



DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
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FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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PUBLIC URGED TO HELP WHOOPING CRANES IN SPRING FLIGHT

As the meager band of 24 surviving North American whooping cranes heads north from Texas this spring, the public is urged by the Department of the Interior's Fish and Wildlife Service to afford these big, resonant-voiced birds all possible protection.

Fish and Wildlife Service records show that these rarest and tallest of North America's migratory birds generally make their annual spring flight to Canadian breeding grounds during the first three weeks in April.

The migration takes the tenacious cranes, threatened with extinction for many years, from their Texas wintering grounds to Canada's Northwest Territory by way of Oklahoma, Kansas, Nebraska, South Dakota, and North Dakota. Residents of these States are particularly urged to do all possible to support the Federal law which prohibits shooting or otherwise molesting these birds. A safe passage through these States is essential as the giant cranes move northward in small groups to reproduce their kind. Only by increasing their numbers can these valiant creatures win a decisive victory in the fight for survival of their species.

Four feet in height, with a wingspread of seven feet, the average whooping crane is not difficult to identify. In flight, its long neck and spindly legs are completely outstretched. Its white body, black wingtips, and resounding "whoop" distinguish it from other birds.

Numbering 21 a year ago, the "whoopers" made a gain of 3 birds between leaving Texas last spring and returning last fall. Censuses are taken each winter at the Aransas National Wildlife Refuge, on Texas' Gulf Coast, where the cranes spend the season under Fish and Wildlife Service protection.

A concerted plea on behalf of the whoopers last fall by the Fish and Wildlife Service, the National Audubon Society, and other conservation agencies brought an excellent response. As the cranes completed their annual Canada-to-Texas flight, no losses by gunfire were reported and the gain of 3 birds was recorded in a special census.

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