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## **BEHAVIOR COMPARISONS FOR WHOOPING CRANES RAISED BY COSTUMED CAREGIVERS AND TRAINED FOR AN ULTRALIGHT-LED MIGRATION**

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**Abstract:** The successful reintroduction program being run by the Whooping Crane Eastern Partnership using whooping cranes (*Grus americana*) trained to fly behind ultralight aircraft depends on a supply of these trained crane colts each year. The crane colts are hatched from eggs contributed by the various partners and trained to follow costume clad humans and ultralight aircraft at USGS Patuxent Wildlife Research Center, Laurel, Maryland, USA. After several seasons of raising small numbers of crane colts (7-14), we wanted to increase the number of birds being trained, but were restrained by limits in our facilities. By altering the established husbandry and training program to allow the use of a recently modified facility, we have increased the number of colts raised for this release program. However, we did not know whether the new facility and husbandry regime would significantly alter the behavior of the colts. Therefore, we have begun a two year study to determine if there are differences in the behavior of cranes raised by the two methods, and if any of the differences discovered relate directly to whooping crane survival and migration skills in the release program.

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**Key words:** behavior, costume-rearing, *Grus americana*, migration, training, ultralight aircraft, whooping crane.

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