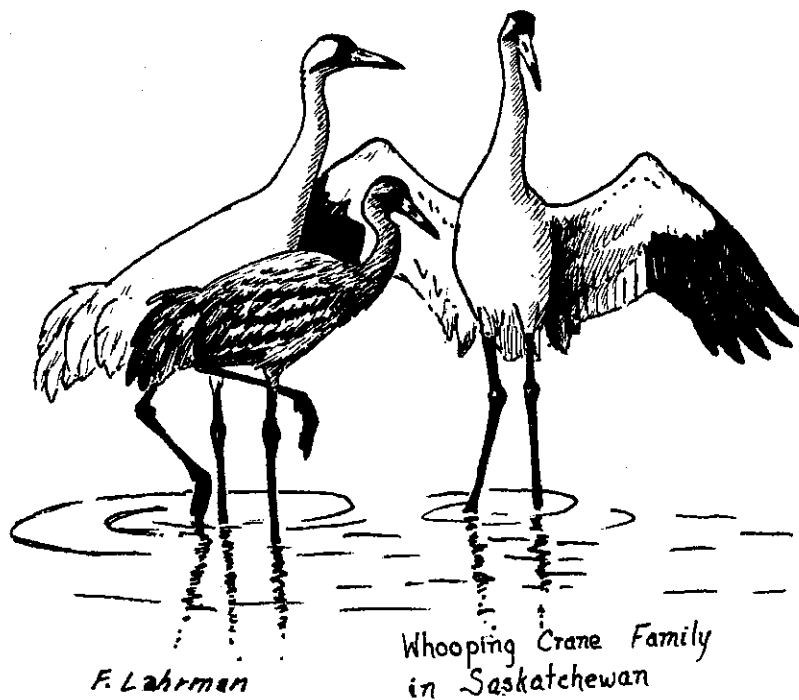
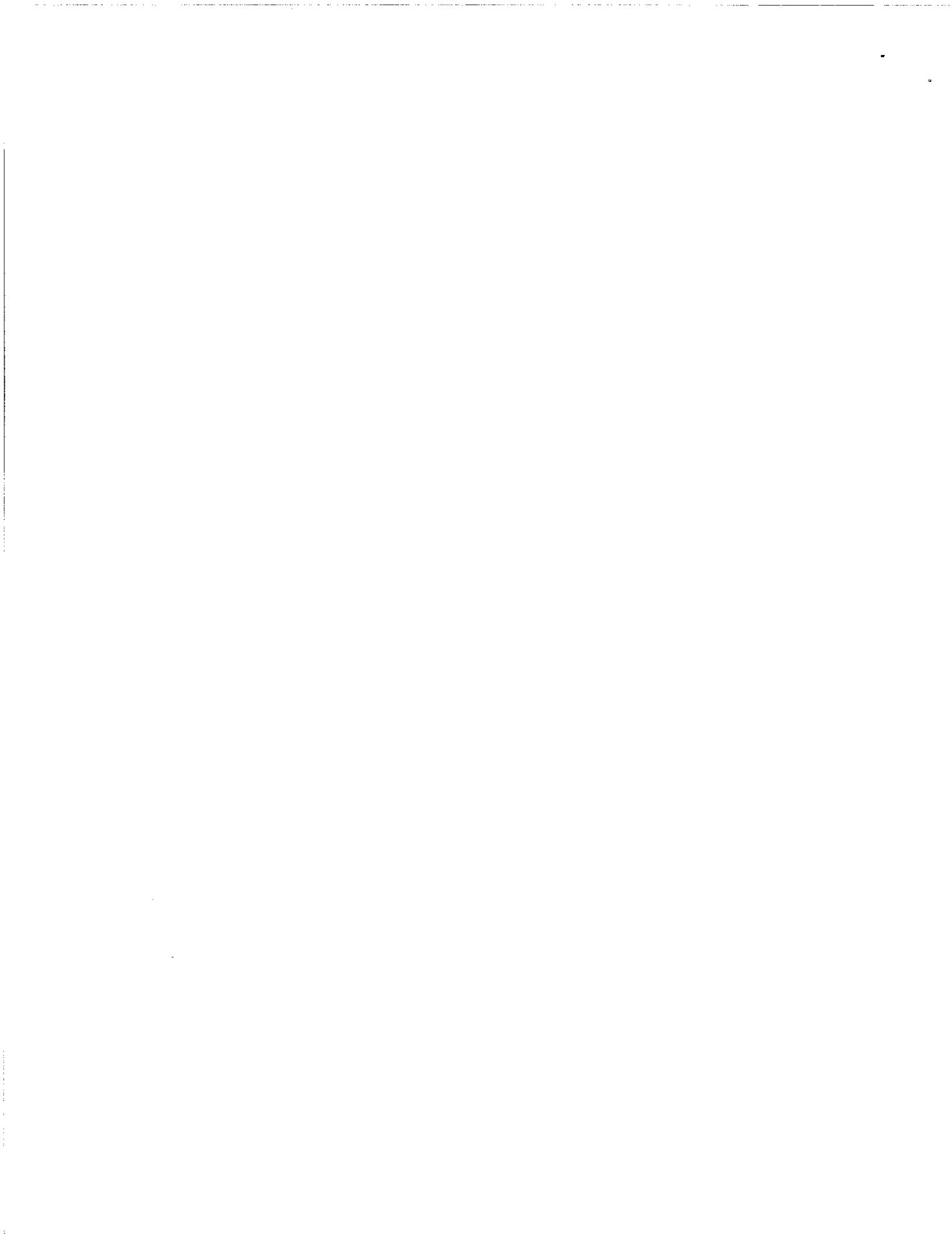


