



United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
FISH AND WILDLIFE ENHANCEMENT
NEBRASKA/KANSAS FIELD OFFICE
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July 13, 1990



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MEMORANDUM

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

From: Acting Assistant Field Supervisor *John G. Liddle*
Nebraska-Kansas Field Office

Subject: Cooperative Whooping Crane Tracking Project

	Action
Des Lacs Complex	
Protect Leader	
Asst. Proj. Leader	
Des Lacs Refuge	
Lost Wood Refuge	
Crosby District	
Lostwood District	
Refuge Asst.	
Shop	
Files	Destroy

Enclosed is a resume of whooping crane sightings reported to our office during the 1990 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 1990)

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 75 were accounted for during the winter of 1989-90. Five cranes, four of which were color-marked, were classified as being either lost or missing during the winter, leaving 71 color-marked cranes to begin the spring migration. No color-marking is planned during 1990. 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 (126 adults/subadults and 20 young) whooping cranes were reported at Aransas during the winter of 1989-90. During the winter, the loss of two adult and three subadult cranes caused the total population to drop to 141 birds (121 adults/subadults and 20 young). The 141 cranes beginning the spring migration was an increase of nine birds over the 132 present in spring, 1989. A majority of the birds (120) departed Aransas during the two-week period April 4-18 (Fig. 1). One of the 20 juveniles remained behind when its parents migrated, and it later migrated with subadults. The predominance of strong south winds and warm, dry weather across the Central Great Plains during the period April 18-26, created excellent migrating conditions and may account for the lower number of sightings reported in the United States. The fourteen confirmed sightings reported in the United States (Table 1) was considerably below the 1987-1989 spring sighting average of 23.

Our hopes that the 1986 female (WbW-o), which was reported at Aransas for the first time last fall, would become established with other whooping cranes were dashed in January when she left the refuge. In late January she was confirmed wintering with sandhill cranes near Telferner, Texas, about 20 miles from the Edna/Ganado locations where she spent the previous two winters with sandhill cranes. She was last seen at the Telferner site on February 13 and it is assumed that she migrated with sandhill cranes. She was not observed during migration and her status is currently unknown.

The first dates recorded for confirmed observations of migrating whooping cranes were April 14 in Canada and April 6 in the United States (Table 1). Sightings were reported from Alberta, Canada (1); Saskatchewan, Canada (17); Texas (1); Kansas (1); Nebraska (3); South Dakota (2); North Dakota (6); and Montana (1).

As of mid-June 1990, 32 nests had been located on the breeding grounds and 22 chicks were observed. One juvenile and one subadult were reported to be summering in Saskatchewan. The 1988 subadult which spent last summer in North Dakota was reported in North-Central North Dakota during June and early July 1990.

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.

