



# United States Department of the Interior

## FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

Ecological Services  
Nebraska Field Office  
203 West Second Street  
Grand Island, Nebraska 68801

June 21, 1995

### MEMORANDUM

To: AES, R-6, MS 60120 (Attn: Larry Shanks)

From: Acting Nebraska Field Supervisor

*Steven Anschutz*

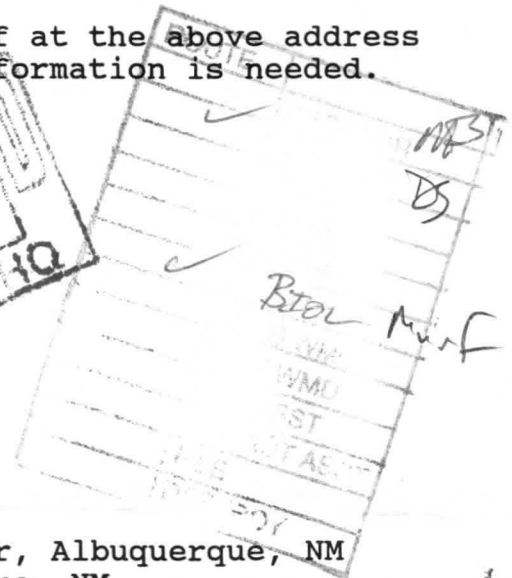
Subject: Cooperative Whooping Crane Tracking Project

The attached report documents whooping crane sightings reported to our office during the 1995 spring migration. We thank everyone involved for their cooperation in monitoring the whooping crane migration.

Please contact Mr. Wally Jobman of our staff at the above address or telephone (308)382-6468 if additional information is needed.

### Attachment

cc: EHC, Washington, D.C.  
ES, Salt Lake City, UT  
ES, Helena, MT  
ES, Cheyenne, WY  
ES, Bismarck, ND  
ES, Pierre, SD  
ES, Billings, MT  
ES, Manhattan, KS  
ES, Tulsa, OK  
ES, Arlington, TX  
James Lewis, Whooping Crane Coordinator, Albuquerque, NM  
Law Enforcement District #2, Albuquerque, NM  
Law Enforcement District #6, Denver, CO  
SA, Pierre, SD  
Manny Medina, SRA, Wichita, 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  
Refuge Manager, Salt Plains NWR, Jet, OK  
Bird Banding Laboratory, Laurel, MD  
Warren Hill, National Park Service, O'Neill, NE  
RW Field Offices (19), SD, ND, KS, NE



**COOPERATIVE WHOOPING CRANE TRACKING PROJECT**  
**(March 1995 - May 1995)**

Whooping crane spring and fall migrations are monitored each year. Sighting reports are forwarded to the Ecological Services Field Office of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Grand Island, Nebraska, by private individuals, the National 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.

Between 1977 and 1988, 132 juvenile whooping cranes were color-marked on the breeding grounds; of these 45 were accounted for during the winter of 1994-95. Three color-marked cranes were observed during the spring migration. All sightings of color-marked whooping cranes during migration are maintained at the Grand Island office. **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 whooping crane reports received from the United States are on record in the Grand Island Ecological Services Field Office and are available upon request.

A peak population of 132 (125 adult/subadult and 7 juvenile) whooping cranes was reported at Aransas during the winter of 1994-95. An additional juvenile crane wintered with sandhill cranes in west-central Oklahoma. No birds were reported as being lost during the winter. The 133 cranes beginning the spring migration represent a net decrease of 2 birds from the 135 present in spring, 1994. A census flight on March 23 revealed that all 132 whooping cranes were present (Fig. 1). By April 6, about 60 cranes had begun to migrate, and by April 18 only 10 cranes were present at Aransas. All but two cranes had migrated by May 15, and at last report, these two birds were still at Aransas.

