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## Cooperative Whooping Crane Tracking Project (February 1998-May 1998)

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**COOPERATIVE WHOOPING CRANE TRACKING PROJECT  
(February 1998 - May 1998)**

**(An edited version of the United States Department of the Interior report follows.)**

**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 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.

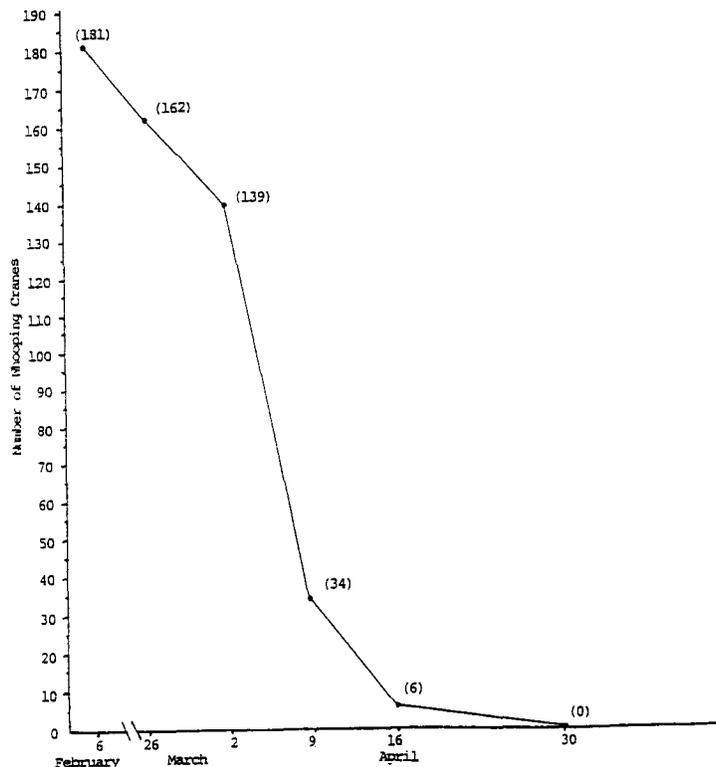
Between 1977 and 1988, 132 juvenile whooping cranes were color marked on the breeding grounds; of these 40 were accounted for during the winter of 1997-98. One color-marked crane was observed during the spring migration. All sightings of color-marked whooping cranes during migration are maintained at the Grand Island office. We cannot over-emphasize the importance of observers looking closely for the colored leg bands.

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 182 (152 adult/subadult and 30 juvenile) whooping cranes was reported at Aransas during the winter of 1997-98. This total includes a juvenile which wintered with sandhill cranes about 90 miles northeast of Aransas in Brazoria County, Texas. One adult female was not found during aerial surveys in March 1998; she is presumed dead. As Figure One illustrates, an estimated 181 whooping cranes migrated north in the spring of 1998, a net increase of 21 birds from the 160 present in spring, 1997. Departures from Aransas began about one week ahead of average. All cranes had migrated by April 30.

Figure One

Chronological departure of whooping cranes from Aransas NWR, Texas; spring, 1988. Numbers do not include juveniles that wintered in Brazoria County, Texas.



The first dates recorded for confirmed observations of migrating whooping cranes were April 12 in Canada and February 15 in the United States. The last sighting date was May 5. Sightings were reported from Kansas, 5; Nebraska, 10; South Dakota, 2; North Dakota, 13; and Saskatchewan, Canada, 10. No confirmed sightings were reported in either Texas or Oklahoma.

The peak of the migration appeared to be between April 10 and 20. Strong south winds during Easter weekend (April 11-12) aided the migration, and birds moved quickly from Texas to North Dakota. A subadult was confirmed on the Platte River in central nebraska on February 15, and stayed until March 25. This was the second earliest spring sighting ever in Nebraska. A juvenile separated from its parents on April 18 in northwestern North Dakota and remained in the area until May 17.

Use-site evaluations were continued this fall. Your continued assistance is essential to the evaluations. Please contact Mr. Wally Jobman, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service if observation details are desired (203 West Second Street, Federal Building, Second Floor, Grand Island, NE, 58801; commercial telephone: (308) 382-6468, ext. 16; FAX (308) 384-8835; or e-mail, wally\_jobman@mail.fws.gov).

Figure Two

Whooping Crane Migration Routes

