UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

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FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE — Flanagan - Interior 5634

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NUMBER OF WHOOPING CRANES AT FEDERAL WILDLIFE REFUGE IN TEXAS ESTABLISHES NEW RECORD OF THIRTY-EIGHT

A record number of 38 whooping cranes is wintering at the Aransas National wildlife Refuge on the Texas coast, the Department of the Interior said today. this is two more than had been reported on previous counts this season and two more than the record of 36 set in 1961.

Refuge officials do not know when the two additional cranes, both adults, arrived at Aransas. They report that the birds have been exceptionally restless this season and that counting has been difficult because the cranes have moved from place to place so often. Shortly before Christmas, an aerial survey indicated 38 cranes, but a recheck disclosed only 36. At other times, only 34 could be located. The flock now consists of 33 adults and 5 young.

In addition to the 38 wild whoopers, there are 7 in captivity--6 in the New Orleans zoo in Louisiana and 1 in San Antonio, Tex. When the official record-keeping began in 1938, there were only 14 whoopers in the wild and extinction of the species was feared.

Fish and Wildlife Service officials of the Department of the Interior said the whooping cranes' fight for survival has captured the imagination of the American people. One of the outstanding examples of cooperation stemming from efforts to preserve the cranes occurred a few years ago in Nebraska when hundreds of goose hunters refused to shoot at a large flock of migrating geese because two whooping cranes were part of the flight.

Such cooperation among hunters and others concerned with preserving wildlife should assure salvation for this Nation's whooping crane population, the Fish and wildlife Service said.

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