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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Conservation Partnership Continues to Thrive in Louisiana With the Release of
Endangered Whooping Cranes Into the Wild**

(New Orleans, La.) - A group of eleven juvenile whooping cranes were transferred to the White Lake Wetlands Conservation Area in Southwest Louisiana as part of an ongoing effort to protect the species from extinction. After spending a few weeks getting used to their new environment, the juvenile cranes will join 69 whooping cranes that are part of a population being monitored by the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries.

Four of the chicks being released were hatched and reared at Freeport-McMoRan Audubon Species Survival Center in New Orleans. Those four chicks were placed into a cohort to socialize together. Seven costumed-reared birds from the International Crane Foundation joined them in early October to form one large cohort. This is the third year Audubon Nature Institute has reared cranes for release into the wild in Louisiana.

LDWF and Audubon, supported by generous donors like Chevron, have been longtime leaders in whooping crane conservation and are continuing to expand their partnership with the goal of developing a self-sustaining Louisiana whooping crane population. This partnership is an example of the importance of collaboration between state agencies and non-profit organizations, leveraging the strengths of both to achieve measurable conservation results and make a significant, historic impact on the future of this species. With the support of Chevron, LDWF and Audubon are committed to the long-term growth and stability of the whooping crane population to save the species from extinction.

“We have worked hard and been able to accomplish great things with our whooping cranes,” says Assistant Curator at Species Survival Center Richard Dunn. “The success we have had with them would not have been possible without the dedication of our committed partners,” says Dunn.

The addition of these cranes increases the flock to 80 whooping cranes living in the wild in Louisiana. The support of partners such as U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Geological Survey, Louisiana Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit, Patuxent Wildlife Research Center, International Crane Foundation, Calgary Zoo, and generous donors, including Chevron, have allowed LDWF and Audubon to expand efforts in Louisiana.

“We’re proud to continue our long-standing collaboration with the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries and Audubon Nature Institute on whooping crane restoration and repopulation to ensure this endangered species is thriving for generations to come,” says Corporate Affairs Manager for Chevron's Gulf of Mexico Business Unit Leah Brown.

The Louisiana wild flock was initiated in 2011 when 10 whooping cranes from the U. S. Geological Survey's Patuxent Wildlife Research Center in Maryland were released to the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries' White Lake Wetlands Conservation Area in Vermilion Parish. This marked a significant conservation milestone with the first wild whooping cranes in Louisiana since 1950. In 2016, the first chicks hatched in the Louisiana wild since 1939—a significant sign of recovery for the species.

"The success of this program can be credited to the hard work and dedication put forth by the diverse network of partnerships committed to conserving whooping cranes and achieving the goal of a self-sustaining population in Louisiana," says Research Coordinator at Rockefeller Wildlife Refuge for the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries Joseph Marty.

In early 2017, Audubon was asked to significantly increase the number of crane chicks raised at the rearing facility to supplement the North American migratory populations as well as the Louisiana non-migratory whooping crane population. As one of only six whooping crane breeding facilities in the U.S., support of project partners is vital to the long-term success of the whooping crane population in Louisiana.

Anyone encountering a whooping crane is advised to observe the bird from a distance and to report the sighting to LDWF <http://wlf.louisiana.gov/webform/whooping-crane-reporting-form>. Whooping cranes are large-bodied, long legged, white birds with a red head and black facial markings on the side of its face. Birds measure a height of five feet and a wingspan of seven to eight feet, which makes them very distinctive. In flight, whooping cranes display black wing tips, a fully extended neck, and legs that extend well beyond the tail.

Anyone witnessing suspicious activity involving whooping cranes is advised to report that information to LDWF's Enforcement Division by calling 1-800-442-2511 or using the tip411 program, which may offer a cash reward for information leading to arrests or convictions. To use the tip411 program, citizens can text LADWF and their tip to 847411 or download the "LADWF Tips" iPhone app from the Apple iTunes store free of charge. Citizen Observer, the tip411 provider, uses technology that removes all identifying information before LDWF receives the text so that LDWF cannot identify the sender.

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