# Aransas-Wood Buffalo Population Whooping Crane Contingency Plan

## Canada



Canadian Wildlife Service  
January 2007



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## **Preamble**

Under the authority of the Accord for the Protection of Species at Risk, this Plan outlines cooperative Federal-Provincial efforts to protect whooping cranes in Canada while on migration or during summer wanderings, when they appear outside the Wood Buffalo National Park breeding area. The primary emphasis of this Plan is to list the response options when whooping cranes are observed in hazardous situations due to avian disease outbreaks, environmental contaminants, shooting/hunting activities, or when these cranes are found injured, sick, or dead.

As of December 2006, the Wood Buffalo-Aransas flock of whooping cranes had increased to 237birds. While the numbers are increasing, the loss of even a single bird is still significant and a matter of concern. The Canadian Wildlife Service (CWS) and cooperating agencies must be prepared to address any emergency in a rapid and coordinated manner.

## **Objectives**

1. To put in place plans to meet emergency situations wherein whooping cranes are perceived to be at risk; to designate appropriate response options and reporting procedures whenever whooping cranes are reported as sick, injured, or dead, or if they are in locations where they face hazards such as contaminants and disease or where hunting of species that resemble immature or adult whooping cranes (such as snow geese or sandhill cranes) is occurring.
2. To reduce whooping crane use of sites deemed to represent a disease or pollutant hazard.
3. To provide protection for whooping cranes where hunting is in progress.
4. To optimize the opportunity to recover and rehabilitate wild whooping cranes found injured or sick, and to assist in identifying and removing causes of mortality or injury.
5. To optimize the opportunity to recover dead whooping cranes for preservation as scientific specimens and for necropsy to determine cause of death.
6. To identify areas used by whooping cranes and use such information to guide landowners in carrying out practices that are not potentially damaging to whooping cranes.

## **Participants**

This plan is intended for guidance in those areas where the Aransas Wood Buffalo Population of whooping cranes occurs in the wild. This population of whooping cranes winters in the United States at the Aransas National Wildlife Refuge in Texas and summers in and near Wood Buffalo National Park along the Alberta Northwest Territories border. In Canada, the cranes migrate through north-eastern Alberta, central Saskatchewan and south-western Manitoba. Under the Memorandum of Understanding on Conservation of the Whooping Crane, and various treaties, Canada and the United States share responsibility for conservation of whooping cranes. The above mentioned provinces, territory, Wood Buffalo National Park and the Canadian Wildlife Service (CWS) are primarily responsible for initiating Plan actions. Other non-government participants may include conservations organizations, hunters and the public at large.

## **Receiving Reports of Sightings**

Since 1978 the Canadian Wildlife Service, Saskatoon has maintained records of whooping cranes sighted during migration in Canada. Federal and provincial Key Contacts personnel from each province should send a 1 page standardized form (Appendix A) to the Records Centre

describing the circumstances of each credible whooping crane sighting. Contact Brian Johns or Lea Craig-Moore for information (Appendix B). Records are shared with the United States Fish and Wildlife Service Records Center in Grand Island Nebraska.

