

## Whooping Crane Script

Throughout the 1980's and 90's it wasn't all that unusual to see one of the rarest endangered species in North America right here in Colorado. A number of whooping cranes migrated through the state twice a year. They were part of an experiment that put whooping crane eggs in sandhill crane nests in an effort to have the sandhills act as foster parents. As a result, a small group of whoopers would accompany the sandhills from their summering grounds in Montana to their wintering grounds in northern New Mexico. In October and March the birds would stop over at the Monte Vista National Wildlife Refuge in the San Luis Valley. Unfortunately the experiment failed and the last Rocky Mountain whooping crane was declared dead in 2002.

However, a whooping crane put in an appearance in eastern Colorado about fifty miles east of Denver in early November. Biologists say the bird is one that migrates from central Canada to the Texas gulf coast and it was about three hundred miles off course. It was accompanied by a sandhill and didn't stick around too long.

When fully grown whooping cranes can reach heights of five feet or more, and are the tallest birds in this part of the world; their wingspans can stretch to more than seven feet.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife service says some 54 nests were confirmed on the breeding grounds this spring and biologists counted a record 41 chicks. State and federal researchers expected a maximum of 234 cranes to return to Texas for the winter.