



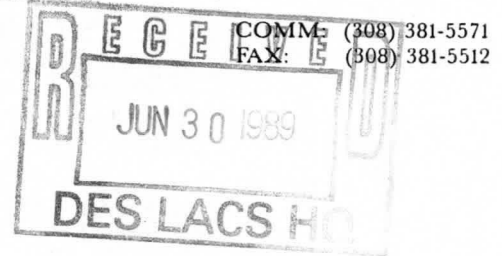
United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
203 WEST SECOND STREET
FEDERAL BUILDING, SECOND FLOOR
GRAND ISLAND, NEBRASKA 68801



March 7-1949	
Project Leader	
Asst. Proj. Leader	
Des. Lacs Refuge	
Lost Wood Refuge	
Crosby District	
Lostwood District	
Refuge Asst.	
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June 28, 1989



MEMORANDUM

TO: AWE, Region 6 MAIL STOP 60120

FROM: *Acting* Nebraska State Supervisor
Nebraska State Office

Kim Hansen

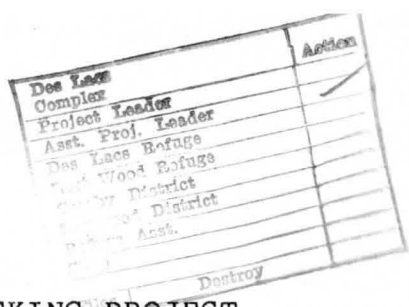
SUBJECT: Cooperative Whooping Crane Tracking Project

Attached is a resume of whooping crane sightings reported to our office during the 1989 spring migration. Thank you for your cooperation in monitoring the migration of the whooping crane.

Attachment

WGJ : nn

cc: EHC, Washington, D.C.
FWE, Salt Lake City, UT
FWE, Helena, MT
FWE, Cheyenne, WY
FWE, Bismarck, ND
FWE, Pierre, SD
FWE, Billings, MT
FWE, Manhattan, KS
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
FWS/FWE, Tulsa, OK
RW Field Offices (19), ND, SD, NE, KS



COOPERATIVE WHOOPING CRANE TRACKING PROJECT

(March-June 1989)

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 82 were accounted for last winter. In 1988, 17 young were color-marked and 16 arrived at Aransas National Wildlife Refuge (Aransas). Seventy-eight color-marked birds began the 1989 spring migration and 35 (45 percent) of these birds were observed during migration. We cannot over-emphasize the importance of observers looking closely for the colored leg bands.

Whooping crane departures from 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.

A total of 137 whooping cranes (118 adults/subadults and 19 young) were reported at Aransas last winter. A 1986 subadult wintered near Ganado, Texas, bringing the number of Aransas/Wood Buffalo Flock birds completing the fall 1988 migration to 138. During the 1988-1989 winter, the loss of three adults and two chicks, caused the total population to drop to 133 cranes (116 adults/subadults and 17 young). On April 21, 1989, a subadult female was found at Aransas in a weakened condition, captured, treated, and sent to the San Antonio Zoo on April 23. A bacterial infection is suspected. Therefore, 132 cranes were expected to begin the spring migration, an increase of one over the 131 present in spring, 1988. At the time of this writing, the 1986 subadult male, which spent last summer at Aransas, was still at Aransas.

A majority of the birds departed Aransas during two periods of time. Approximately 55 birds left between mid-March and April 8, and 62 birds departed between April 15 and 22. Only two cranes migrated between April 8 and 15, a period predominated by northeast winds, overcast, and drizzle over the Texas Coast. On April 15, the migration was approximately one week behind schedule. Four out of 17 juveniles remained behind when their parent(s) started the migration. The subadult wintering near Ganado departed about March 10 and was confirmed on the Platte River in central Nebraska on March 24.

