

The Whooping Crane

This wildlife film is a portrait of a rare bird, the whooping crane — a mysterious and fiercely independent creature whose lineage dates back to the pre-Ice Age. A bird of extraordinary beauty whose flight resembles poetry in motion, the whooping crane's claim to fame is its scarcity. Fifty years ago, there were only 15 "whoopers" in the whole world. Although the efforts of conservationists in Canada and the United States have increased this population, it still numbers less than one hundred. The whooping crane remains an endangered species. This documentary shows a few of the methods that aid in the preservation of the whooper. Tiny radio transmitters inserted in the leg-bands put on juveniles help



conservationists keep track of the birds. But the film focusses on the main characteristics of this bird: its courting dance; its unique mode of conserving energy during the long migratory flights between the Aransas National Wildlife Refuge in southern Texas and Wood Buffalo National Park in the Northwest Territories; its diet; breeding and parenting characteristics; and the growth of the newborn to adulthood. The film also touches on the main factors, natural and man-made, that endanger the whooper. Young viewers will be fascinated by the beauty of this bird and the clear details on its known characteristics. This is, in part, a classroom adaptation of the longer film, *A Great White Bird*.

Photography
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Color
Screening time:
9 minutes 48 seconds

16 mm: 106C 0186 006
3/4": 116C 0186 006
VHS: 113C 0186 006
Beta: 114C 0186 006

Age groups:

Grades 3 to 6

Subject areas:

Sciences and environmental studies (wildlife/conservation); Language Arts

Some questions for discussion:

1. What is an "endangered species"? What are some of the hazards that endanger the whooping crane's life?
2. What makes up the diet of the whooper?
3. Describe the unique techniques that the whooping crane uses for long-distance flying.
4. Why do you think the whooping crane requires so much space (450 acres) in its summer breeding grounds?
5. Describe some of the growth and behavioral patterns through which a whooper passes from birth to maturity.

Activities:

1. Find or draw a picture of a young whooping crane and a mature one. List the main characteristics and habits of this bird.
2. Do additional research on the whooper in your library or see the companion film, *Operation Egglift*, or the longer National Film Board film, *A Great White Bird*. List your findings on characteristics, and on the methods used to increase this species's population. Share your findings with your class.
3. Imagine you are a whooping crane. Write a story of your life, from birth to old age. Include explanations of why space and isolation are so important to you. If you like, include information about your long heritage and some of the great changes your species has witnessed from the pre-Ice Age to the present.



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