

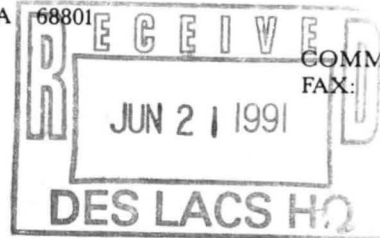


# United States Department of the Interior

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



June 18, 1991



COMM: (308) 381-5571  
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## MEMORANDUM

To: AWE, Region 6 MAIL STOP 60153  
(Attention: Larry Shanks)

From: *for* Field Supervisor *Wallace D. Jobman*  
Nebraska-Kansas Field Office

Subject: Cooperative Whooping Crane Tracking Project

Enclosed is a resume of whooping crane sightings reported to our office during the 1991 spring migration. Thank you for your cooperation in monitoring the migration of the whooping crane.

Please contact Mr. Wally Jobman of our staff if additional information is needed.

## Enclosures

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  
FWE, Tulsa, OK  
FWS, Arlington, TX  
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, Grand Island, NE  
Bureau of Reclamation, Bismarck, ND  
RW Field Offices (19), SD, ND, KS, NE

**COOPERATIVE WHOOPING CRANE TRACKING PROJECT**  
**(April - June 1991)**

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. 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 each migration. Since 1977, 132 juvenile whooping cranes have been color-marked on the breeding grounds; of these 66 were accounted for during the winter of 1990-91. Eleven cranes, three of which were color-marked, were classified as being either lost or missing during the winter, leaving 63 color-marked cranes to begin the spring migration. We cannot over-emphasize the importance of observers looking closely for the colored leg bands.

Whooping crane departures from Aransas National Wildlife Refuge (Aransas) (Fig. 1), a sighting report summary (Table 1), and a map of degree-block sighting locations (Fig. 2) 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 146 (133 adults/subadults and 13 young) whooping cranes were reported at Aransas during the winter of 1990-91. Nine adult and subadult birds disappeared between the spring 1990 departure and fall arrival at Aransas. During the winter, the loss of three adult, three subadult, and five juvenile cranes caused the total population to drop to 135 (127 adults/subadults and 8 young). The 135 cranes beginning the spring migration was a decrease of seven birds from the 142 present in spring, 1990. This was the first year since 1981 that the population had declined. Ninety percent of the birds (121) departed during the three-week period March 30-April 21 (Fig. 1). Overcast skies and poor visibility at Aransas during early April may have accounted for the later than usual departure of birds from Aransas. One white-plumaged whooping crane was shot and killed on April 15, 1991, near Bend, Texas. The migration progressed quickly, with 14 of the 17 confirmed sightings in the United States being reported between April 14 and 23 (Table 1). At last report one color-banded 1988 subadult remained at Aransas, and is expected to spend the summer. As of early-June 1991, 31 nests had been located on the breeding grounds.

The first dates recorded for confirmed observations of migrating whooping cranes were April 11 in Canada and April 1 in the United States (Table 1). Sightings were reported from Alberta, Canada (1); Saskatchewan, Canada (12); Texas (2); Oklahoma (1); Kansas (6); Nebraska (6); and South Dakota (2).

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).



