

## FLORIDA WHOOPERS

**CLIENT:** International Crane Foundation

**TITLE:** Florida Whoopers: The Unexpected Journey

**OBJECTIVE:** Provide an accurate account of the unexpected migration of a pair of non-migratory Florida Whooping cranes for an upcoming meeting of scientists and crane experts.

**LENGTH:** 15 Min.

**WRITTEN BY:** Pam Rucinski, Rucinski & Reetz Communication, LLC

Video • Stills • Graphics	SHOT	Narration • Music • Audio
The video opens with a “run-a-way pair of Florida Whooping Cranes circling above a corn field in Sandusky Michigan.	1	Music captures the mystery and beauty of the cranes.
Dissolve to the Whoopers foraging in a corn field.	2	
Title graphic enters over the cranes foraging in the sparkling water of a shallow peat pond.  <b>Florida Whoopers “The Unexpected Journey”</b>	3	
Dissolve to helicopter shot of the Whooper pair and a Sandhill in a peat bog.	4	
Fade to George Archibald on camera at the ICF. A pair of Whoopers forage in a pond as he speaks.  Create title window: George Archibald, International Crane Foundation	5	

Still of Florida non-migratory whooping crane flock.	6	
Fade onto screen: <b>Migration Begins</b>	7	
George on cam at the ICF.	8	GEORGE ARCHIBALD ON CAM: Two birds produced at the Patuxent Wildlife Research Center in Maryland, that had been in Florida for five years in the wild, in the spring of the year 2000
Animated map showing southern Illinois sighting. Graphic: First recorded roosting site.	9	GEORGE VO: left Florida and appeared in mid-May in southern Illinois.
Return to George on camera.	10	GEORGE ON CAMERA: The birds in the non-migratory flock had shown no indication that they were going to migrate. Although they had moved around Florida from here to there, they did not show signs of going north.
Stills showing the dry wetlands in Florida.	11	GEORGE VO: But it was an extremely dry spring in Florida, and the wetland at which these cranes had lived for about a year dried out.
Stills of the pair in southern Illinois in the flooded field.	12	GEORGE VO: When the birds were reported in southern Illinois, they were in a flooded agricultural field. I don't know what they were eating,
George back on camera.	13	GEORGE ON CAMERA: and I don't know what they did, where they spent the night, but we know they were in that vicinity for about five days.
Birds on the ground in the flooded field.	14	GEORGE'S VO: They came to a similar field, a flooded 40 acre field
Animated map shows bird location in Sandusky, Michigan.  Graphic: Summer roosting site Sandusky MI	15	GEORGE VO: beside the house of Mark Batkie near Sandusky, Michigan.

CHAPTER BREAK: Shoot through corn stalks to the field. Graphic: <b>Summer Home Sandusky Michigan</b>	16	Nat sound rustle of the corn stalks.
Mark Batkie on cam. Graphic: Mark Batkie Sandusky MI farmer	17	<b>FARMER MARK BATKIE ON CAM</b> The birds had come to a harvested soybean field from the year prior and it had quite large areas of water in it in the low ground.
Cranes groom in Mark's field—lifting and flapping wings.	18	<b>MARK VO:</b> They were pretty much just foraging out there all day and spending their days pecking at the ground and grooming themselves.
Birds forage for corn and soybeans in the neighboring field.	19	<b>MARK VO:</b> Occasionally they'd fly to neighboring fields that had either soybeans or corn in it.
Mark back on cam.	20	<b>MARK BACK ON CAM:</b> The birds stayed for about three weeks. About the 15 <sup>th</sup> of May is when they arrived and they stayed until the 2 <sup>nd</sup> or 3 <sup>rd</sup> of June.
Helicopter view of pair in a green field.	21	<b>MARK VO:</b> By that time the ground had dried out and we were able to start farming again.
George on cam.	22	<b>GEORGE ON CAM:</b> And then in early June when they disappeared with the ducks and geese he thought it was the natural chronology
From the air—birds fly over Michigan peat complex.	23	<b>GEORGE VO:</b> Actually, the cranes had just flown over the trees into the Michigan Peat complex.
George on cam.	24	<b>GEORGE ON CAM:</b> They were then seen by Vito Palazzolo and his wife Sheila.
Cam cord shot of the birds in field.	25	<b>GEORGE VO:</b> And they took video of the birds and studied their behavior.
Helicopter shot of the Michigan Peat Company  Push in to shot of birds foraging next to the road. Graphic: Michigan Peat Company	26	<b>VITO PALAZZOLO VO:</b> We come out of the plant into harvest in early June and we dig ponds to get to the clay to build the roads

