

6-1996

Whooping Crane Sightings during March-May 1996 Migration

Steven Anschutz

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Steve_Anschutz@fws.gov

Follow this and additional works at: <http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/nebbirdrev>



Part of the [Ornithology Commons](#), [Poultry or Avian Science Commons](#), and the [Zoology Commons](#)

Anschutz, Steven, "Whooping Crane Sightings during March-May 1996 Migration" (1996). *Nebraska Bird Review*. 870.
<http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/nebbirdrev/870>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Nebraska Ornithologists' Union at DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln. It has been accepted for inclusion in Nebraska Bird Review by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln.

WHOOPING CRANE SIGHTINGS DURING MARCH-MAY 1996 MIGRATION

Compiled from information provided by
Steven Anschutz, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
203 West Second St., Grand Island, NE 68801

A peak population of 158 whooping cranes (130 adult/subadult and 28 juvenile) was reported at the Aransas National Wildlife Refuge in Texas during the winter of 1995-96. One juvenile was believed to have died between March 17 and 20, so 157 cranes began the spring migration, an increase of 24 birds over 133 in spring, 1995. By April 4, about 82 cranes had begun to migrate, and by April 25, only 9 cranes remained at Aransas. All but 2 of these had migrated by May 3. One of the two cranes migrated sometime after May 22, but the other bird was still at Aransas on June 7.

The first dates for confirmed observations of migrating whooping cranes were April 15 in Canada (Saskatchewan) and March 13 in the U.S. (Kansas), and the last sighting date was May 29 in Saskatchewan. Sightings were reported from Oklahoma (2), Kansas (4), Nebraska (20), South Dakota (3), North Dakota (7), Saskatchewan (10), and Alberta, Canada (1).

A spring blizzard struck central Nebraska on 24 March, 1996 and is estimated to have killed between 1500 and 2000 Sandhill Cranes within the Platte River valley. Based on a March 20 census flight at Aransas, a maximum of seven Whooping Cranes had started migration. Two birds, known to be in central Nebraska during the blizzard, were using wetlands located about 50 miles north of the Platte River, and they are known to have survived. The rest of the migration was relatively uneventful, however, the frequent passage of weather systems tended to slow the migration.

In addition to confirmed and probable sightings in Nebraska in the following table, there were at least 35 unconfirmed sightings in the following counties: Adams (15), Buffalo (2), Hall (10), Kearney (at least 2), Merrick (2), Phelps (1), and York (3). Legal descriptions of locations by township and range, and information for other states can be obtained from the NBR Editor or from Wally Jobman at the address listed under the title.

WMA = Wildlife Management Area, WPA = Waterfowl Production Area

<u>1996 Sighting Date</u>	<u>No. of Cranes adults/young</u>	<u>Location</u>
<u>Confirmed Sightings:</u>		
3/14-4/6	2	Custer Co., 5½ mi. west, 1½ mi. north of Merna.
3/30	1	Buffalo Co., 12 mi. west of Kearney on I-80 (mm 259).
4/7-4/8	2	Garfield Co., North Loup River, 1½ mi. north, ½ mi. west of Burwell.
4/7-4/11	2+1	Phelps Co., 2 mi. west of Wilcox; Sacramento-Wilcox WMA.
4/7-4/9	2+1	Phelps Co., 3 mi. south, 1½ mi. east of Odessa.
4/8	2	Custer Co., flying 17 mi. north of Broken Bow.
4/10	2	Hall Co., Platte River, 5 mi. south, 3½ west of Wood River (3½ mi. upstream from Wood River (bridge over Platte River).
4/11	2+1	Hall Co., 5 mi. south, ½ mi. southwest of Wood River (½ mi. upstream from Wood River bridge over Platte River).
4/12-4/16	2+1	Wheeler Co., 1 mi. northwest of Erickson on Cedar River.
4/12-4/15	5+1	Rock Co., 2 mi. west of Carns bridge, Niobrara River.

<u>1996 Sighting Date</u>	<u>No. of Cranes adults/young</u>	<u>Location</u>
<u>Confirmed Sightings (continued):</u>		
4/15	4+1	Garfield Co., North Loup River, 1½ mi. west of Burwell.
4/16	5	Lincoln Co., 1 mi. east of Maxwell.
4/17-4/22	3+1	Sherman Co., 3½ mi. west, 3½ mi. north of Loup City, Middle Loup River.
4/20	2+1	Hall Co., 1 mi. west, 2 mi. north of Doniphan, Platte River.
4/20-4/21	2+1	Hall Co., 1 mi. west, 2 mi. north of Doniphan; Platte River.
4/21	2+1	Boyd Co., 3 mi. south, 1 mi. west, ½ mi. south of Monowi, Niobrara River.
4/24	2	Holt Co., 7½ mi. south of Chambers.
5/7-5/17	2	Phelps Co., Funk WPA, 3 mi. north, 1½ mi. east of Funk.
5/8-5/13	2	Buffalo Co., Platte River, 2 mi. south, 2 mi. east of Elm Creek.
5/5	3	Keya Paha Co., 2 mi. east of Norden.
<u>Probable Sightings:</u>		
4/1	11	Scotts Bluff Co., flying over Lake Minatare.
4/6-4/10	5	Valley Co., 3 mi. northwest of Arcadia on Middle Loup River.
4/8-4/9	2	Dawson Co., 7 mi. north of Darr I-80 exit near Bitterns Call WMA.
4/11	3	Cherry Co., 8 mi. south, ¾ mi. southwest of Wood Lake.
5/15	2	Custer Co., 1 mi. south of Weissert.