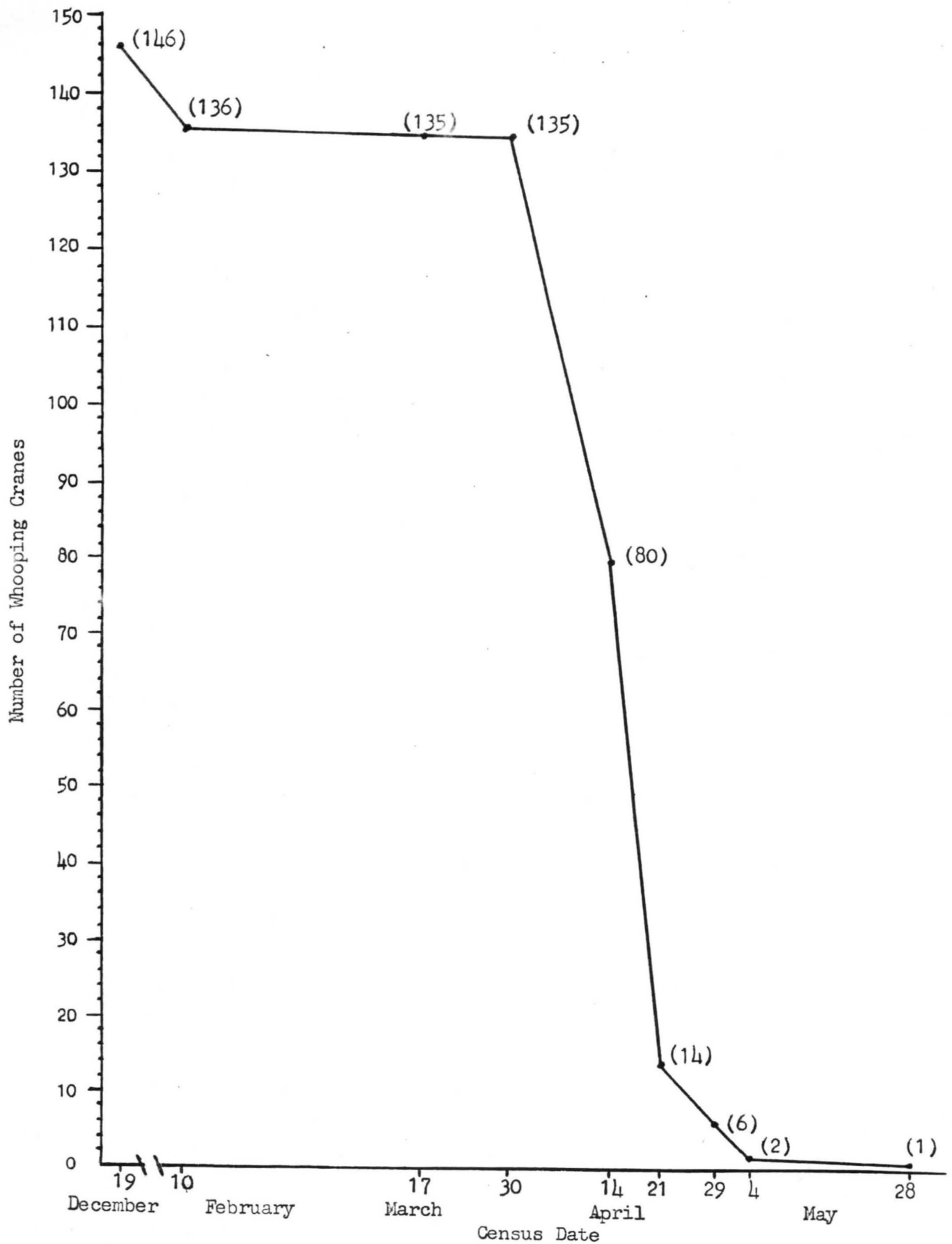


Fig. 1. Chronological departure of whooping cranes from Aransas NWR, Texas; Spring 1991.

Table 1. Date, State or Province of occurrence, and number of birds observed in confirmed whooping crane sightings reported during the spring 1991 migration.<sup>a</sup>

Date <sup>b</sup>	TX	OK	KS	NE	SD	Sask., CA <sup>c</sup>
4-1	2-0					
4-5		2-0				
4-6					4-0	
4-11						2-0
4-12						2-0
4-13						2-0
4-14				<u>3</u> -0	<u>3</u> -0	<u>2</u> -0
4-15	5-0					
4-17			3-0			
4-18			6-1; <u>6</u> -0			
4-19			2-0			
4-20			<u>3</u> -0			
4-21				3-0; <u>4</u> -0		
4-22				2-0;2-1		
4-23			2-0	3-0		
4-26						4-0;4-0
4-29						1-0;2-1
5-1						1-0;1-0
5-2						<u>3</u> -0
5-3						7-0;4-0
TOTAL REPORTED SIGHTINGS						
	2	1	6	6	2	13

a Each report represented by number of whooping cranes reported; adult-young. Sightings in which color-banded birds were present are underlined.

b Month-day; first date of sighting used when bird(s) at location several days.

c One of the 4-26 sightings was in Alberta, CA.