Vito on cam.  Graphic: Vito Palazzolo Sandusky MI Resident	27	VITO ON CAM: and when the ponds flood the fish kind of spread out through the fields. Then the water goes down and the birds come in and eat on that and the frogs.
Crane pair foraging in tall grass. Geese in the background on the water.	28	VITO VO: It's just plentiful with all kinds of food for them.
Vito on camera. His wife sitting next to him at the kitchen table.	29	VITO ON CAM: I'm the harvest foreman out there and I have my six wheeler there and I come driving up the road one morning and – it's like breaking daylight and going to check on some of the guys and
The pair crane flapping wings and bouncing on the ground.	30	VITO VO: here's these two birds in the middle of the road both with their wings out sort of bouncing around and stuff.
Cranes walking in the peat bog.	31	VITO VO And me and Sheila and the kids were out fishing there one day,
Vito on camera.	32	VITO ON CAM: and I asked her if she wanted to see some cool looking birds. So we went driving down the one road and sure enough they came walking right up to the van.
Sheila on camera.  Graphic: Sheila Palazzolo Sandusky, MI resident	33	SHEILA PALAZZOLO ON CAM: As we were sitting there they flew right to the tail end of the truck, and they stood at the back and they opened their wings and did a little dance, and then after a little while they flew back away. But if they hadn't opened their wings I'm not sure I'd known what they were because you can't see any black at all on them.
Sandhill eating near the whooping cranes.  Three birds take off from the ground.  Another shot of the 3 birds in the marsh.  Still of Vito kneeling over a crane platform.	34	GEORGE VO: The Sandhill crane that had tried to join the whooping cranes on their territory finally was accepted and  when I observed them on August 24 <sup>th</sup> , the three birds were constantly together.  Vito and I went to the marsh where the birds had spent most of June and July.  And we found two platforms that looked like crane platforms on which the birds eventually would lay eggs,

George on camera.	35	GEORGE ON CAM: but there were no signs of eggshell fragments. I don't think the birds laid. I think it was their first year on their new territory, and perhaps if they come back again next spring they will produce eggs and chicks in that wetland.
CHAPTER BREAK: Shoot through corn stalks to the field—gentle push to pair in the field. Graphic: <b>The Fall Journey</b>	36	
Jeb Barzen on camera  Graphic: ICF /Field Ecology Director  Cut away of the Whoopers in cornfield foraging	37	JEB BARZEN ON CAM: September and October, it began to dawn on us that it was really important to try and follow these birds back to Florida that were currently in Sandusky, Michigan. The only problem with that, to do it we needed an airplane as well as ground crew and that's pretty expensive stuff.
Windway plane on the tarmac--pilot enters the plane.	38	JEB VO: But, Windway Corporation was really nice in that they decided to commit a pilot, an airplane, and equipment to really pull this off.
Kirstin on camera.  Graphic: Kirstin Lucas ICF Field Ecology Project Manager	39	KIRSTIN LUCAS ON CAM: We've been flying with Terry Kohler's planes throughout the season with our Briggsville project, and so it's really nice. He was fairly prepared for the Whooper following, and set up fixed antennas onto the plane wings. We had it on the Caravan, we had it on the Cessna 182 and also on the 172. They set up all three planes with inside antennas that hook up to a switch box and we hooked up the switch box to the receiver and we are set to go.
Matt on cam. Graphic: Matt Hayes ICF Field Ecology Intern	40	MATT HAYES ON CAM: The day before the whooping cranes took off was just a mess – the nastiest day we've probably seen yet. There was snow and ice all day
Cranes foraging in snow.	41	MATT VO: and it didn't melt by the afternoon and we saw a lot of small areas of water just freezing up and the birds weren't acting like they normally were.

Visuals the day before the birds left Sandusky, Michigan.	42	MATT ON CAM: They were foraging but they moved very little and they basically just seemed like they were trying to conserve as much body heat as they could.
A dismal scene capturing the crane pair under cloud heavy sky standing against the snowy backdrop of a weather beaten barn.	43	MATT'S VO And by about 11:00 and in the afternoon the winds were like 15-20 miles per hour. It was just nasty.
Graphic: <b>The Fall Journey Day One</b>	44	
Matt on camera cut to dramatic scene of birds lifting off to leave the misery of the snow and cold and start their migration.	45	MATT ON CAM: We were listening to the roost and all of a sudden the signals were just pounding, which usually means you're getting all sorts of signals from the air, which is a signal that they are flying.
Whoopers flying – and tracking van.	46	KIRSTIN ON CAM: When they took off it was pretty evident because they were south of the roost that they had been hanging out at all summer.
Tracking van on route as they follow birds.	47	KIRSTIN VO: So the tracking crew on the ground scurried and got everything together and were able to track them for hours by vehicle, which is actually pretty amazing because when a bird is flying it doesn't necessarily fly along the roadways.
MATT ON CAM. JEB IS IN SHOT. Map animation of coordinates of the roost location the first day.	48	MATT ON CAM: Well they had a visual on both birds the first day. They were able to see both of them flying together and they heard both signals.
Footage of the radio bands on the birds' legs. Cut away to female Whooper	49	MATT VO: But the problem is that the female's radio is a lot stronger and a lot clearer than the male's was. He was missing an antenna and all sorts of stuff.
Matt on cam.	50	MATT ON CAM: And so basically we used the female as our guide to say, you know, the pair is moving.

