



DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

INFORMATION SERVICE

UNITED STATES FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

For Release AUGUST 25, 1957

SPECIALIST COMPLETES TASK OF REARING YOUNG WHOOPERS

The world's only captive whooping crane chicks, unnamed as yet and designated as No. 1 and No. 2, have been "eating like pigs and growing like weeds" in their home in the New Orleans Zoo and are now almost as large as their parents, Crip and Josephine.

Hence, Mr. George Scott--aviculturist from the Bronx Zoo, who has been in New Orleans since before the birds hatched last May, seeing them through the critical stages--has declared that his job is done and he has turned over the handling of the young birds to two men he has personally trained for the job.

Officials of the Fish and Wildlife Service, which has jurisdiction over the whooping cranes, captive or free, consider Mr. Scott's successful raising of the chicks a definite contribution to the survival of the whooping crane.

Nos. 1 and 2 are really Nos. 4 and 5 in point of whoopers hatched in captivity. Josephine and Crip are the parents of all five. Previously, Josephine and Old Pete, her first mate, had produced only one set of unproductive eggs.

Rusty, the first born of Crip and Josephine, was taken by a predator a few days after he was hatched in an inclosure on the Aransas National Wildlife Refuge in Texas in 1950. The other two were hatched last year but both died, one a victim of a predator and the other of disease.

Josephine's history begins in the Louisiana marshes. She is the sole survivor of a resident flock of whoopers on the marshes 17 or 18 years ago. She was shot and crippled by a farmer in Evangeline Parish in 1940 and then taken to the New Orleans Zoo where she was nursed back to health.

In the fall of 1948 she was brought from New Orleans to the Aransas Refuge and "Old Pete" was presented to her as a mate. In the spring of 1949 Josephine laid a set of two eggs, but they failed to hatch. "Old Pete" was an ancient,

one-eyed, and otherwise battered-up bird that had been in the possession of the Gothenburg Rod and Gun Club in Nebraska, which had rescued him after he had been wounded by a hunter. The name "Pete" is short for Petunia, as his first owners were not sure of his sex and so to be on the safe side they gave him a name which could be adapted as circumstances warranted. He died on July 22, 1949, and the following year Crip, a handicapped bird that had been at the Aransas Refuge since 1945, was herded into the inclosure with Josephine. They were compatible immediately and Josephine again laid two eggs, one of which hatched--the first recorded hatching of a whooping crane in captivity. This chick, christened "Rusty," lived only a few days, apparently the victim of some predator. In 1951, with Jo and Crip still in the 150-acre inclosure on the Refuge, one egg was laid but the nest was flooded out by rising water levels.

On December 13, 1951, the birds were transferred to the Audubon Park Zoo in New Orleans. No nesting efforts were made until 1955 when two eggs were laid but were accidentally crushed by the birds when they were disturbed by an electrician working next to their inclosure.

In 1956 Josephine again laid two eggs, both of which were successfully hatched but in a matter of three or four days one bird disappeared, the victim of a winged predator or a rat. The second bird lived about 45 days and then died of a fungus disease of the lungs. It is now mounted in the collections of the Museum of Zoology of Louisiana State University at Baton Rouge.

This year the two chicks were hatched in a smaller inclosure roofed over with wire netting, the rodent population well under control, and with Mr. Scott on the job to see that the youngsters had the best that the science of aviculture could provide.

Mr. Scott has long been recognized as one of the world's fine aviculturists and now has the added glory of performing a job never done before. Mr. Scott's presence at the New Orleans Zoo during the chicks' critical time is the result of a cooperative effort by the New York Zoological Park where he is employed, the New Orleans Zoo, and the United States Fish and Wildlife Service.

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