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SPRING 1984 WHOOPING CRANE RECORDS IN NEBRASKA

The Pierre, S.D., office of the Fish and Wildlife Service has released their records of sightings of the Wood Buffalo flock of Whooping Cranes, and those that pertain to Nebraska are given below.

There are three classes of sightings:

Confirmed Sightings. Observation made by a State or Federal Biologist or officer or by other known qualified observer (trained ornithologist or birder with experience in identification of Whooping Cranes). A photograph may also be used to confirm sightings.

Probable Sighting. No confirmation made by State or Federal Biologist or officer or by other known qualified observer, yet details of the sighting seen to identify the birds as Whooping Cranes. To be classified as a probable sighting each of the following factors must be met: (1) location of sighting is within normal migration corridor and is an appropriate site for Whooping Cranes, (2) date of sighting is within period of migration, (3) accurate physical description, (4) number of birds is reasonable, (5) behavior of the birds does not eliminate Whooping Cranes, and (6) good probability that observer would provide reliable report.

Unconfirmed Sighting. Details of the sighting meet some, but not all, of the six factors listed for a probable sighting.

The confirmed sightings are:

Two birds 1 to 6 April, near Keane, Kearney Co. (T5N, R15W, Sec. 6), near Wilcox (T5N, R15W, Secs. 16 and 26), and Franklin Co. (T4N, R15W, Sec. 26).

Two birds 7 and 11 to 16 April, .25 m. north of Milburn (T20N, R21W, Sec. 9), and 1.5 m. south of Milburn (T20N, R21W, Sec. 16).

Two birds 9 to 15 April, in Kearney Co., 1 m. north and .5 m. east of Wilcox.

Two adults and a young 12 to 17 April in Webster Co., 4.5 m. east and 1.5 m. south of Red Cloud (T1N, R10W, Sec. 10).

Two adults and a young 16-17 April, in Gosper Co., 2 m. west and 3 m. north of Elwood (T8N, R23W, Sec. 26, SW $\frac{1}{4}$).

Five adults and a young 16-17 April 5 m. southwest of Brownlee, Cherry Co. They had been in Graham Co., Kansas, 11 m. NNE of Wakeeney 15-16 April, and some of them were in McKenzie Co., N.D., 26 m. southeast of Watford, 17-18 April.

Three birds 17 April at Valentine NWR Headquarters, Cherry Co. (T30N, R29W, Sec. 14, SW $\frac{1}{4}$).

Two birds 18 April to 9 May in Lincoln Co., 7 m. west of North Platte on US 30 and 2 m. north. They had been at the west end of Cedar Bluff Reservoir, Trego Co., Kansas 17-18 April and were in Hettinger Co., N.D., 8 m. southwest of Mott on 9-11 May.

The probable sightings were:

Two birds 11 April in Kearney Co., 1 m. east and 1.5 m. south of Kearney bridge. (This is marked "highly probable".)

One bird 17 April, 4 m. southwest of Brownlee, Cherry Co.

Eight birds 24, 26, and 29 May, 5 m. west of Giltner, Hamilton Co.

The unconfirmed sightings are:

Six to eight birds 5 April, flying over Snake River near Snake Falls, Cherry Co.

Four birds 5 April, 1 m. south and 1 m. east of Anselmo, Custer Co.

Four birds 8 April, 8 m. south and 6 m. west of Brownlee, Cherry Co.

The report included: "Many of the migrating Whoopers were delayed in Kansas and Nebraska during the second week of April because of unfavorable winds and poor weather conditions. . . . Most of the birds began migrating again on 16 and 17 April, moving rapidly into Canada. As a result, very few sightings were reported in the Dakotas."

The September *Grus Americana*, of the Whooping Crane Conservation Assn., 23:3, says: "Twenty-nine Whooping Crane nests were found in Wood Buffalo National Park this year, five more than in 1983. The highest number before 1983 was 19 nests in 1979 and 1980, then it dropped to 17 nests in 1981 and 1982. . . . Twenty-five eggs were collected from the wild nests; 22 were sent to Grays Lake NWR to be placed under Sandhill Crane foster-parents, and 3 sent to the Patuxent Wildlife Research Center in Maryland. Nineteen hatched at Grays Lake and one at Patuxent. The two failing to hatch at Patuxent were known to be inferior prior to reaching their destination. On 22 May six additional eggs arrived at Grays Lake from the Patuxent captive Whoopers; three hatched normally, one hatched malpositioned, one hatched but died in the nest, and one egg was infertile. . . . The foster-parent families experienced severe unfavorable weather conditions between 2 and 11 June. It is estimated that about 20

Whooper chicks survived the perils, and if depredation and natural disaster doesn't take an above average toll, about 15 more birds should be added to the Rocky Mountain Whooping Crane population in 1984. It is calculated that there were about 28 Whoopers out there in the West when spring arrived this year, now with favorable fortune we may see more than 40 Whoopers in their New Mexico winter habitat this fall. On a 20 June survey of Wood Buffalo National Park, 20 Whooper chicks were counted."