## **Sighting Definitions**

A confirmed whooping crane sighting is an observation made by a qualified observer (wildlife professional or very experienced person expected to be competent in the identification of whooping cranes). Sometimes an untrained observer can provide such accurate sighting details and description of whooping crane behaviour that a sighting can be considered as confirmed. This normally may occur when whooping cranes are present on the ground and not just seen in flight.

A probable whooping crane sighting is defined as whenever the observer's physical description of the bird seems accurate, the location and timing of the sighting are reasonable, the number of birds seen is reasonable (more than 10 flying in a flock unlikely, although occasional groups of up to 20 have been on the ground together at stopover sites), behaviour of the birds does not eliminate whooping cranes (i.e., swimming in a reservoir, 20 yards away from a busy road, etc.), and there is a good probability that the observer would provide a reliable report.

An unconfirmed sighting is one which meets some but not all of the requirements of a probable sighting.

It is important that the Key Contact and/or the Records Management Centre communicate with the observer to make an informed judgment on how to classify a sighting.

## **Response to Sightings**

Upon receipt of the report and having alerted others identified under 1.6 (Responsibility Centres), CWS/Provincial/NWT/PCA Responsibility Centre will implement the appropriate Contingency procedure as outlined below.

### **1. No further action required**

Observation likely invalid due to description of the bird, bird's behaviour or report appears unverifiable (e.g. bird flying when sighted).

### **2. Further action appropriate**

If sighting probable or confirmed and bird(s) is on the ground. Attempt to confirm and determine if bird(s) is/are healthy or if a hazard exists.

#### **2.1 Searchers are unable to confirm report.**

After reasonable efforts are made, no further action required.

#### **2.2 Sighting confirmed.**

Bird(s) should be checked periodically, if practical, until departure.

##### **2.2.1 Non-Hazard Situation**

Whooping cranes are at a site where there are no serious hazards (e.g., disease outbreak, ongoing legal hunting of look-alike species, transmission lines near birds, etc.) to their well-

being. The bird(s) appear healthy and act normal. The sighting is reported to the appropriate provincial/territorial and federal personnel. The site should be revisited later, if practical, to check on the physical condition of the bird(s) and to ascertain that no hazard develops.

### **2.2.2 Disease Hazard Situation**

Responses will vary with the type of disease involved. A disease hazard is defined as a location where a disease outbreak is underway or a chronic disease problem exists.

For example, if migrating whooping cranes attempt to utilize habitats where an avian cholera or a botulism outbreak is underway, they should be encouraged to leave the site. While hazing the bird, direct its flight away from power lines and other aerial obstacles. Hazing may be accomplished by personnel on foot, in aircraft, boats, or vehicles. Continue hazing only until the bird(s) leave the hazard area. Report the action to appropriate provincial/federal personnel. In consultation with Dr. Gary Wobeser at the CCWHC or other veterinarians experienced in treating whooping cranes, CCWHC staff will provide recommendations for emergency treatment of injured or sick birds or birds exposed to contaminants. Continue to monitor the hazardous site as reasonable and/or use zon guns to ensure that the cranes do not return.

If other disease hazards exist at a location where whoopers are sighted, the Whooping Crane Coordinator will consult with CCWHC personnel to identify the most appropriate response. CWS and the province/territory will jointly decide on and carry out a plan of action.

### **2.2.3 Contaminants Hazard Situation**

In some disease and contaminant hazard situations, field personnel will need to act promptly and chase the cranes from the site. In all other circumstances, the Provincial Wildlife Director and the Regional Director CWS jointly decide on an appropriate response.

Examples of possible contaminants hazards are chemical pesticides recently applied to seeds, plants, or animals the cranes might use as food and oil or chemical spills in aquatic environments used by whooping cranes. If the bird(s) appear sick, field personnel will respond as in 2.2.5. If the bird(s) appear healthy, response options are to haze the birds from the site or to divert, confine, dilute, or remove the contaminant. If hazing is attempted, direct the bird(s)' movement away from power lines and other obstacles. A quick decision and action by field personnel may be essential for the bird(s)' well-being. This may be a situation where field personnel do not have time to involve their supervisors in the initial decision-making process. Report the action to appropriate personnel. Continue to monitor the hazardous site as long as necessary to ensure the cranes do not return if they have been hazed from the site. If it is possible to follow or to relocate cranes which have been hazed from a contaminants site, continue to observe them for several days to confirm that they are not affected by the contaminant.

