



# United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE  
2604 ST. PATRICK, SUITE 7  
GRAND ISLAND, NEBRASKA 68803

JAN 23 1989  
DES LACS HQ

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Project Leader	
Asst. Proj. Leader	
Des Lacs Refuge	
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January 13, 1989

## MEMORANDUM

TO: AWE, Region 6 MAIL STOP 60120

FROM: Nebraska State Supervisor  
Nebraska State Office

SUBJECT: Cooperative Whooping Crane Tracking Project

Attached is a resume of whooping crane sightings reported to our office during the 1988 fall migration. Thank you for your cooperation in monitoring the migration of the whooping crane.

Attachment

WGJ:jg

cc: OES, Washington, D.C.  
FWE, Salt Lake City, UT  
FWE, Helena, MT  
James Lewis, Whooping Crane Coordinator, Albuquerque, NM  
Law Enforcement District #2, Albuquerque, NM  
Law Enforcement District #6, Denver, CO  
Cleveland Vaughn, SRA, Omaha, NE (69460)  
John Cooper, SRA, Pierre, SD (69450)  
David Kraft, SRA, Bismarck, ND (69430)  
Cornelis Vendel, SRA, Lenexa, KS  
Director, Patuxent Wildlife Research Center, Laurel, MD  
Rod Drewien, Soda Springs, ID  
Central Flyway Representative, Golden, CO  
Refuge Manager, Aransas NWR, Austwell, TX  
Refuge Manager, Medicine Lake NWR, Medicine Lake, MT (61530)  
Refuge Manager, Salt Plains NWR, Jet, OK  
Bird Banding Laboratory, Laurel, MD  
Bureau of Reclamation, Bismarck, ND  
Manager, Field Stations (35), SD, ND, KS, NE  
FWS/FWE, Tulsa, OK

## COOPERATIVE WHOOPING CRANE TRACKING PROJECT

(September - December 1988)

Whooping crane spring and fall migrations are monitored each year. Sighting reports are forwarded to the Fish and Wildlife Enhancement Office of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Grand Island, Nebraska, by private individuals, the Audubon Society, other private organizations, State and Federal conservation agencies, and the Canadian Wildlife Service and their cooperators in Saskatchewan and adjacent provinces. Cooperation throughout the whooping crane flyway continues to be excellent. Special thanks go out to each participant.

Identification of color-marked birds is providing new information during each migration. Since 1977, 132 juvenile whooping cranes have been color-marked on the breeding grounds; of these, 80 have been accounted for this winter. In 1988, 17 young were color-marked and 16 arrived at Aransas National Wildlife Refuge (Aransas). We cannot over-emphasize the importance of observers looking closely for the colored leg bands.

Whooping crane arrivals at Aransas, a sighting report summary, and a map of degree-block sighting locations are included with this narrative summary. Repeat sightings of the same birds at the same location during a stopover period are not included when known to be repeats. Only sightings classified as confirmed, based on whooping crane recovery plan criteria, are shown in the report. Probable and unconfirmed sightings are not shown. All U.S. reports received are on record in the Grand Island Fish and Wildlife Enhancement Office and are available upon request.

Arrivals at Aransas occurred from October 27 through December 5. A total of 134 (115 adults/subadults and 19 young) whooping cranes had arrived at Aransas by December 5, 1988. The two subadults which spent the summer at Aransas are not figured in the arrival total. Since their arrival at Aransas, one adult bird and one chick from family groups have disappeared, and are presumed dead. An additional four-year-old female, of a family group, was shot near Aransas by a waterfowl hunter on January 3, 1989. Three subadults were last observed at Aransas in November 1988 and are considered missing. The number of birds at Aransas, as of January 3, 1989, was estimated to be 130. A subadult, believed to be 1986 chick nicknamed "Oklahoma", was confirmed in late December in southwestern Oklahoma with sandhill cranes. This crane brings the number of Aransas/Wood Buffalo Flock birds surviving to between 131 and 134, depending on the fate of the three missing subadults. One-hundred twenty-nine whoopers departed for the breeding grounds last spring (two additional birds remained at Aransas all summer) and 20 young fledged during the summer. Under optimum conditions, a total of 149 whoopers were expected to arrive at Aransas this fall. As of January 3, 1989, one breeding pair and ten color-banded subadults had not arrived at Aransas.

