

Complimentary Issue

# Festival of the Cranes 2023

January 13 - 15, 2023  
Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge  
Decatur, AL

## INSIDE

Schedule of Events

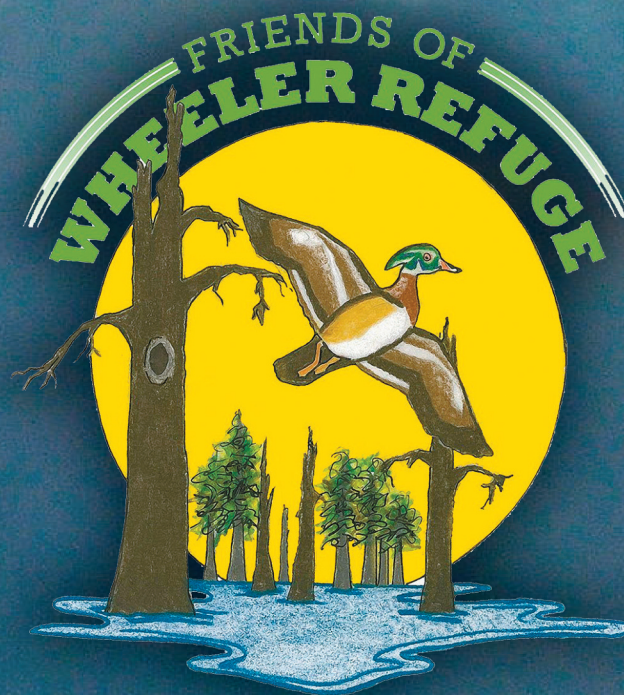
Photography and Music

Children's Activities

Thousands of Sandhill Cranes  
and Whooping Cranes

Wings to Soar

"Hope" the mascot of the  
International Crane Foundation



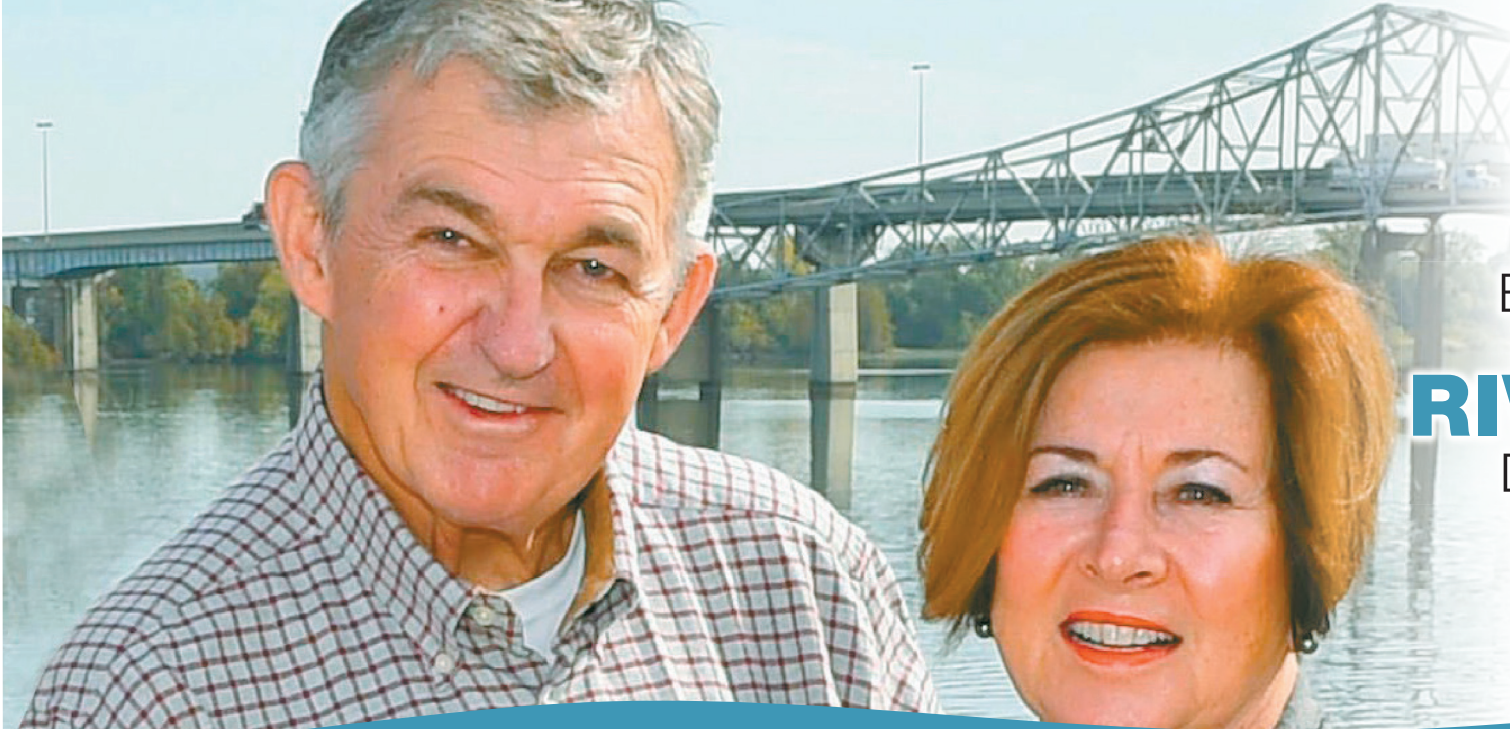
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# Wheeler Wildlife Refuge Association Board Members