Graphic of map showing migration location. Title: First roosting site Southern shore Lake Erie	51	JEB VO: They probably roosted on the north side of Ohio. Which means,
Jeb on camera.	52	JEB ON CAM: for them to do that, they would have had to flown over the lake in snow squalls, and in darkness.
Footage of a white-out snow storm over the lakeshore.  Female foraging in the snow for food.	53	JEB VO: So I suspect the birds actually made it or at least the female made it across the lake that night and  then roosted in the wetland and didn't leave her roost until about 10:00 in the morning.
Jeb on camera.	54	JEB ON CAM: But we don't know what happened to the male. It doesn't mean the male is dead. It just means that the male might have gotten separated from the female flying across the lake in snow squalls that night and he might be making his own way to Florida, but separately from the female, and since we can't get as good a detection range.
<b>Graphic:</b> <b>The Fall Journey</b> <b>Day Two</b>	55	
Matt on camera.	56	MATT ON CAM: So we went through Ontario down to Detroit, and that was probably the longest day for us on the ground, because we went all the way from Ontario
Animated map shows progress of migration from the first roosting site to the second roosting site in a coal mine pond.	57	MATT VO: up and around, down to the southern edge of Ohio between Ohio and West Virginia which is where she roosted that night.
Matt on camera.	58	MATT ON CAM: And so it was basically like we were trying to catch up all day and we finally got there like at nine o'clock at night.
Jeb on camera. Cut to still of the coal mine taken from the plane—cut to another shot of the female Whooper on the ground.	59	JEB ON CAM; Koji was pretty nervous so he called me and he said, "Jeb, she is in this really dirty looking pond that looks like it's in the middle of a coal mine, and I don't know what it's like for her.

<b>The Fall Journey Day Three</b>	60	
Matt on camera.	61	MATT ON CAM: We made it through West Virginia and she kept heading south. We try to get a visual on her if we can, and luckily we did get to see her a couple times. It was really neat--
Footage of the female spiraling on thermal.	62	MATT VO: and got some great behavior. We saw her flying so we went right over her, and we kind of watched her as we were passing over and she started to do a spiral, which is what they do when they try to rise up on a thermal.
Matt on cam.	63	MATT ON CAM: So she starts spiraling and spiraling and she got a little bit higher and she took off.
Mountain region from the air.	64	MATT VO: And so we were starting to get into mountainous areas.
Animated map showing migration route to Tennessee.	65	MATT VO: She roosted in the very western tip of Virginia, right before it intersects with Tennessee.
JEB ON CAM. Cut away of heavily forested area.	66	JEB ON CAM: That was about the most un-Whooper kind of habitat you would ever anticipate.
Female Whooper flying over dense forest area.	67	JEB VO: It's in a mountain, on a mountain stream completely forested.
	68	JEB ON CAM: She had stopped somewhere in that area. So both the southern Ohio
Still of Whooper in cloudy coal pond.	69	JEB VO: roost spot in a cloudy coal pond

From Jeb on camera to air footage of Whooper over thick forest area and back to Jeb on camera.	70	JEB ON CAM: and in the mountains of Virginia were two roost spots that offered the minimum of what the bird needed, which is water. And presumably gave her enough security that she was safe. That probably was about all. There wasn't any food to any great degree that was likely available at either of those two sites.
<b>Graphic:</b> <b>The Fall Journey</b> <b>Day Four</b>	71	
Jeb on camera.	72	JEB ON CAM: The fourth day began her taking off, pretty much as she had done before, about 10:30.
Matt on camera.	73	MATT ON CAM: She is still heading pretty much in a straight direction south. South by south east.
Jeb on-camera with b-roll of the animated map showing the veer west and continuing to Greenville, Tennessee.	74	JEB ON CAMERA: Right after she left Virginia, she's hitting the mountains, the main part of the Appalachian chain. And at that point she began to veer to the west and parallel to the mountains. She landed by midday and she was near Greenville, Tennessee, just southwest of her point. .
Jeb on-camera with b-roll back to animated map showing straight line flight.	75	JEB ON CAMERA: This was the first time during the migration that she did anything than fly in a straight line, basically between Sandusky, Michigan and Gainesville, Florida. It seemed fairly clear that she was having problems going over the mountains
Jeb on camera with b-roll of the female spiraling.	76	JEB: There's two explanations that might be likely and they're not mutually exclusive of each other.  One is that she needed thermals to have enough energy to give her lift to go high enough to clear the mountain range.  Or two, she had already been, this was her fourth day of migration and she had not likely fed much from the time she left Sandusky, Michigan. And it may be that her protein metabolism is such that she needed to eat. Not necessarily high-energy foods, but foods that had proteins and minerals and that sort of thing to help fuel her general day-to-day daily metabolism.