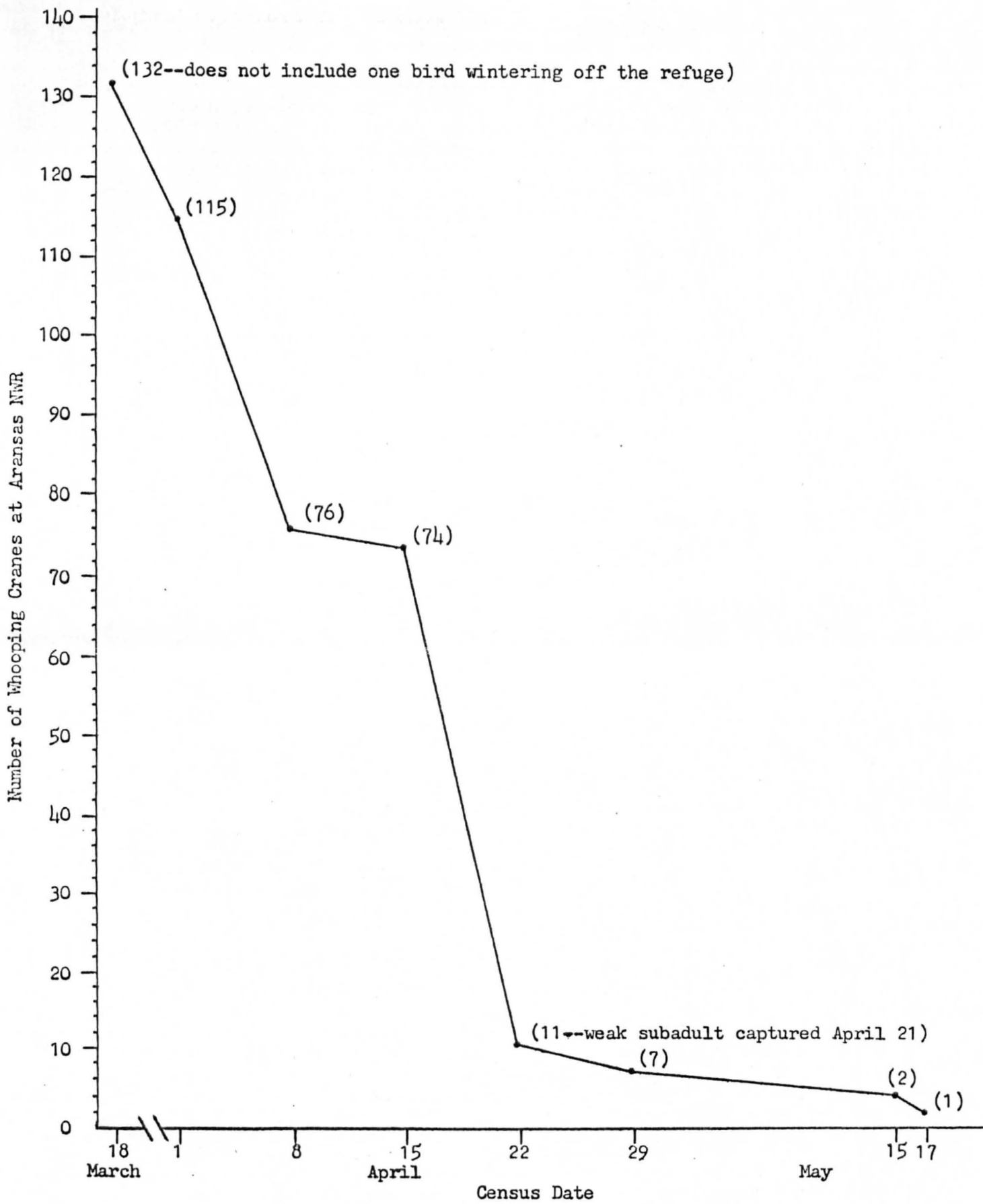
Sixty-one percent (14) of the spring sightings, confirmed in the United States, were reported between April 5 and 16. The remainder (9) were reported between April 20 and June 11. Abnormally hot, dry weather with predominately south winds during the period April 19 to 27, created excellent migrating conditions, and may account for the lower number of sightings reported after April 16 in the United States. Nebraska was a popular stopover point this spring, with 12 of the 23 confirmed United States sightings being reported in the State. The first migrating cranes were confirmed in Canada on April 20, and 75 percent of the Canadian sightings were reported between April 22 and 26. Through the comparison of departure dates of color-banded birds from Aransas, and sighting dates in Canada, it appears that the later departing birds caught up with the earlier departing birds in Saskatchewan. At last report, 30 nests had been located on the breeding grounds.

The first dates recorded for confirmed observations of migrant whooping cranes were March 24 in the United States and April 20 in Canada. The last sighting report was on June 11. Sightings were reported from Oklahoma (1); Kansas (3); Nebraska (12); South Dakota (2); North Dakota (5); and Saskatchewan, Canada (20). The combined total of 43 sightings in Canada and the United States is the most recorded for a spring migration since the tracking project began in 1975.

Thanks again to the many cooperators. Use-site evaluations were continued this spring; your continued assistance is essential to the evaluations. Please contact Mr. Wally Jobman, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Office in Grand Island, Nebraska, if observation details are desired (203 West Second Street, Federal Building, Second Floor, Grand Island, Nebraska 68801; commercial telephone: 308/381-5571).

Addendum -- The following sighting was not reported in the fall 1988 Tracking Report: January 24-March 9, 1989; one bird (WbW-o); wintered 10 miles north of Ganado, Texas.

TRACKING.WGJ



Chronological departures from Aransas NWR, Texas; spring 1989.

SPRING 1989 WHOOPING CRANE TRACKING PLOT REPORTS^a
(Confirmed Sightings Only)

Date ^b	OK	KS	NE	SD	ND	Sask., CA
3-24			<u>1-0</u>			
4-4		4-0				
4-5			<u>2-0</u>			
4-6		3-0	<u>4-0</u>			
4-8	4-0		<u>2-1</u>			
4-9			<u>2-0</u>			
4-11			4-0			
4-13		<u>6-1</u>				
4-14				<u>2-0</u>		
4-15				<u>3-0</u>		
4-16			<u>1-0</u> ; 4-0		<u>2-1</u>	
4-20					1-0	2-0
4-21						1-0; 2-0
4-22						2-1; 3-0
4-23						<u>3-0</u> ; 2-0; <u>2-1</u>
4-24			2-0		<u>5-1</u>	<u>2-0</u> ; 2-0; 2-0
4-25						<u>2-0</u> ; 2-0; 3-0
4-26						<u>2-1</u>
4-27			5-0			
4-29			<u>4-0</u>			
5-3						<u>5-0</u>
5-4					<u>1-0</u>	
5-8						<u>0-1</u>
5-17						<u>1-2</u>
5-23			<u>0-1</u>			
5-28						<u>1-1</u>
6-5						<u>1-1</u>
6-11					<u>0-1</u>	
TOTAL REPORTED SIGHTINGS						
	1	3	12	2	5	20

GRAND TOTAL OBSERVATIONS=43

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.

LEGEND

2/1 - Sightings reported as adults/young.

Note: Only confirmed sightings are included.

ARIZONA NWR

2/1 = Sightings reported as adults/young.

Note: Only confirmed sightings are included.