

# DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE  
Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife

For Release to PM's January 9, 1969

Carroll 343-5634

## WHOOPING CRANE POPULATION: 50 WILD, 18 CAPTIVE

With this year's migration to the Texas wintering area apparently complete, the world's population of wild whooping cranes is a record 50, the Interior Department's Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife reported today.

The rare birds spend the winter at Aransas National Wildlife Refuge or adjacent Matagorda Island, south of Austwell, Texas. Of the 50 whoopers, 6 are young-of-the-year--easily distinguished by some buff coloration of head, neck, and wings.

Forty-nine whoopers arrived between October 13 and November 25; a lone adult showed up on December 14, just a week before the latest arrivals ever recorded at Aransas.

The count, made by aerial survey, exceeds last year's record of 48 (39 adult and 9 young). Wild whoopers numbered just 15 in 1941, exceeded 30 in 1947 and topped 40 in 1964.

There are presently 18 of the birds in captivity, 12 at the Bureau's Patuxent Wildlife Research Center near Laurel, Maryland.

All but two of the Patuxent birds are from egg pickups in the Canadian wilds the past two years involving United States and Canadian biologists. Of the five cranes hatched successfully from the 1967 expedition, three remain in good health. One died of a dietary problem in 1967. The fifth, which died last month, is being given a pathological examination by specialists at Patuxent and the University of Maryland to determine cause of death.

Of 10 chicks resulting from the 1968 expedition, 2 died from disease and 1 from injury last summer. The other 7 remain in good condition.

Other captive whoopers are at zoos in San Antonio and New Orleans.