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GEORGETTE, THE WHOOPING CRANE, BECOMES GEORGE II

Georgette, one of the captive young whooping cranes at Audubon Park Zoo in New Orleans, La., has been renamed George II.

The change of names closely follows the recent discovery by a Department of the Interior scientist of a new technique for distinguishing young male cranes from young females.

The interest of science in the matter was more than academic. The Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife and the New Orleans Zoo are cooperating in an attempt to increase the size of the captive whooper population.

Until the discovery there wasn't much to go on, except that the female cranes might eventually lay eggs and the males usually were more alert and showed a protective attitude toward the females.

Aviculturists who raise and care for the birds needed more knowledge than that. They knew that selective breeding produces superior offspring, and they wanted to do the selecting before the nests were made.

Now everyone is sure. There are four male whoopers and three females at the zoo. The males are Crip and his three sons, Pepper, George I, and George II. The females are Crip's mate, Josephine; their daughter, Pewee; and Rosie. Rosie was found injured in Texas in 1956. She was transferred from the San Antonio Zoo to New Orleans in hopes that she would become a mother.

Some of the cranes, including Rosie, have started performing the characteristic whooping crane dance that is a prelude to nesting. In addition to the seven captive cranes at New Orleans, a young injured whooper, Canus, is being treated by veterinarians in Colorado. There are 42 whoopers--a record--wintering in the wild at the Aransas National Wildlife Refuge in Texas.

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