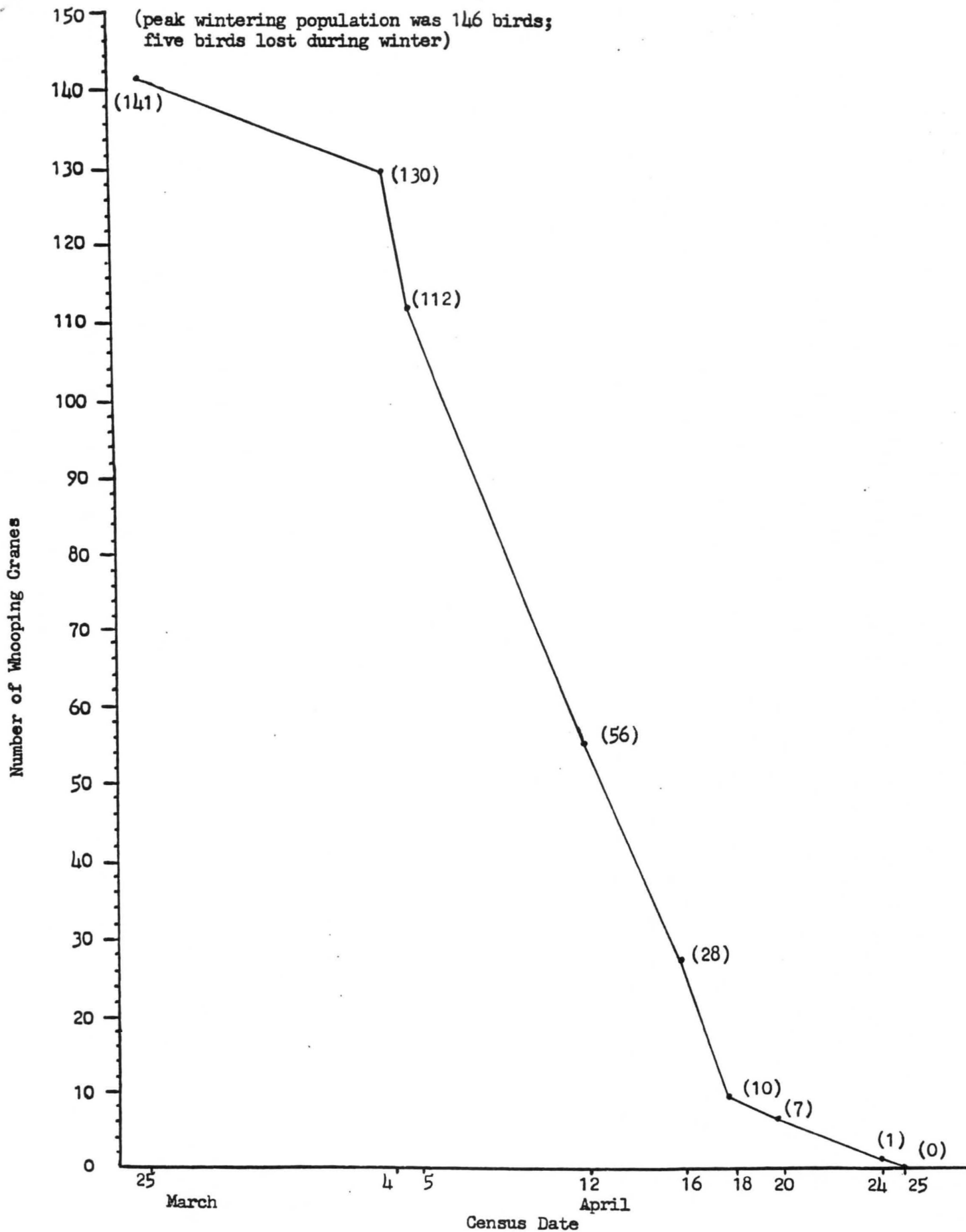


Fig. 1. Chronological departure of whooping cranes from Aransas NWR, Texas; spring 1990. Departures estimated from boat and ground observations; no aerial surveys were flown during this period. Includes one bird which wintered off the refuge.

Table 1. Date, State or Province of occurrence, and number of birds observed in confirmed whooping crane sightings reported during the spring 1990 migration.^a

Date ^b	TX	KS	NE	SD	ND	MT	Sask., CA ^c
4-6	<u>3</u> -0						
4-8		2-1					
4-9				2-1			
4-14			3-0				3-0
4-15			<u>4</u> -0				
4-16							<u>3</u> -0
4-17				4-2			
4-19							2-0; 2-0
4-22							3-0
4-23							<u>4</u> -0
4-24					<u>2</u> -0		2-1
4-25					<u>2</u> -0		<u>5</u> -1
4-26					<u>3</u> -0		
4-27							<u>5</u> -1; <u>4</u> -0; 4-0
4-29							<u>2</u> -1
4-30							2-1
5-1						<u>2</u> -0	
5-4							2-0
5-7					<u>1</u> -0		
5-9			1-0				
5-17							1-0
5-20					1-0		
5-24							1-0
5-25							0-1
5-30							1-0
6-15					<u>1</u> -0		
TOTAL REPORTED SIGHTINGS							
	1	1	3	2	6	1	18

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 The 4-29 sighting of three birds was in Alberta, Canada.