### **2.2.4 Hunting Hazard Situation**

- 2.2.4.1 Alert nearest CWS or provincial/territorial Conservation Agency of the location of the crane(s), requesting them to investigate promptly and report back about bird(s) activities.
- 2.2.4.2 If the birds are free flying and healthy, take steps to inform hunters of the presence of Whooping Cranes and warn them to take extreme caution when hunting.

2.2.4.3 Contact landowner and neighbours requesting that permission to hunt be deferred until after the departure of the crane(s).

2.2.4.4 If crane(s) are in heavily hunted areas, close season as provided in Sections 18 and 37 of the Migratory Bird Regulations.

## **2.2.5 Sick or Injured Situation**

In the event that a Whooping Crane is reported to be sick or injured, immediate implementation of the approved rescue procedure is required.

2.2.5.1 Advise veterinary Responsibility Centre.

2.2.5.1.1 In Saskatchewan the Veterinary Contact is Dr. Gary Wobeser, Canadian Cooperative Wildlife Health Centre, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. (306) 966-7310 and residence (306) 374-5605.

2.2.5.1.2 In Alberta, the Veterinary Contact is Dr. Sandie Black, Calgary Zoo, Calgary, Alberta. (403) 232-9309. (Additional contacts in Appendix B).

2.2.5.1.3 If additional veterinary assistance or advice is needed contact Dr. Glen Olsen, Patuxent Wildlife Research Center, Laurel, Maryland, (301) 497-5603.

2.2.5.2 CWS Regional Responsibility officers will immediately proceed to the area and retrieve the sick or injured crane.

2.2.5.3 In anticipation of an event under 2.2.5, the primary Responsibility Centres will have access to all materials required to capture, immobilize and transport the sick or injured crane to the designated veterinary centre.

2.2.5.3.1 Loose burlap or vet wrap and tape for immobilizing birds' wings.

2.2.5.3.2 Crate for transport (crates are available at the CWS offices in Saskatoon, Regina, Winnipeg and Edmonton and at the Parks Canada office in Fort Smith).

- Acceptable dimensions are 50 cm wide, 65 cm long and 105 cm high. (Appendix C).
- Outdoor carpeting to be placed on bottom of crate to prevent bird from slipping.
- Ensure adequate ventilation by drilling 5 rows of 1.5 cm holes, 5 per row on each side of box.

**Recommended procedures to be followed when capturing, immobilizing, and transporting or housing a sick or injured Whooping Crane.**

- a. Do not alert the media or public action groups until the crane has been successfully captured and removed, in order to avoid undue alarm to the bird during capture which might result from crowds of people.
- b. The designated veterinarian should be present if at all possible or provide advice in advance, since general practitioners may lack experience in handling sick or injured wild birds. In the event that the designated veterinarian is not available, use nearest veterinary assistance.
- c. Once the bird has been crated, every effort should be made to keep bird standing, since once it sits down, prognosis for eventual recovery lessens.
- d. If bird can make short escape flights and if capture and removal are deemed to be desirable, the bird should be kept under scrutiny during daylight hours and captured by lights during dark nights.
- e. Personnel involved in any capture attempts of adult birds should wear protective eye shields because of danger from the bill or feet of a frightened bird.
- f. Ensure that the bird's wings are immobilized during transportation but not bound so tightly as to impair circulation or breathing.
- g. Ensure that housing area is free of all foreign objects which might be ingested by cranes (especially plastic and metal).
- h. Ensure that housing area is kept dimly lit or dark.
- i. Ensure that area has not previously been used for domestic birds since cranes are susceptible to diseases.

**2.2.6. Retrieval of a Dead Bird.**

- 2.2.6.1 No commitments as to future disposition of the specimen are to be made since the Canada – U.S. MOU clearly states that all specimen material is to be shared between the two countries. In Canada the repository is the Canadian Museum of Nature.
- 2.2.6.2 The specimen should be kept cool, not frozen, and transported immediately to Dr. Gary Wobeser or Dr. Sandie Black for necropsy.
- 2.2.6.3 Care is to be taken during necropsy to save as much of the internal parts of the specimen as possible in addition to the skin.
- 2.2.6.4 Upon completion of the necropsy, the entire carcass is to be frozen. The Canadian Whooping Crane Coordinator and Mr. Michel Gosselin, Collection Assistant (Birds), Canadian Museum of Nature, P.O. Box 3443, Station D, Ottawa, Ont. K1P 6P4 will decide on the final disposition of the specimen.



