



DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR INFORMATION SERVICE

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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CAPTIVE WHOOPING CRANES IN NEW ORLEANS ZOO FAIL TO PRODUCE YOUNG IN 1959

Although Josephine and Crip--the two captive whooping cranes that make their home in the New Orleans zoo--laid seven eggs during the 1959 mating season, no living birds were hatched, the Department of the Interior announced today.

The first egg was laid on January 30 and the last on May 8, according to a report received from George Douglass, Superintendent of the zoo. In the report Mr. Douglass stated that Mr. George Scott, prominent aviculturist and formerly with the New York Zoological Society, who played an important part in the successful rearing of two captive birds in 1957, has been in New Orleans throughout the 1959 mating season as a guest of Mr. Douglass.

Officials of the Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife, Fish and Wildlife Service, which has jurisdiction over whooping cranes, captive or free, expressed keen disappointment over this year's unsuccessful hatching efforts.

Josephine and Crip are the parents of six whoopers hatched in captivity. Of these, only three are still living. "George" and "Georgette" were hatched in 1957 and according to the latest report from the New Orleans zoo, "are in healthy plumage and show a good disposition". The young bird born in 1958 is also in excellent condition. "Its growth has been very good and it shows great promise of developing into a healthy adult."

Josephine and Crip were transferred to the Audubon Park zoo in New Orleans in December 1951 from the Aransas National Wildlife Refuge in Texas in order to give better protection to the birds while nesting. No nesting efforts were made there until 1955 when two eggs were laid but were accidentally crushed by the birds.

In 1956 Josephine again laid two eggs, both of which were successfully hatched but in a matter of three or four days one bird disappeared, the victim of a predator. The second bird lived about 45 days and then died of a fungus disease. It is now mounted in the collections of the Museum of Zoology of Louisiana State University at Baton Rouge.

In 1957 "George" and "Georgette" were hatched in a smaller inclosure roofed over with wire netting, the rodent population well under control, and with Mr. Scott on the job to see that the young birds had the best that the science of aviculture could provide.

In the fall and winter of 1958-59, there were 32 whooping cranes wintering on the Aransas Refuge--23 adults and nine young. Counting the six whoopers in captivity, the total then known to exist in the world was 38--the highest number since record keeping began 21 years ago.

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