Wheeler Wildlife Refuge Association (WWRA) is a non-profit volunteer group supporting the conservation, awareness and appreciation of Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge (NWR). We work closely with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service staff and volunteers to support the land and wildlife of Wheeler NWR. With donations from our friends and organizations in the community, membership dues and funds from our nature store operations, we finance awareness and educational projects, provide much-needed volunteer hours,

sponsor and manage special events, and provide services to inform the public about the benefits and attractions of the refuge.

WWRA was established in July of 1998 in partnership with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Its purpose is to “promote conservation, awareness, and appreciation of Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge and to provide assistance to environmental education programs and other conservation efforts on the Refuge”. The mission statement of the

WWRA is “To conserve the natural and cultural resources of Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge and Satellite Refuges of Northern Alabama.”

The Association is part of a network of more than 200 “Friends Groups” nationwide, each associated with one or more national wildlife refuges, all committed to improving and protecting our unique refuge resources.

Our operations and activities are managed by a nine-member all-volun-

teer board of directors. A large part of the Board’s efforts are focused on informing local and national elected officials about refuge issues, securing funding for refuge projects to enhance public access to and understanding of refuge wildlife and to sponsor events that show-case the many attractions of the refuge.

WWRA Board members are from local communities and all have a passion for the refuge.



**L to R front row:** Susan Estes; Mary Ratliff **L to R back row:** John Hobdell; Dwight Cooley; Teresa Adams; Nicole Mashburn; Dave Young, refuge staff liaison; Tom Ress  
**Not pictured:** John Rice

**Mary Ratliff** is the WWRA Board President. One of the main reasons my volunteering with nature based organizations has persisted for over 45 years is that I know and wholeheartedly believe it is the best use of my time to help humanity in general. The mental and physical benefits of doing anything outdoors has been scientifically proven and endorsed, and our association has provided the impetus to facilitate making that happen for anyone who decides to participate. I know that’s more a mission statement than bio, but to sum up a very active and fulfilling life that began in Wisconsin riding my pony to discovering Wheeler on my horse (and still rediscovering) is proof my direct involvement with nature has

been incredibly good for me. All our dedicated board members are avid outdoors people and they can attest to that fact too. We are and continue to be proud of sharing and protecting Wheeler NWR.

**Susan Estes** Most of Susan’s award winning 40 year teaching career was spent in the life sciences with special interest in ecology and the marine environment. Her field studies students won several awards for their reclamation and bio-engineering projects along the Tennessee River. Estes was one of two teachers selected by Decatur City Schools to design Wetlands Edge Environmental Center, and develop its curriculum for K-12 students. A self-

taught artist, Estes enjoys painting, her family and grandchildren, being outside for any reason, reading, traveling, and raising awareness about Wheeler NWR.

**John Rice** recently joined the Association as Treasurer. He grew up in Hickory Hills in Decatur adjacent to the Refuge and explored the nearby woods and backwaters. John was a Youth Conservation Corps employee. His father, Harry Rice, retired from the Department of Interior and became Director of Point Mallard Park. John is married to Amanda Brownlee Rice, a Decatur native, and they have two sons and four grandsons.

**Tom Ress** is a long time refuge volunteer and leads kayak and birding trips on the refuge. He worked his entire career with the Department of Defense in various locations and served as the US Army’s representative for a NATO partnership. He is a Yankee by birth, born and raised in Indiana, but has embraced Alabama and Wheeler NWR in particular. Tom is a writer and public speaker and authored the book *Images of America: Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge*. He loves to travel and spending time outdoors and is an avid kayaker, hiker, biker, birder and photographer.