- 2.2.6.5 Copies of the necropsy report are to be forwarded to the National Coordinator, the Regional Director, CWS, the National Coordinator, USFWS, and the jurisdiction from which the deceased bird was removed.
- 2.2.6.6 Even if toxic chemicals are not suspected as contributing to the death of the bird, appropriate aliquots are to be sent to the Wildlife Toxicology and Pathology Division, CWS National Wildlife Research Centre, 100 Gamelin Boulevard, Hull, (819) 997-1410, as per their instructions.
- 2.2.6.7 All efforts will be made to develop a coordinated United States-Canada necropsy report and examination protocol as provided by the Canada-U.S. MOU.

## **Responsibility Centres**

To facilitate prompt response to situations involving whooping cranes, the following responsibility centres are identified:

- 1. CWS Saskatoon, (306) 975-4087 or (306) 975-5595, will have ultimate responsibility for situations arising in all provinces and territories. Alternate Responsibility Centres will be established at Fort Smith, N.T., Edmonton, Alberta; and Winnipeg, Manitoba.**
  - 1.1 Parks Canada Agency Fort Smith - R. Kindopp (867)872-7932; NWT Environment and Natural Resources, Fort Smith - D. Johnson (867) 872-6408; and CWS Ft. Smith/Saskatoon - B. Johns (306) 975-4109 will serve as Responsibility Centres for situations involving Whooping Cranes in or near Wood Buffalo National Park.**
    - 1.1.1 The Director, NWT Environment and Natural Resources Government of the Northwest Territories will serve as the alternate Responsibility Centre for the Northwest Territories.
  - 1.2 CWS Edmonton, (780) 951-8600, will have responsibility for situations arising in Alberta.**
    - 1.2.1 CWS Saskatoon and the Alberta Fish and Wildlife Division will be responsible for situations within the province of Alberta falling outside Wood Buffalo National Park.
    - 1.2.2 The Director, Fish and Wildlife Division, Department of Sustainable Resource Development, Government of Alberta, (780) 427-9503, will serve as the alternate Responsibility Centres for Alberta.
  - 1.3 CWS Saskatoon (B. Johns), (306) 975-5595 or (306) 975-4087, will have responsibility for situations arising in Saskatchewan. The phone at Saskatoon is on 24 hour call, 7 days per week during periods of migration and staging.**
    - 1.3.1 The Director, Resource Stewardship Branch, Government of Saskatchewan, (306) 787-2309, will serve as the alternate Responsibility Centre for Saskatchewan.
  - 1.4 CWS Winnipeg, (204) 945-7100, will have responsibility for situations arising in Manitoba.**

1.4.1 CWS Saskatoon and the Wildlife & Ecosystem Protection Branch, Department of Natural Resources will be responsible for situations within the province of Manitoba.

1.4.2 The Director, Wildlife & Ecosystem Protection Branch, Government of Manitoba, (204) 945-7761, will serve as the alternate Responsibility Centre for Manitoba.

**1.5 Alternate Responsibility Centres will be kept up to date on current sightings and any relevant situations which might arise.**

**1.6 If the birds are perceived to be at risk the Responsibility Centres will immediately inform:**

1.6.1 Regional Director, Canadian Wildlife Service, Prairie and Northern Region (780) 951-8853, and/or the Biologist-in-Charge of the Whooping Crane Program, B. Johns (306) 975-4109 (Office) and (306) 373-1228 (Home).

1.6.2 National Coordinator, B. Johns (306) 975-4109 (Office), who will inform the U.S. Coordinator, Tom Stehn (361) 286-3559 (Office), (361) 758-2354 (Home).

1.6.3 Appropriate CWS, Provincial, GNWT and/or PCA staff.

**2. The Primary Responsibility Centres, in conjunction with PCA, Provincial and NWT Responsibility Centres, will make an assessment of the type of risk to Whooping Cranes.**

## Response Option Summary

Parks Canada Agency, provincial, territorial or CWS personnel receive report. Report relayed to the Provincial, NWT, PCA, or CWS employee designated as the Responsibility Centre within that area's boundaries.