The juvenile which wintered in Oklahoma migrated with sandhill cranes, and an interesting series of observations began on February 1, when this juvenile was observed at Optima National Wildlife Refuge (Optima) in the Oklahoma panhandle. It apparently migrated with sandhill cranes to North Platte, Nebraska, where it was confirmed on February 10. This was the first whooping crane ever confirmed in Nebraska during February. Cold and snowy weather conditions sent the bird back south to Optima, where it was observed on February 17. The bird then decided to visit southeastern Colorado, where it was seen

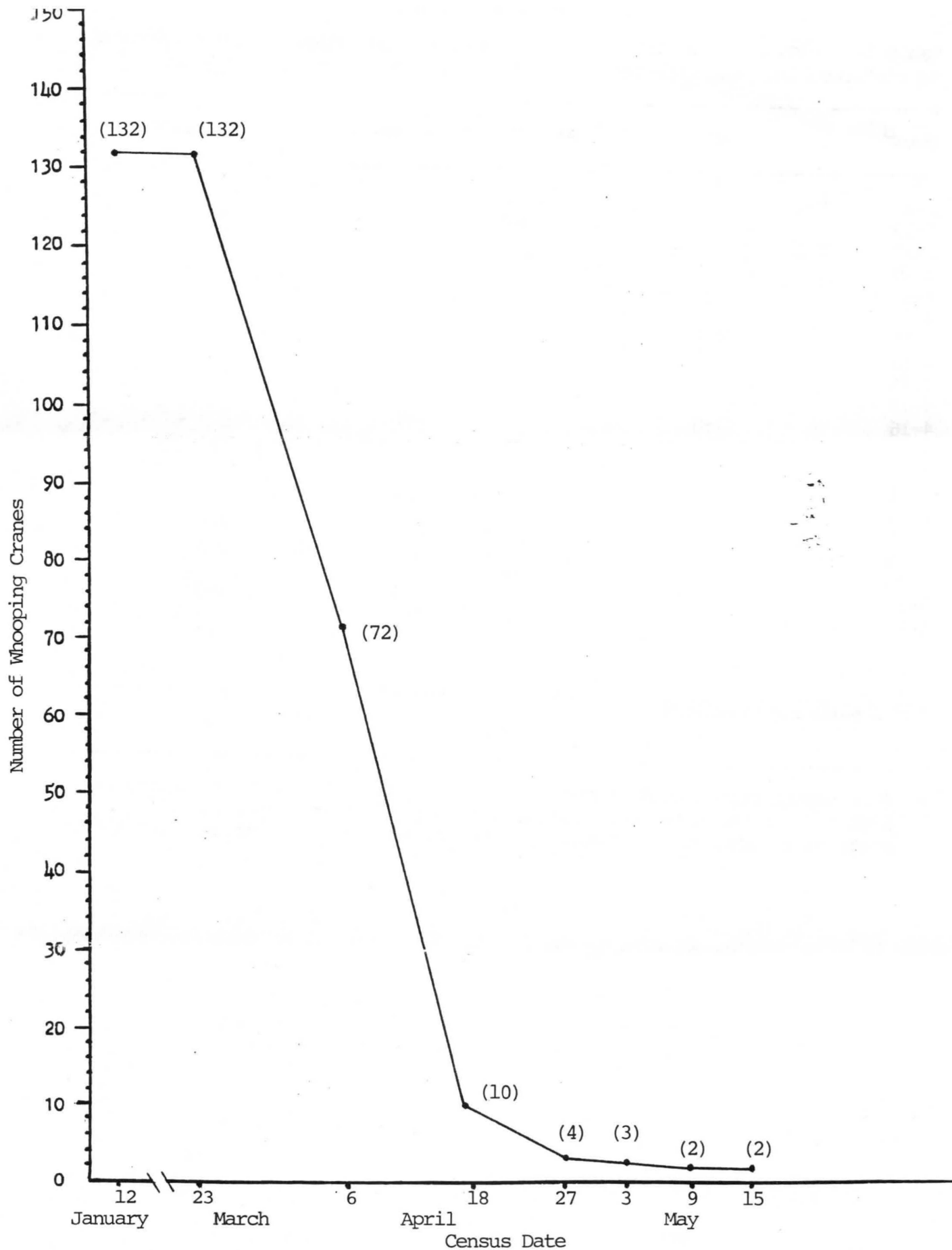


Fig. 1. Chronological departure of whooping cranes from Aransas NWR, Texas; spring 1995. Numbers do not include one juvenile which wintered in Oklahoma.

