

# DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE  
Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife

news release

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## ANOTHER WHOOPING CRANE ARRIVES IN TEXAS; NEW RECORD IS 56

The Interior Department's Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife, which announced a new record total of wild whooping cranes in November, today reported that a record-late arrival at the Aransas National Wildlife Refuge in Texas has increased the population to a new high of 56.

The additional whooper was first counted tentatively during an aerial survey on December 31, but Uncle Sam's bird census takers could not confirm the figure for three more weeks because of poor flying conditions.

The tardy whooper--latest arrival ever recorded at the Aransas wintering grounds--may have been the same bird that caused temporary suspension of South Dakota's crane hunting season. A lone adult whooper was spotted in that State on November 7, a date much later than would be expected.

The latest previous arrivals at Aransas came on December 21, 1941. A lone adult arrived as late as December 14 in 1968. Whooping cranes, North America's tallest bird, come to Aransas Refuge after spending the summer on Canadian nesting grounds near the Arctic Circle.

By giving the gigantic birds protection on Federal land along the Texas gulf coast, Uncle Sam hopes that their numbers will increase in the wild so that the species will not be so perilously close to extinction.

Of the Bureau's 328 national wildlife refuges, located in all but four States, 82 of them protect species which are considered to be threatened by extinction. In all, these refuges provide sanctuary for 25 endangered species.

Wild whoopers numbered just 15 in 1941, exceeded 30 in 1947, and topped 40 in 1964. The present total includes 48 adult and 8 young birds.

Although Bureau biologists are jubilant with the new record at Aransas, they were disappointed early in January by the deaths of two of the world's 23 captive cranes at the Patuxent Wildlife Research Center near Laurel, Maryland.

The mortalities involved cranes which resulted from egg pickups in the Canadian wilds during the past three years. A six-month-old whooper died when a sharp shingle nail pierced its gizzard, causing infection and trauma. Patuxent Center has made "every effort" to prevent accidents of this type, including magnetic pickup of metal objects dropped during construction of pens.

The other crane, aged 2½ years, had been in poor condition because of a deformed leg resulting from a dietary imbalance when the whooper was six weeks old.