<u>2012</u>	<u>2013</u>	<u>3 Year Average:</u>
Current Survival:	10/16= 63%	9/14= 64%	8/10=80%	27/40= 68%

Waterfowl Hunters Advised to Be Alert for Whooping Cranes...

As waterfowl hunters prepare for the start of the hunting season in November, the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF) is reminding all hunters to be alert for whooping cranes in marshes and fields that contain legally hunted game birds.

LDWF's whooping crane reintroduction program has released cranes into the wild from White Lake Wetlands Conservation Area each year since 2011. The birds have dispersed over time to locations that include east Texas, but there are whooping cranes situated in Acadia, Avoyelles, Rapides, Vermilion, Jefferson Davis, Calcasieu, and Cameron parishes.

Anyone encountering whooping cranes in the wild is advised to observe them from a distance and minimize any disturbance. Hunters are cautioned to positively identify their targets as game birds before shooting. Although whooping cranes in Louisiana are considered an "experimental, non-essential population" under the Endangered Species Act, they cannot be pursued, harassed, captured or killed and are fully protected by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and Endangered Species Act if any illegal activity causing harm to the birds occurs.

Waterfowl hunters should be accustomed to seeing large-bodied, white birds with black wing-tips, such as white ibis, white pelicans, and wood storks, which must be distinguished from the legally-hunted snow geese. Whooping cranes are equally identifiable as they stand an impressive 5 feet tall and have a wingspan of 7-8 feet. Easily identifiable characteristics of whooping cranes in flight include fully extended neck and legs, and black wing tips.

Hunters are encouraged to report whooping crane sightings to assist the department in tracking their movements. Location information can be reported to the White Lake WCA office at 337-536-9400, ext. 4 or szymorski@wlf.la.gov.

Anyone witnessing whooping cranes being pursued, harassed, captured or killed is urged to call the LDWF Enforcement Division's Game Thief hotline at 1-800-442-2511 to report what they've seen.

Page 4 of this issue of the "Friends newsletter" includes identification tips included in our annual LDWF hunting regulation book. Over 300,000 copies of the LDWF hunting regulations are distributed annually. A similar advertisement is also contained within LDWF's annual Migratory Bird pamphlet of which 100,000 copies are distributed annually.



L7, 8, 10 & 11-11 take to the sky.

Louisiana hunters are reminded to please be cautious of our resident whooping cranes this hunting season.

July-October 2014 Friends of the Cranes

A special thanks to our monetary donors, without whom this project would not be possible. The following individuals have made monetary donations to support the reintroduction of whooping cranes to southwest Louisiana.

**Martha Murphy and Jack Leahy, Christy Snowden, Betty Cowger, "Don" Munro,
Patricia & Phineas Stevens, and S&K Kneipp**

Many donations were in memory of a very special individual and Louisiana whooping crane supporter, Caroline "Polly" Winters. Ms. Polly will be sorely missed by all of those involved in the Louisiana project and by our beloved cranes who have unknowingly benefited from her generous donations over the course of the past several years. LDWF wishes to express our sincerest condolences to the Winters family for their loss of such an extraordinary individual and conservationist.



Approximately 1/3 of the Louisiana whooping crane project budget is comprised of private donations; all donations are sincerely appreciated. If you or someone you know would like to make a donation in support of the cranes, please contact Kell McInnis at 225-765-5100, kmcinnis@wlf.la.gov, or visit the Foundation's website directly at <http://lawff.org/>. Donations can also be mailed directly to the Foundation at P.O. Box 80378 Baton Rouge, LA 70898-0378.

Jane Chandler of Patuxent Wildlife Research Center Retires

The LDWF whooping crane project would like to congratulate a special colleague and friend to our staff, and to whooping cranes everywhere. Mrs. Jane Chandler retired from her position as crane flock manager at the USGS Patuxent Wildlife Research Center in Laurel, MD. As many of you know, the Patuxent facility is responsible for raising a large portion of costume reared whooping cranes including those that are re-leased here in Louisiana. Jane had been the flock manager at Patuxent for over twenty five years and was directly responsible for the production of many whooping cranes that have been released across North America. Jane worked with masked bobwhite quail and with the Mississippi sandhill cranes during her career, but she deeply loved and respected whooping cranes and was dedicated to their recovery.



Jane leaves an enviable legacy of excellent work, including as past editor of the Unison Call, the newsletter of the North American Crane Working group. Thank you Jane for all you have done for whooping cranes, and the LDWF project. You will be sorely missed our dear friend.

BE ON THE LOOKOUT WHOOPING CRANES

Male and Female Adult:

Large (about 5 feet tall) white bird, red head, and black facial markings

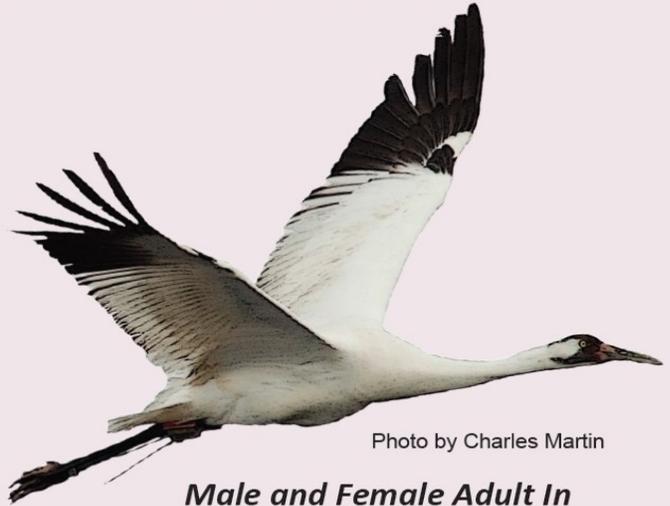


Photo by Charles Martin

Male and Female Adult In

Flight: Large (wingspan about 7-8 feet) white bird, black wing tips, legs that extend well past the tail and neck is extended during flight.

Juvenile Standing:

Resembles an adult bird but will lack black facial markings and red head. Juveniles will have varying amounts of brown and white feathers, younger birds will have more brown than white.



Juvenile In Flight: Will appear the same as an adult, primarily white body with black wing tips.

IT IS ILLEGAL TO SHOOT WHOOPING CRANES

SIMILAR BIRD SPECIES THAT RESEMBLE WHOOPING CRANES:



From Left to Right: White Pelican (Remi Jouan, Wikimedia Commons), Snow Geese (Terry Spivey, USDA Forest Service, forestryimages.org), White Ibis (Dick Daniels, carolinabirds.org), Sandhill Crane (Dori, Wikimedia Commons), and Great Egret (John Herrick, Wikimedia Commons).