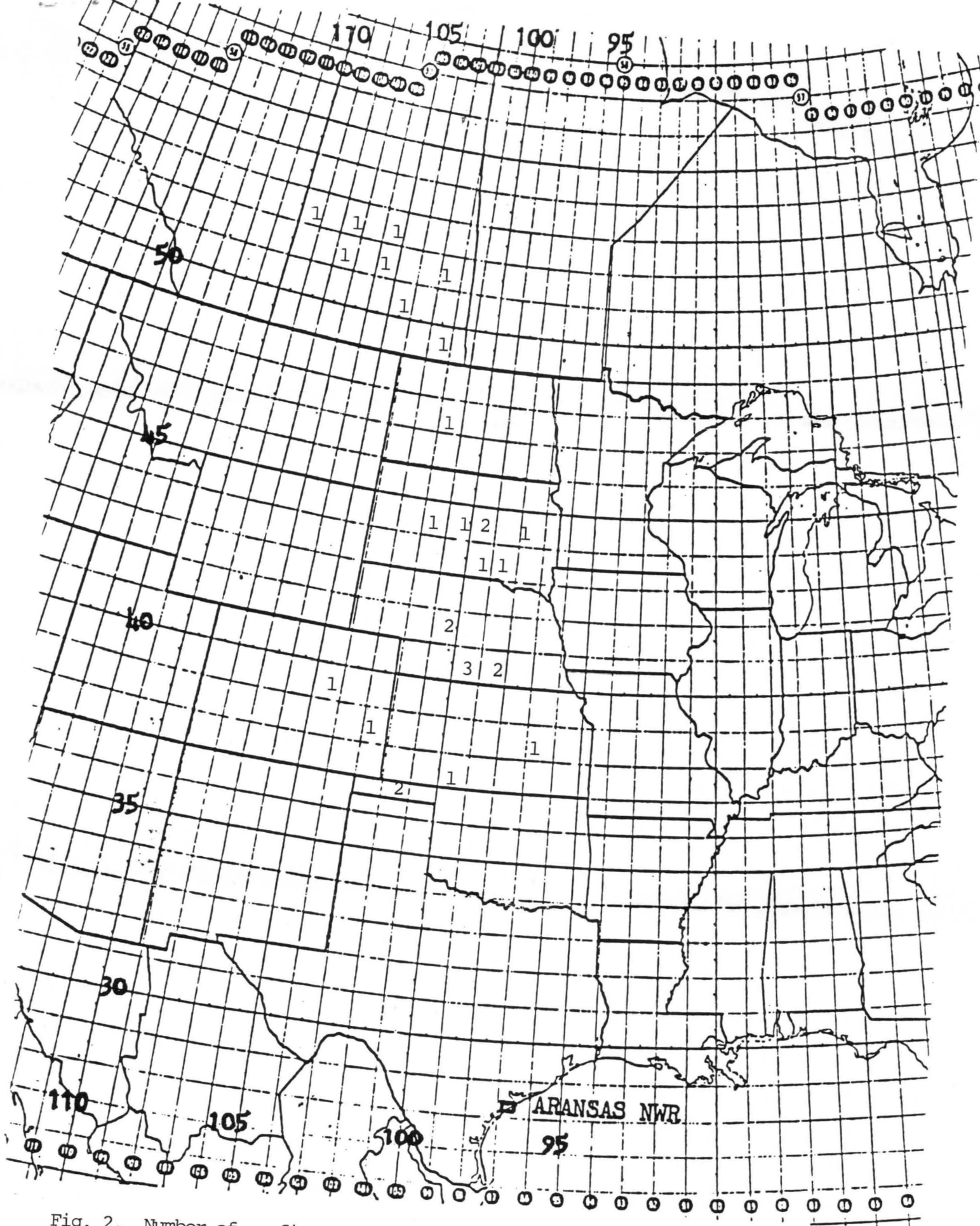


Fig. 2. Number of confirmed whooping crane sightings, reported in each degree-block during the spring 1995 migration.