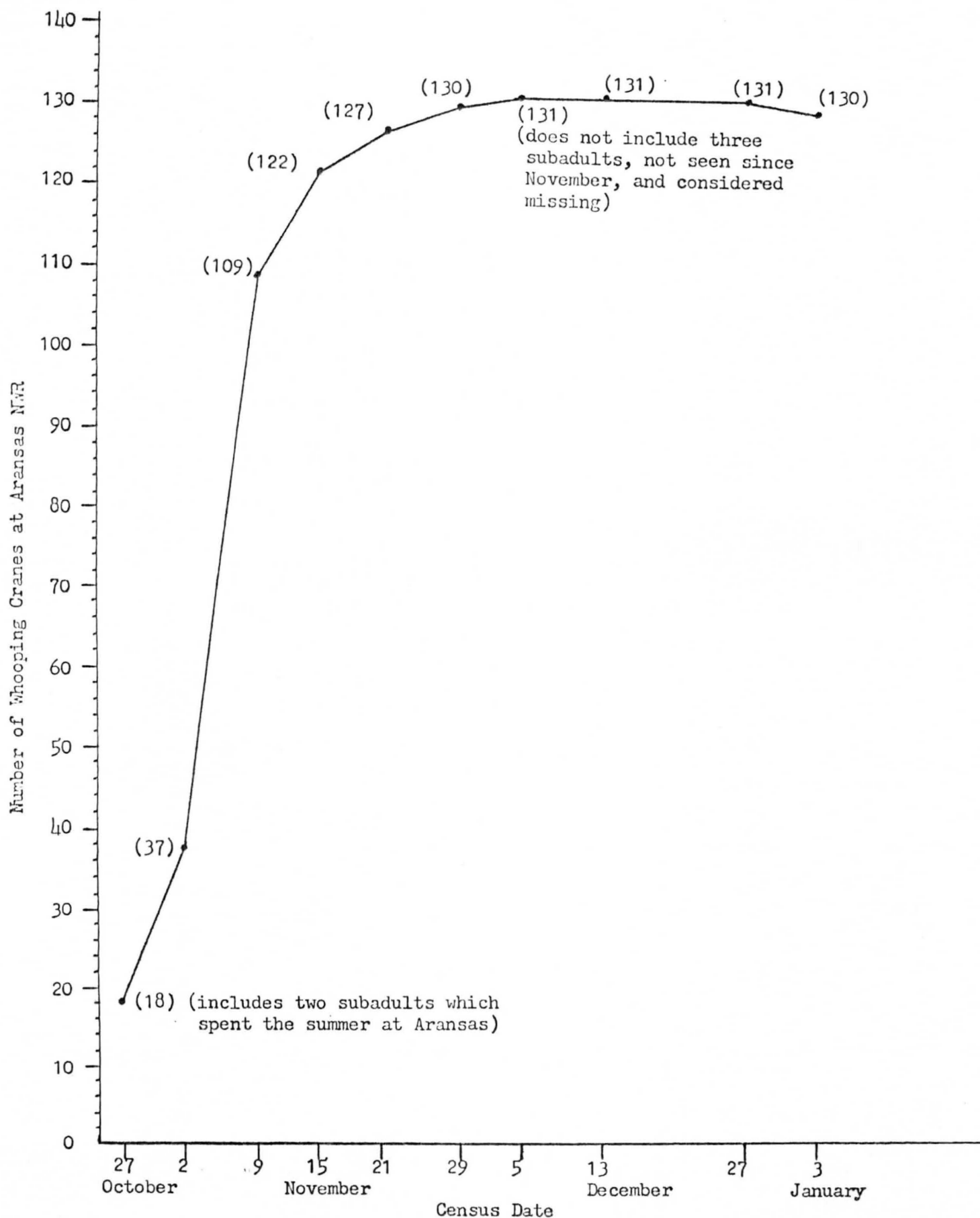
The first dates recorded for confirmed observations of migrant whooping cranes were August 3 in Canada and October 4 in the United States. The

last sighting report of migrant whoopers was on December 29. Sightings were reported from Saskatchewan, Canada (16); North Dakota (2); South Dakota (1); Nebraska (5); Kansas (3); Oklahoma (8); and Texas (2). A total of 37 confirmed sightings were recorded.

Eighty percent of the United States sightings were reported during the period October 18 to November 5, 1988. An unusual number, 33 and 44 percent of the sightings in the United States and Canada, respectively, were of single birds. A sighting of one bird along the south shore of Lake Manitoba, Manitoba, Canada, was confirmed July 16-29, 1988, and is not included as a migrational sighting. This was the first confirmed sighting in Manitoba since the spring of 1979.

Thanks again to the many cooperators. Use-site evaluations were continued this spring; your continued assistance is essential to the success of the evaluations. Please contact Mr. Wally Jobman, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Office in Grand Island, Nebraska, if observation details are desired (2604 St. Patrick Avenue, Suite 7, Grand Island, Nebraska 68803; commercial telephone: 308/381-5571).

Addendum: The following sighting was reported during the spring 1988 migration in Alberta, Canada; May 28-June 10, 1988; three birds; 26 miles west of Hines Creek (5618, 11850; NW9, NW29-84-6-w6).



Chronological arrivals at Aransas NWR, Texas; fall 1988. Numbers do not include one bird wintering off the refuge.

FALL 1988 WHOOPING CRANE TRACKING PLOT REPORTS<sup>a</sup>  
(Confirmed Sightings Only)

Date <sup>b</sup>	TX	OK	KS	NE	SD	ND	Sask., CA
8-3							1-0
9-1							<u>1</u> -0
9-15							<u>1</u> -0
9-18							<u>1</u> -0
9-27							1-0
9-28							2- <u>1</u> ; <u>1</u> -0; 2-0
9-29							2-0
10-4					<u>1</u> -0		<u>1</u> -0
10-12						1-0	
10-13							6-1
10-14		<u>2</u> -0					<u>4</u> -0
10-15							<u>2</u> -0
10-17							2- <u>1</u> ; <u>1</u> -0
10-18		1-0					
10-19				<u>1</u> -0			<u>4</u> - <u>1</u>
10-24		8-0		<u>4</u> -0			3-0
10-26			<u>8</u> - <u>1</u>	<u>2</u> -0		2- <u>1</u>	
10-28		2-0	<u>2</u> -0				
10-29				2- <u>1</u>			
10-30		<u>2</u> -0					
11-1		<u>2</u> -0	4-1				
11-2				2-0			
11-3	3- <u>1</u>						
11-5	1-0						
12-18		1-0					
12-29		<u>1</u> -0					

TOTAL REPORTED SIGHTINGS

2      8      3      5      1      2      16

GRAND TOTAL OBSERVATIONS = 37

a--Each report represented by number of whooping cranes reported: adult-young, young reported color-marked are underlined once; birds color-marked during period 1977-1987 are shown as adults and underlined twice.

b--First date of sighting used when bird(s) at location several days.

[illegible]

## LEGEND

2/1 = Sightings reported as adults/young.

Note: Only confirmed sightings are included.