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GROUP DISCUSSES PROBLEMS OF WHOOPING CRANE

More than a score of migratory bird and wildlife experts of two nations agreed today that the whooping crane is in a precarious position and that more substantial management plans must be made. When the meeting concluded, late in the afternoon, it was agreed that an international committee would be appointed by United States and Canadian wildlife officials to fully explore the problems.

The meeting was held in the conference room of the Secretary of the Interior at the call of John L. Farley, Director of the Fish and Wildlife Service. Specialists from numerous national wildlife societies, international organizations, and officials of the Canadian Wildlife Service, as well as personnel from the Fish and Wildlife Service attended.

Two general plans were suggested. One was that steps be taken at once to propagate the whooping crane in captivity using two pair of young cranes for brood stock.

The other suggestion was to interfere as little as possible with the small flock of whoopers but to increase the protective measures and to keep up the appeal for public understanding of the whoopers plight--an understanding which has already made millions of Americans and Canadians decidedly whooper conscious. This school of thought conceded that every effort should be made to utilize the three whooping cranes now in captivity and to learn how to raise whoopers in captivity from these.

Those sponsoring the plan to raise the whoopers in captivity maintained that the whoopers' problems are not biological but ecological--that the few remaining birds showed no signs of senility or effects of inbreeding but that civilization has pushed their nesting grounds north to a place which affords a nesting season from 30 to 60 days shorter than normal and that this handicap, together with severe weather, is too great for the small number of cranes left to overcome.

They also point out that the life expectancy of birds in captivity is several times that of wild birds.

Those opposing artificial propagation at this time claim that the lack of knowledge of whooping crane propagation makes the risk of handling young whoopers, or whooper eggs, excessively great.

Last year 28 whooping cranes, including 8 young, returned to Aransas from nesting grounds near Great Slave Lake. One bird was lost during the winter. One bird was injured and is in a zoo in San Antonio and another did not make the northern migration. As of October 26 there were 13 whoopers back on the Aransas Refuge in Texas. Only one of these was a young one. Reports from Nebraska tell of at least 22 of the birds being sighted there.

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