**John Hobdell** worked for many years in Pharmaceutical Development at GSK. He volunteered at Hawk Mountain Sanctuary in Pennsylvania doing a variety of activities: painting, parking cars, moving big rocks, shoveling snow off roofs, planting trees, and doing a few bird counts. He worked with others to clear fields at Nockamixon State Park in Pennsylvania to improve habitat for American Woodcock. He calls Alabama home and lives in Lawrence County with his wife, Patricia, trying to reduce the quantity of privet hedge and kudzu. A slow process! They both currently volunteer at the Wheeler NWR help desk on Wednesdays.

**Teresa Adams** is a former Supervisory Park Ranger at Wheeler NWR, retired with thirty-six years of Federal Service with the National Park Service, U.S. Army Corps Of Engineers and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

**Nicole Mashburn Ph.D.** is a Birmingham native but has resided in Hartselle for the past 26 years. She has served as an instructor for Calhoun Community College for the past 13 years teaching biology as well as anatomy and physiology. Prior to teaching for Calhoun, she served as the environmental educator for the Morgan County Soil & Water Conservation District. She is married to Dr. Eric Mashburn and has one daughter, Jesse. An avid outdoors person, her

hobbies include birdwatching, scuba diving, kayaking, astronomy, hiking and travel.

**Dwight Cooley** worked for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for 36 years at locations throughout the southeast. From 2001 until his retirement in 2016, he served as the Project Leader at Wheeler NWR Complex. Since his retirement, he has served as a volunteer at the refuge. He holds a B.S. in Biology from Athens State University and a M.S. in Zoology and Wildlife from Mississippi State University. He and his wife Deb are both native Alabamians.

**David Young** is the refuge staff liaison for the WWRA Board. He is a Park Ranger for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service at Wheeler NWR. In this varied role, he helps manage the refuge's Visitor Services program by working with other refuge staff, refuge volunteers, the Wheeler Wildlife Refuge Association, and other partner organizations to help visitors explore, learn about, and enjoy nature and wildlife on the refuge. Trained as a geographer and natural resource interpreter, David has worked at several different national parks and national wildlife refuges across the country. He's glad to call the biodiverse state of Alabama home, with plenty of birds to watch, trails to hike, and rivers to kayak!

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## Event Presenters



**Steve Trash**

Rockin' Eco Hero **Steve Trash** has entertained over 25 million people since 1984. The award winning performer has received numerous awards including Daughters of the American Revolution National Conservation Award, the 2017 Best Environmental Science Curriculum Winner by EAAA and the 2011 Environmental Educator of the Year Award. He's a founding board member of the national Keep America Beautiful affiliate, Keep the Shoals Beautiful. He was a featured guest on LeVar Burton's Reading Rainbow. He has his own kids science show on PBS called STEVE TRASH SCIENCE.



**Timothy Michael Joe**

**Timothy Michael Joe** is an American self taught, representational artist from the rural southern town of Greensboro, Alabama. Timothy creates art based on themes associated with the southern rural culture loving God, family, and heritage. He has experience with many mediums over the years including; graphite, calligraphy, charcoal, gouache, acrylic, and oil paints and soft pastels. He enjoys using his gift to educate, uplift, and encourage his audience.



**Jimmy Stiles**

**Jimmy Stiles** is a naturalist, field biologist, and outdoorsman, currently working on Alabama's herpetofaunal diversity with the Alabama Natural Heritage Program and also in the Conecuh National Forest leading efforts to recover the endangered indigo snake (North America's largest and arguably most impressive snake species) and restore the longleaf forests.



**Christopher Joe**

Conservationist and owner of Connecting with Birds and Nature Tours, LLC. **Christopher Joe** will be leading the Birding 101 tours at the refuge Visitor Center. He is a 3rd generation farmer that raises Black Angus Cattle, and avid outdoors man. He started his company on October 31, 2018 in order to diversify the family's award winning Black Angus cattle farm which has been in the family since the early 1900s.



**George Archibald**

**George Archibald**, along with fellow graduate student Ron Sauey, established the International Crane Foundation in Baraboo, Wisconsin as the world center for the study and preservation of cranes. His dream was to save the world's cranes and that notion has been his driving force ever since. Dr. Archibald's visionary leadership in international conservation over the last fifty years has given flight to extraordinary grassroots recovery efforts across the globe. He forged scientific exchanges and field conservation programs in the 1970s with Chinese and Russian biologists. Under his leadership, the International Crane Foundation grew into a highly respected organization, successfully promoting crane and habitat conservation around the world. Dr. Archibald recently completed the book, *My Life with Cranes: A Collection of Stories*.