Responsibility Personnel receive report. Each keeps the other informed.

### Report response options are:

#### 1. No further action required

Observation likely invalid due to description of the bird, bird's behaviour or report appears unverifiable (e.g. bird flying when sighted).

#### 2. Further action appropriate

If sighting probable or confirmed and bird(s) is on the ground. If probable, it should be checked to ascertain if bird(s) is healthy or if a hazard exists.

##### 2.1 Searchers are unable to confirm report.

After reasonable efforts are made, no further action required.

##### 2.2 Sighting confirmed

###### 2.2.1 Non-Hazard

Periodic checks on birds to see that situation has not deteriorated.

###### 2.2.2 Disease

Responses will vary with the type of disease involved.

- Lure or haze birds away from disease site.
- Diminish or eliminate disease organism.

###### 2.2.3 Contaminant

CWS regional contaminant specialist, M. Wayland, Saskatoon (306) 975-6340 is notified.

- Lure or haze birds away from site.
- Divert, confine or remove contaminant
- Other responses depending on circumstances

###### 2.2.4 Hunting Hazard

Hunting hazard exists because hunting is underway or soon will begin for Whooping Crane look-alike species. Options are:

- Informal spot closure. Take whatever action is needed to protect Whooping Cranes. This may include media involvement via newspaper, radio and TV announcements; contact of individual hunters in the vicinity; acquiring cooperation of landowners; restricting public access to the site; and monitoring of the crane(s).

- Formal Spot Closure - Post the small area used by Whooping Cranes with no hunting signs under Section 18 of Migratory Birds Regulations.
- Formal closure of season when spot closure cannot be accomplished (Section 37 of Migratory Birds Regulations).
- Encourage Whooping Crane(s) to move. Use this option only in unusual circumstances.

#### **2.2.5 Sick or Injured**

Whooping Crane Coordinator, Regional and Provincial Directors are informed. CWS employees follow procedures outlined in this plan. Provincial, PCA or RCMP personnel participate as required.

#### **2.2.6 Retrieval of Dead Bird**

Follow procedures outlined in this plan. Provincial, PCA or RCMP personnel participate as required.

Appendix A

WHOOPING CRANE SIGHTING REPORT

OBSERVER: Name \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_

REPORTER: Name \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
Agency/Org. \_\_\_\_\_

Reporting Date \_\_\_\_\_ Sighting Date \_\_\_\_\_

NUMBER SEEN: Adults \_\_\_\_\_ Young \_\_\_\_\_ Total \_\_\_\_\_

LOCATION: (Distance and direction from nearest town)  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

LEGAL LAND DESCRIPTION: \_\_\_\_\_

DESCRIBE SITE: (Any details about land use, wetland, etc.)  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

TIME AND DURATION OF SIGHTING: \_\_\_\_\_

COLOUR-MARKINGS OBSERVED: \_\_\_\_\_

OBSERVATION DETAILS:

Bird(s) observed: Flying \_\_\_\_\_ On ground \_\_\_\_\_  
Distance of observation \_\_\_\_\_ Binoc used \_\_\_\_\_ Scope used \_\_\_\_\_

Bird(s) description (ask observer about each)

BODY \_\_\_\_\_

LEGS \_\_\_\_\_

WINGS \_\_\_\_\_

NECK \_\_\_\_\_

HEAD & BILL \_\_\_\_\_

Behaviour (describe in observers words): \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

List other birds present at site: \_\_\_\_\_

List species seen flying with: \_\_\_\_\_

<p><u>OBSERVATION NUMBER:</u></p> <p>_____</p> <p><u>CLASSIFICATION:</u></p> <p>Confirmed _____</p> <p>Probable _____</p> <p>Unconfirmed _____</p> <p><u>PROVINCE:</u></p> <p>_____</p> <p><u>DEGREE BLOCK:</u></p> <p>Lat. _____</p> <p>Long. _____</p>
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## **Key Contacts**

### Whooping Crane Coordinator

Brian Johns  
Canadian Wildlife Service  
115 Perimeter Road  
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. S7H 4V6  
Phone (W) (306) 975-4109 (H) (306) 373-1228  
FAX (306) 975-4089  
Email

Alternate:  
Lea Craig-Moore  
Canadian Wildlife Service  
115 Perimeter Road  
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. S7H 4V6  
Phone (W) (306) 975-5404  
FAX (306) 975-4089  
Email:

