



# Whooping Crane

*Grus americana*



*The whooping crane is the tallest bird in North America, reaching heights of 5 feet with a wingspan of 7-8 feet. It is solid white except for a red patch on its head and black facial markings and wing tips. The black wing tips are only visible during flight or when its wings are spread. Juvenile whooping cranes are cinnamon brown and take on a mottled appearance as white feathers begin to emerge.*

## Age and Behavior

Whooping cranes can live approximately 20-30 years in the wild. Captive birds have lived up to 40 years. Whooping cranes historically occurred in Louisiana in both a resident, non-migratory flock and a migratory flock that wintered in the state. The release area, White Lake, is the location where whooping cranes were historically documented raising young in Louisiana. Whooping cranes in the Louisiana project are designated a non-migratory flock though they don't stay exclusively in southwest Louisiana.

## Diet

Whooping cranes are generalists, quite adaptive, and will utilize the food sources that are available. The Louisiana non-migratory whooping cranes are being released into freshwater habitats. They feed in shallow water wetlands and eat insects, insect larvae, minnows, fish, tadpoles, frogs, snakes, crawfish, acorns, snails, rodents and other food items. Like other wading bird species, whooping cranes will target wetlands that are drying down and will use areas that have been flooded or burned.

Whooping cranes do not typically start breeding until they are three to five years old even though they have their adult plumage by the time they are a little over one-year old. When they do mate, they are monogamous and generally have the same mate for life. If one of the pair dies, the remaining bird will mate with another. Whooping cranes usually nest once each year but may have additional clutches of eggs if their first is unsuccessful. Whooping crane pairs lay one or two eggs at a time and begin nesting in mid-February to mid-May, with hatching one month later.



### Habitat/Range

There are approximately 1.3 million acres of marsh, open water and chenier habitat in southwestern coastal Louisiana, prime habitat for whooping cranes and where they once lived in abundance. This area, also known as the Chenier Plain, has experienced one of the lowest coastal land loss rates of all the Louisiana coastal regions.



### The Future... You Can Help!

Each year, a new cohort of birds is introduced at the White Lake Wetlands Conservation Area or Rockefeller Wildlife Refuge. Research and monitoring of released birds will be ongoing and is an important component of this project. The continued progress towards our goal depends on you. Success of this project is made possible through private and corporate donations. If you would like to support the Louisiana whooping crane project by making a tax deductible donation, please contact the Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries Foundation at 225-765-5100 or visit the foundation's web site at [lawff.org](http://lawff.org).

### Report Whooping Crane Violations

LDWF knows that the sportsmen and farmers here in Louisiana only want the best for our wildlife and the habitat they utilize. As conversationists of our state resources, you have high regard for our Sportsman's Paradise, not only for your pleasure, but so your children and grandchildren can share in its enjoyment. Unfortunately a small group of individuals threaten that reputation by poaching. **If you witness suspicious activity involving whooping cranes, please call LDWF's Enforcement Division at 1-800-442-2511.**

**Program Contact:** Sara Zimorski | 337-536-9400 | [szimorski@wlf.la.gov](mailto:szimorski@wlf.la.gov)

**Report a Violation:** LDWF Enforcement Division | 1-800-442-2511

**Report a Sighting:** [www.wlf.louisiana.gov/webform/whooping-crane-reporting-form](http://www.wlf.louisiana.gov/webform/whooping-crane-reporting-form)

**Other Resources:** [www.facebook.com/lawhoopingcranes](http://www.facebook.com/lawhoopingcranes)  
[www.lawff.org](http://www.lawff.org)  
[www.fws.gov](http://www.fws.gov)  
[www.savingcranes.org](http://www.savingcranes.org)  
[www.audubonnatureinstitute.org](http://www.audubonnatureinstitute.org)

**[www.wlf.louisiana.gov](http://www.wlf.louisiana.gov)**

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