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WHOOPING CRANE SIGHTINGS DURING MARCH-MAY 1997 MIGRATION
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During the 1996-97 winter, 158 (143 adult/subadult and 15 juvenile) Whooping Cranes stayed at the Aransas National Wildlife Refuge in Texas. Two early migrants in Nebraska were an adult-plumaged bird first observed on 9 March, and a juvenile confirmed on 19 March. Neither of these birds wintered at Aransas, so the total population was therefore 160 (144 adult/subadult and 16 juvenile). All 158 cranes wintering at Aransas were present 3 April, but by 10 April, about 103 cranes had begun to migrate, and by 24 April, only 13 cranes were still at Aransas. All cranes had migrated by 6 May.

Migrations for Nebraska are given in the following table. Locations by township and range, and data for other states can be obtained from the NBR Editor or from Wally Jobman at the address listed under the title. All sightings in the table were confirmed. WPA = Waterfowl Production Area.

<u>1997 Sighting Date</u>	<u>No. of Cranes</u> <u>adults + young</u>		<u>Location</u>
3/9	1		Buffalo Co., 4.5 mi. south, 1.75 west of Gibbon, Platte River.
3/10-4/17	1		Hall Co., 3 mi. west of Doniphan, Platte River.
3/19-4/7	+ 1		Buffalo Co., 4.5 mi. south, west of Gibbon, Platte River.
4/8	+ 1		Lincoln Co., 4 mi. south of Hershey.
4/14	1		Kearney Co., 6 mi. south of Gibbon.
4/14-16	2		Kearney Co., 2 mi. south of Gibbon, Platte River.
4/15-16	2		Holt Co., 1 mi. south, 2.5 west of Atkinson.
4/15-17	12		Valley Co., 1 mi. north, 1.5 east of Elyria, North Loup River.
4/15-17	4		Kearney Co., 6 mi. south, 11 east of Minden, Jensen WPA.
4/15-17	2 + 1		Custer Co., 8 mi. east of Callaway.
4/18-19	+ 1		Phelps Co., 4.5 mi. south, 1 west of Overton.
4/21-24	3		Buffalo Co., 5 mi. south, 2 west of Gibbon, Platte River.
4/25-28	+ 1		Gosper Co., 9 mi. east, 5 north of Elwood.
5/12	2		Lincoln Co., 20 mi. northeast of North Platte on Hwy 83, flying.

The first dates for confirmed observations of migrating Whooping Cranes were 9 March in the United States and 6 April in Canada. The last sighting was 25 May in Saskatchewan, Canada. Sightings were reported from Oklahoma (1), Kansas (5), Nebraska (14), South Dakota (4), North Dakota (5), and Saskatchewan (19).

A spring blizzard struck western Nebraska and the Dakotas on 5 and 6 April, and cold, snowy weather continued until 12 April. The migration peak was probably during the week of 13 April. In Nebraska, 12 adult-plumaged cranes (the largest group ever confirmed in Nebraska) were observed on 15 April. At least two juveniles and possibly as many as five (three sightings may have been the same bird) migrated alone or with Sandhill Cranes.