### Whooping Crane Hot Line (Records Management Centre) (306) 975-5595

Lea Craig-Moore  
Canadian Wildlife Service  
115 Perimeter Road  
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. S7H 4V6  
Phone (W) (306) 975-5404  
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Email:

### Wood Buffalo National Park

Rohna Kindop  
Wood Buffalo National Park  
Parks Canada Agency  
Box 750  
Fort Smith, Northwest Territories. X0E 0P0  
Phone (867) 872-7932  
FAX (403) 872-3910  
Email: rhona.kindopp@pch.gc.ca

### Provincial/Territorial

Deborah Johnson  
Regional Biologist  
Wildlife and Fisheries Division  
Department of Environment and Natural Resources  
Government of the Northwest Territories  
Box 900  
Fort Smith, Northwest Territories. X0E 0P0

## Appendix B

Phone (867) 872-6408  
FAX (867) 872-4250  
Email:

Lisa Wilkinson  
Alberta Sustainable Resource Development  
Fish and Wildlife Division  
Government of Alberta  
#203, 111 - 54th Street  
Edson, AB T7E 1T2  
Phone: (780) 723-8556  
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Email:

Doug Campbell  
Manager, Ecological Assessment Unit  
Resource Stewardship Branch  
Saskatchewan Environment  
3211 Albert Street  
Regina, Saskatchewan S4S 5W6  
Phone: (306) 787-2314  
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Ken De Smet  
Wildlife & Ecosystem Protection Branch  
Manitoba Conservation  
Government of Manitoba  
P.O. Box 24, 200 Saulteaux Cresc.  
Winnipeg, Manitoba. R3J 3W3  
Phone: (204) 945-5439  
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Email:

### CWS/Provincial/Territorial Directors

Bill Gummer  
Regional Director  
Prairie and Northern Region  
Canadian Wildlife Service  
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Phone: (780) 951-8853

Mr. Jack Dubois  
Director  
Wildlife & Ecosystem Protection Branch  
Manitoba Conservation  
Government of Manitoba  
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## Appendix B

Mr. Hugh Hunt  
Executive Director  
Resource Stewardship Branch  
Saskatchewan Environment  
Government of Saskatchewan  
3211 Albert St., Room 436  
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Mr. Ron Bjorge  
Director Wildlife Management Branch  
Fish and Wildlife Division  
Government of Alberta  
2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, Great West Life Building  
9920 - 108<sup>th</sup> Street  
Edmonton, Alberta. T5K 2M84

Ms. Susan Fleck  
Director, Wildlife and Fisheries  
Environment and Natural Resources  
Gov't of the Northwest Territories  
600, 5102 - 50<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
Yellowknife, Northwest Territories. X1A 3S8

### Veterinary

Sandie Black, DVM  
Head of Veterinary Services  
Calgary Zoo Animal Health Centre  
1625 Centre Ave E,  
Calgary, Alberta. T2E 8K2  
Phone (403) 232-9309 Cell (403) 371-9082) Home (403) 283-3910  
or Doug Whiteside (403) 232-9390 Cell (403) 371-9081  
FAX (403) 237-8318  
Email:

Gary Wobeser, DVM  
Canadian Cooperative Wildlife Health Centre  
Western College of Veterinary Medicine  
52 Campus Drive  
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. S7N 5B4  
Phone (W) (306) 966-7310 (H) (306) 374-5605  
FAX (306) 966-7387  
Email:

### Contaminants

Mark Wayland  
Canadian Wildlife Service  
115 Perimeter Road  
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. S7H 4V6



## Appendix B

Phone (W) (306) 975-6340  
FAX (306) 975-4089  
Email:

### Enforcement

#### Canadian Wildlife Service

Northwest Territories – (867) 669-4788  
Alberta – (780) 951-8891  
Saskatchewan – (306) 975-6818  
Manitoba – (204) 984-4977

#### Provincial/Territorial

Northwest Territories – (867) 872-1163 or RAP 1 (866) 762-2437  
Alberta – RAP 1 (800) 642-3800  
Saskatchewan – TIPS 1 (800) 667-7561  
Manitoba – TIPS 1 (800) 782-8477

#### Wood Buffalo National Park

Fort Smith - (867) 872-7900  
Fort Chipewyan - (780) 697-3662

### Transport Crane Dimensions

