

**Office of the United States Attorney
Southern District of Texas**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Dallas Man Convicted and Fined for Killing Whooping Crane
*Only Fifth Known Case in Nearly 45 Years***

CORPUS CHRISTI, Texas – Worthey D. Wiles, 42, of Dallas, has entered a plea of guilty and was sentenced for killing a whooping crane, United States Attorney Kenneth Magidson announced today along with Nick Chavez, special agent in charge of U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS).

On Jan. 12, 2013, Wiles was a guest hunter at the St. Charles Bay Hunting Club in Rockport which is located inside the designated critical habitat for whooping cranes. While hunting in the marsh adjacent to San Jose Island, Wiles shot and killed a juvenile whooping crane. After contacting Texas Parks and Wildlife (TPW), Wiles told state game wardens he thought the whooping crane was a sandhill crane. Wardens then contacted FWS who located the bird and verified it was a whooping crane.

“The whooping crane is one of the most beautiful and highly valued species of America’s wildlife heritage,” said Chavez. “FWS is committed to protecting this extraordinary bird so that future generations of Americans are able to marvel at its grace and beauty.”

Whooping cranes are one of the rarest birds in the world with a total population of approximately 437 cranes in the wild and 599 overall. The juvenile whooper killed by Wiles is believed to have been one of only 34 juveniles that migrated 2,500 miles from Canada during the fall to Port Aransas. The whooping crane population that winters in Texas is the only self-sustaining wild population of whooping cranes in the world. This case is only the fifth known shooting death of a whooping crane since 1968.

Today, Wiles appeared before United States Magistrate Judge B. Janice Ellington and entered a plea of guilty to one count of violating the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, which provides protection for Migratory Birds. As a result, he was ordered to pay a \$5,000 fine and make a \$10,000 community service payment to the non-profit organization Friends of Aransas and Matagorda Island National Wildlife Refuges. He will also serve a one-year-term of probation for his conviction.

The case was investigated by FWS and TPW. Assistant U.S. Attorney Hugo R. Martinez prosecuted the case.

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