

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service



News Release

Midwest Region

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Donations Triple Reward for Information on Shooting of Whooping Crane Near Cayuga, Indiana

Contributions from two organizations have tripled the amount of a reward offered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for information leading to the arrest and conviction of the person or persons who shot and killed a whooping crane near Cayuga, Indiana.

Defenders of Wildlife, a national non-profit conservation organization, and the Indiana Turn in a Poacher or a Polluter Program are each donating \$2,500 to the reward for information that leads to an arrest. The total reward is now \$7,500.

Wildlife law enforcement agents with the Service and the Indiana Department of Natural Resources are investigating the shooting of the crane, which happened sometime between Saturday, Nov. 28, when the crane was observed by an International Crane Foundation staff member, and Tuesday, Dec. 1, 2009, when an ICF volunteer found the carcass along West County Road 310 North, just west of North County Road 225 West.

The Turn in a Poacher or a Polluter Program is a joint effort between the sportsmen and sportswomen of Indiana, concerned citizens and the Indiana Department of Natural Resources. Through this program, any citizen can anonymously report violations of fishing, hunting and environmental laws, and can be eligible for cash rewards. All of the money contributed to rewards comes from private donations.

“The Indiana TIP Program hopes that the increased reward amount will encourage some good citizen to come forward with information that will lead to the arrest of the person who did this,” said Phil Seng, a member of the TIP Citizen’s Advisory Board. “People who break hunting and fishing laws are not hunters or anglers. They are thieves who steal from all of us.”

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Defenders of Wildlife often contributes to rewards for information when endangered or state-listed species are killed, according to Caroline Kennedy, Senior Director of Field Conservation for the organization.

"It is tragic that such an important bird in the recovery effort was killed," Kennedy said. "We hope that the additional reward money that Defenders of Wildlife is providing will help lead to a conviction in the death of this bird."

Observations reported by the public play a key role in solving wildlife crime, according to U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Special Agent Buddy Shapp. "People who live in an area notice details that can tell us a lot," Shapp said. "They sometimes see something or hear something that strikes them as unusual but not necessarily criminal. People might not realize that their observation is significant."

Anyone with information should call the Indiana Department of Natural Resources 24-hour hotline at: 1-800 TIP IDNR (800-847-4367), or the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service at 317-346-7016. Callers can remain anonymous.

The crane was identified by a leg band, and determined to be the seven-year old mother of "Wild-1," the only whooping crane chick successfully hatched (in 2006) and migrated from captivity.

There are approximately 500 whooping cranes left in the world. The crane and its mate were among 19 whooping cranes migrating from their summer grounds in Wisconsin to their wintering grounds in Florida.

In addition to the Endangered Species Act, whooping cranes are protected by state laws and the federal Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

The Indiana DNR is the guardian of the state's fish and wildlife resources and their habitats. More information about the Indiana DNR is available at:
<http://www.in.gov/dnr>.

The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect and enhance fish, wildlife, plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. We are both a leader and trusted partner in fish and wildlife conservation, known for our scientific excellence, stewardship of lands and natural resources, dedicated professionals and commitment to public service. For more information on our work and the people who make it happen, visit <http://www.fws.gov>.