

DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

news release

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TRANSPLANTED WHOOPING CRANE FOUND DEAD

One of the six surviving whooping crane transplants which had been raised by foster sandhill crane parents has been found dead alongside a highway near Lyman, Wyoming, the Interior Department announced today. The year-old bird had a 3-inch gash on the upper inside of its left leg.

Initial examination of the bird had puzzled U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service officials as to exact cause of death. While the wide wound appears to be of the type caused by a barbed wire fence, it had not festered and there was little blood surrounding it. X-rays showed no evidence of gunshot nor broken bones. The exact cause of death is expected to be determined by the Service's Fish and Wildlife Health Lab in Madison, Wisconsin, where the bird is being sent.

The whooper was one of three which last year were hatched from eggs transplanted into nests of sandhill cranes in a joint U.S. Fish and Wildlife-Canadian Wildlife Service project to establish a second wild flock of the endangered birds. The eggs were taken from the whoopers' nesting grounds in northern Canada and placed in nests of sandhills at Grays Lake National Wildlife Refuge, Idaho. Three other whoopers were raised in the project in 1975.

The dead whooper, discovered by a local resident on May 28, was identified by the yellow plastic band with the code A-07 on its leg. It was hatched on June 6, 1976, at Grays Lake. The bird weighed about 11½ pounds and had a wingspan of almost 7 feet.

The whooper and its foster sandhill parents migrated from Idaho to the Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge in New Mexico last October and returned to Wyoming this spring.

Last October, another transplanted whooper which hatched at the same time, died from wounds suffered after it flew into a rancher's wire fence.

There are now 65 wild whooping cranes in existence, and production from the captive flock at the Patuxent Wildlife Research Center and in the whoopers traditional nesting grounds in Canada seems excellent for 1977.

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