Jeb on cam with b-roll of the Whooper flying (ground to sky shot)	77	JEB ON CAM: What probably happened is she was flying and may have made another attempt to get over the Appalachians. Didn't, and then came and landed in the last place that he had a location on her at midday.
Animated map showing roosting location with plenty of food.—cut to still of a by-air still of a pond and fields.	78	JEB VO: And so she came back to that location and chose a pretty nice spot for the first time to land. She had a nice pond where she could forage. She had alfalfa in a grazed pasture nearby right adjacent to the pond and harvested corn.
Matt on camera. B-roll of Sandhill Cranes in the air.	79	MATT ON CAM: We just kind of checked on her throughout the day, and said if she is going to take off this is most likely when she is going to take off. For some odd reason there were some sandhills hanging around. She took off and started to fly with them. They kind of reacted to her. They veered off from her and she kind of followed for awhile and they all kind of flew together. They started spiraling and spiraling. Okay she might be taking off. It was a little later than normal. It was about 11:30 eastern.
Matt on camera. B-roll of Whooper back on the ground in the cow pasture.	80	MATT ON CAM: She ended up landing back in the cow pasture. So she spent the rest of the day there foraging. The next day she didn't really do a whole lot. She just kind of foraged around and moved, she created a better radius of a circle of where she was going. She went further into the cow pasture. She was just going after bugs and whatever else was there. There was, as Jeb said, corn across the street, but she didn't ever go over there.
Jeb on camera.	81	JEB ON CAM: She ended up sitting there for two days.
<b>Graphic:</b> <b>The Fall Journey</b> <b>Day Seven</b>	82	
Jeb on cam. B-roll animated map showing pass to North Carolina.	83	JEB ON CAM: That would be the seventh day of the migration, her fifth migrating day. She then went through the pass toward Asheville, North Carolina. As we're speaking she should be somewhere in South Carolina nearing the Savannah River which is the border between Georgia and North Carolina.

Animated map shows the straight line the crane is making straight to Gainesville, Florida.	84	JEB: This female is going straight toward Gainesville, Florida.
<b>Graphic:</b> <b>Fall Migration Day Nine</b>	85	
Stills and C.G. over animated map  Graphic 1 over map: After nine days, the female landed near Inverness, Florida.  Graphic and still two over map: Still of ground crew C.G. The air and ground crew were there to celebrate the event. R	86	Music.
<b>Graphic:</b> <b>Conclusions...</b>	87	
Jeb on camera with b-roll of the wetlands of Buffalo National Park, still of Whooper in Florida.	88	JEB ON CAMERA: This is a bird who genetically comes from Wood Buffalo National Park Bird, a migratory population. But she spent approximately 4-5 years in Florida – not migrating. She was released in Florida and gradually used a larger home area. I believe that they were a strong pair that people following them in Florida thought would be a good possibility for nesting. So they are clearly being migratory.
Jeb on camera with b-roll of footage showing the dry conditions in Florida wetlands when the Whooper pair took off on their journey. B-roll from the air of the topography of Florida the birds were leaving.	89	JEB ON CAMERA: All of a sudden for whatever reason, the best hypothesis around might be that there were dry conditions and so the wetlands weren't very good for nesting. These birds took off and went north.
Various shots of the pair: in flight, on the snowy ground before leaving Sandusky, Michigan.	90	JEB VO: They migrated to a temperate area that's within the realm of possibility as being a breeding area for whooping cranes. And they try to breed.
Animated map showing the straight line back to Florida.	91	JEB: And then these birds picked up and are clearly are flying straight as an arrow back to Gainesville. They know exactly where they are and they know where they need to go. To me it's pretty striking because it suggests that perhaps there's much more to migration than what we generally attributed to cranes can be genetically held.

C.G. Friday, Dec. 1, 2000	92	
<p>Slow motion footage captures the majesty of the Whooping Crane pair.</p> <p>Wind ruffles their feathers as they drink then look up in unison at the horizon.</p> <p>Graphic:  <i>No signals from the male Whooper have been heard since November 21, 2000.</i></p> <p><i>The Florida team of Biologists is keeping watch for his return.</i></p>	93	
Fade to image of sparkling water with three cranes in the glitter of water below.	94	
Credits	95	