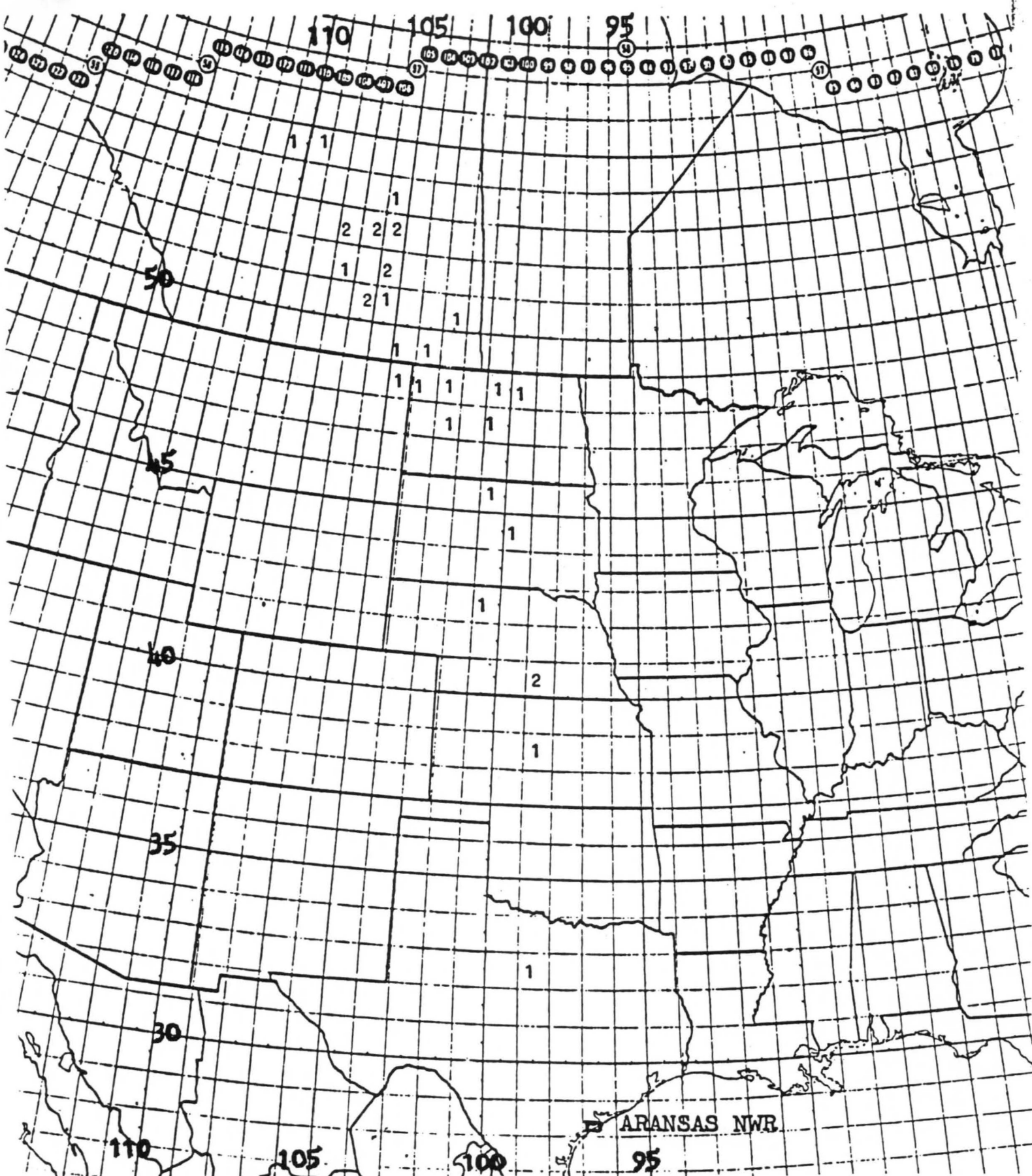


Fig. 2. Number of confirmed whooping crane sightings, reported in each degree-block, during the spring 1990 migration.