

Louisiana PASS



Courtesy of Michael W. Lucas

Whoop it up!

Did you know that the whooping crane is the largest bird in North America? It stands about 5 feet tall and weighs between 14 and 16 pounds. These cranes are so big they have to get a running start in order to fly. In spite of their size, whooping cranes are able to fly; like all birds, they have hollow bones to make them lighter. Whooping cranes got their name from their loud, unusual call, which can usually be heard from 2 miles away!

Whooping cranes aren't picky eaters. They eat both plants and animals. They mate for life and may live as long as 25 years or more in the wild. When mating season is successful, female cranes will lay two eggs. Both parents take turns incubating (sitting on the eggs to provide heat) the eggs and caring for the young. Cranes migrate seasonally. They fly as fast as 52 miles per hour; sometimes they fly for 10 hours straight!

Whooping cranes are not very common. In 1940, there were fewer than 20 cranes alive. Today, there are 100 cranes in captivity. Scientists are trying to prevent these birds from becoming extinct. Whooping cranes are endangered mostly due to loss of habitat (when wetlands are drained for agriculture). They have also been hunted for their meat and feathers.

Cranes are considered very special birds in many parts of the world; in China, cranes are a symbol of long life.

For more information about cranes, click on one of these links:

[Enchanted Learning.com: Cranes](#)

[Watch a crane chick grow up](#)

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