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NORMAL WHOOPING CRANE MIGRATION PERIOD ENDS WITH 32 BIRDS ON WINTERING AREA IN TEXAS

The normal fall migration period for the whooping crane has passed and only 32 of the rare birds are on the wintering grounds on the Aransas National Wildlife Refuge and nearby sections of the Texas coast, the Department of the Interior reported today. This is six less than the number which started north in the spring of 1962.

No young whoopers have been seen on the wintering grounds nor were any sighted during the summer of 1962 on the nesting grounds near Great Slave Lake in Canada. This is the first year since the fall migration of 1954 and the second time since record keeping began in 1938 that no young whoopers have been reported.

The fall migration period usually extends over a period of about two months. The first whoopers to arrive at Aransas Refuge last fall were seen on a survey October 19, 1962. There was a gradual build-up of the flock until December 7, when 32 birds were observed. Subsequent counts have failed to disclose any additional whoopers.

Only once since the record-keeping began has there been any additions to the numbers noted in the mid-December survey. Late in January 1962 a survey disclosed 38 whoopers, two more than had been observed previously. Refuge personnel do not know whether the two were late arrivals or a pair which had somehow been missed during repeated aerial and ground counts.

Besides the 32 wild whoopers at Aransas there are seven birds in captivity. Six of these are in the zoo at New Orleans and one at San Antonio, Texas.

In the fall of 1938 there were 10 adults and four young at the refuge. The numbers have fluctuated considerably over the years jumping to 26 in 1940-1941 and then back to 15 the next autumn. A peak of 34 was reached in 1949-1950 and a drop to 21 three years later. For the past five years the count has remained between 32 and 38. The highest number of young-of-the-year was in 1958-1959 with nine. The following year there were only two.

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