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Whooping Crane Eastern Partnership Statement on Vision for the Future
Partners agree to modify rearing and release methods to improve success

In an effort to improve the success of the Eastern Migratory Population of whooping cranes, the Whooping Crane Eastern Partnership will modify all methods of rearing and releasing whooping cranes. The announcement came as the result of meetings among the partners to focus on the long-term viability of the Eastern Migratory Population. Modifications are being made to put emphasis on more natural methods of rearing and releasing young whooping cranes, which means discontinuing ultralight-led migrations and perhaps other techniques that rely heavily on human intervention as recommended by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

As the agency responsible for implementing the Endangered Species Act and overseeing the recovery of the whooping cranes nationally, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service decided to focus the extremely limited number of whooping crane chicks toward populations and methods that will be most effective toward reaching our goal of self-sustaining populations. As a result, the current ultralight led migration will be the last.

The partnership recognizes the strides made over the past 15 years, with nearly 100 whooping cranes in the eastern population. While survival of the birds is something we are proud of, a critical lack of reproductive success has hampered the partnership's effort to meet its goal of a self-sustaining population.

WCEP used a collaborative process that engaged all of the partners to set a vision for the next five years of whooping crane recovery. The Whooping Crane Eastern Partnership will assess all current rearing and release methods to implement those which instill behaviors in chicks that foster future reproductive success. The partnership intends to focus on the quality of released birds, emphasizing methods that use a large percentage as parent-reared chicks. The Whooping Crane Eastern Partnership recognizes the important contributions of Operation Migration and its contributions to the Eastern Migratory Population and look forward to a continued strong relationship as the partnership evolves to meet the needs of the whooping crane.

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The Whooping Crane Eastern Partnership (WCEP) is a group of agencies, non-profit organizations and individuals, formed to restore a migratory population of whooping cranes to eastern North America.