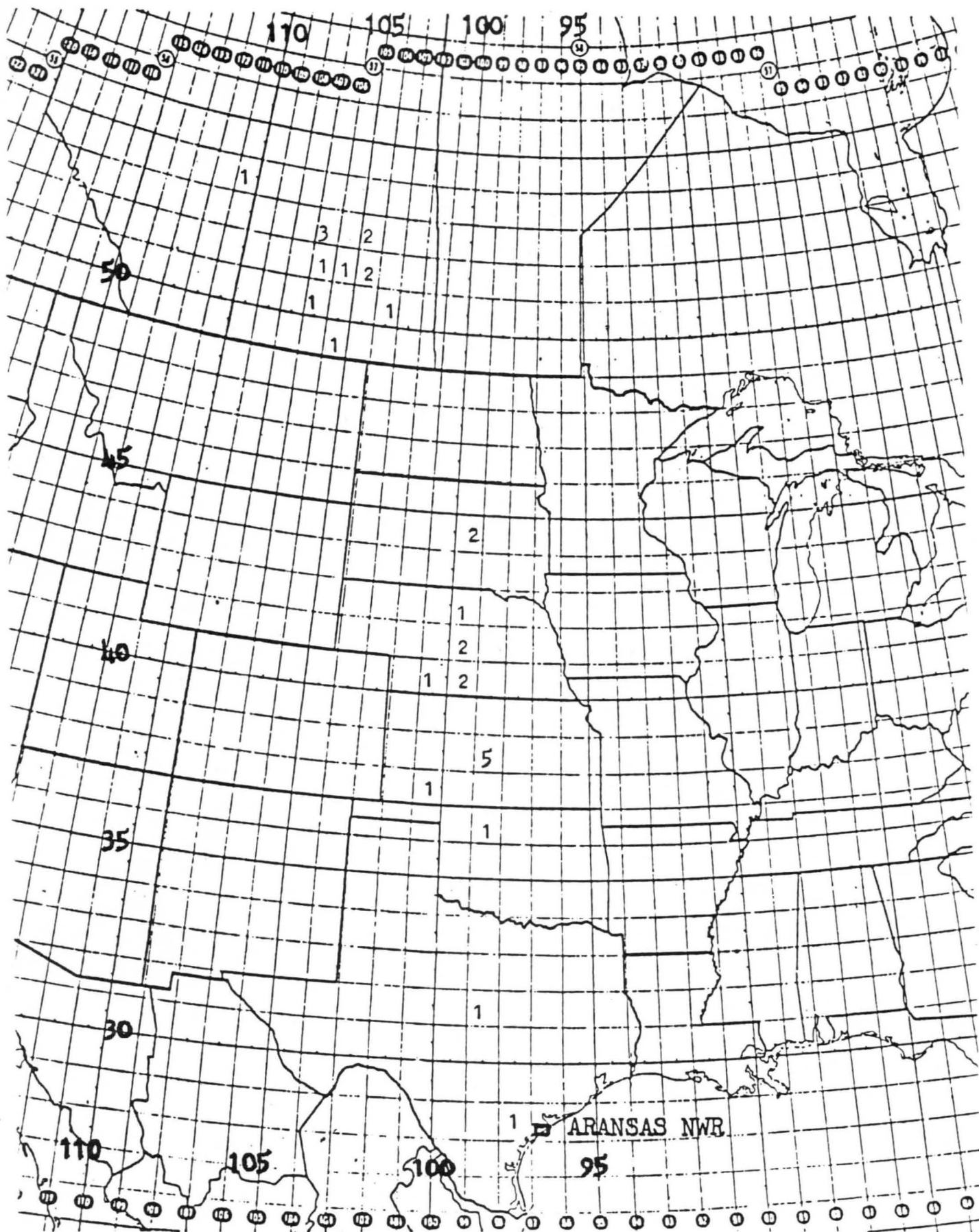


Fig. 2. Number of confirmed whooping crane sightings, reported in each degree-block, during the spring 1991 migration.