



## ***Requirements for Avoiding Disturbance/Harassment to Migrating Whooping Cranes***

The following guidelines for avoiding disturbance to and/or harassment of migrating whooping cranes were developed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Nebraska Game and Parks Commission. The Endangered Species Act (ESA) of 1973 (as amended), and Nebraska's Nongame and Endangered Species Conservation Act prohibits harassment, harm, and pursuit of whooping cranes including any intentional or negligent act or omission that creates the likelihood of injury to wildlife by annoying it in such a way that significantly disrupts normal behavior patterns, such as feeding or roosting. Harassment ***includes flushing the birds to flight during observation.***

### ***Never Approach a Whooping Crane!***

Please follow these guidelines to avoid unnecessary disturbance to whooping cranes:

- 1) Observers must remain inside their vehicle(s) while watching whooping cranes. Although whooping cranes are relatively used to moving or stationary vehicles from a distance, they will take flight at the sight of a human figure.
- 2) Cranes may be observed from public roads only or established viewing area and from a distance of at least 2,000 feet (approximately 0.4 miles). Cranes can be easily seen from over 0.5 miles with binoculars.
- 3) Whooping cranes, sandhill cranes, and many other migratory birds stop in Nebraska to rest and feed. Avoid flushing birds or causing birds to alter normal behavior. Anytime birds are flushed unnecessarily they are expending energy that would otherwise be used for migrating and (in the spring) breeding.
- 4) Collision with obstacles such as power lines is the highest known cause of mortality of flighted whooping cranes. Birds escaping from a perceived threat or disturbance may be more vulnerable to collisions with nearby power lines.



#### **Whooping Crane Facts:**

- Less than 600 whooping cranes exist on the planet and less than 270 exist in the Aransas/Wood Buffalo migratory flock.
- The life span is estimated to be nearly 30 years in the wild.
- Whooping cranes form life-long pair bonds. However, if one adult dies, the surviving bird will find a new mate.
- Whooping cranes migrate singly, in pairs, in family groups or in small flocks, and are sometimes accompanied by sandhill cranes.
- Whooping cranes migrate during the day, stopping regularly to rest and feed, and use traditional migration staging areas. Whooping cranes are omnivorous feeders.

In addition to one of the Law Enforcement personnel, contact any one of the following Federal or State personnel to report a disturbance or harassment incident or an injured or dead whooping crane:

**Law Enforcement:**

Ellen Goeckler, Special Agent  
USFWS, Office of Law Enforcement

(W) (402) 223-1709

Mike Damico, Special Agent  
USFWS, Office of Law Enforcement

(W) (308) 534-0925

**Federal Contacts:**

**Martha Tacha (Key)**

**Jeanine Lackey (ext 14)**

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
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Grand Island, NE 68801

[Martha\\_Tacha@fws.gov](mailto:Martha_Tacha@fws.gov)  
[Jeanine\\_lackey@fws.gov](mailto:Jeanine_lackey@fws.gov)

(W) (308) 382-6468, Ext. 19

(C) (308) 379-6107

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(W) (308) 236-5015, Ext. 22

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**State Contacts:**

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