**John Stokes and Dale Kernahan**

**Wings to Soar.** Dale Kernahan and John Stokes have a combined 72 years of experience working with raptors. Dale became a licensed Falconer in 1990 and began her professional raptor career in 1993 when she joined the American Eagle Foundation. She worked for the Wings of America Show at Dollywood, as a herpetologist with the Santa Barbara Zoo and in 2004, she began work with Save Our American Raptors. In 2013, Dale and John formed Wings to Soar. John began his professional career with the Memphis Zoo. In 1986, John left the Memphis Zoo and began work with the Cumberland Wildlife Foundation which later merged with the National Foundation to Protect America's Eagles (later known as the American Eagle Foundation). In January of 1991, NFPAE relocated to Pigeon Forge and Dollywood theme park. His position was that of Edutainment Director and duties were training raptors and presentors for the Wings of America Show. In 2002, John became the Lead Keeper of Birds at the Santa Barbara Zoo. From 2004 to the present, John has worked with Dale at Save Our American Raptors and Wings To Soar.



**Andrew Orr**

Photographing harsh climates and endangered species has long been a favorite subject for **Andrew Orr**, a landscape and wildlife photographer for the past twenty years. For much of the last decade, he's spent hundreds of days photographing in extreme climates such as Antarctica and the deserts of Northern Arizona. He recently completed a portfolio documenting the critically endangered California Condor. While not photographing condors, Andrew has traveled several times to Antarctica teaching photography on expedition ships as well as sailed on a 52-day Antarctic expedition on a 100-year-old tall ship.



**Richard Beilfuss**

**Richard Beilfuss** serves as President & CEO of the International Crane Foundation and has more than 30 years of experience leading community-based conservation efforts for cranes, other wildlife, and people across many countries in Africa and Asia as well as in the US. Rich will explore the role of cranes as inspiring and endangered ambassadors for conservation worldwide, bringing people together to save the amazing places where cranes dance. He will share conservation stories from the field in Vietnam and Zambia, and the struggle to bring back Whooping Cranes from the brink of extinction and maintain the successful recovery of Sandhill Cranes across the US.



**Joseph Duff**

**Joseph Duff** joined WildAid Canada Society as their Executive Director in 2019 following a career spanning over 25 years as the CEO of Operation Migration Inc. After earning his pilot license in the Yukon Territories and a 20 year career as a commercial photographer in Toronto, Joe Duff joined Bill Lishman and together they conducted the first ever human-led bird migration. The two "artists-turned-naturalists" used two ultralight aircraft to lead a flock of Canada geese from Ontario to Virginia. The success of that initial study led to the founding of Operation Migration and the making of the Columbia movie "Fly Away Home" in 1995. Joe headed the team of pilots and handlers that annually led a new generation of Whooping cranes on their 1200+ mile first migration from Wisconsin to Florida. Between 2001 and 2016, Operation Migration worked with the nine federal, state and private agencies that made up the Whooping Crane Eastern Partnership.

# RETURN OF THE WHOOPING CRANE TO ALABAMA



Three stately white birds with red crowns and black primary feathers flap silently as they head south from their summer home in Wisconsin, headed for the Gulf Coast of Florida where they will spend the winter. They had taken a similar path two years before, following an ultralight airplane piloted by what seemed to them a member of their own species. With the ultralight no longer accompanying them, they are looking for a place to alight for the night when they see a small wetland surrounded by harvested corn just north of the Tennessee River and Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge. They set their wings and land.

Sometime over the next few days, they note a small party of humans approaching and they move slowly away. Little did they know or care, the humans were participating on the 2004 Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge Christmas Bird Count on December 18. It was an historic event...they were Whooping Cranes and members of their species had not been seen in Alabama since 1899.

Whooping Cranes, unlike many other waterbird species, were probably never numerous with peak estimated populations of around 10,000. They nested over much of the northern United

States and Canada and migrated through much of the U.S. to their wintering grounds in the southern U.S. By the 1940's their numbers had declined precipitously to only 15-20 birds when conservation measures aimed at increasing their populations were initiated. Thankfully, these measures resulted in an increase in numbers and by the 1990's, 500-600 birds were migrating from their nesting grounds in and near Wood Buffalo National Park in northwest Canada to winter along the Gulf Coast of Texas.

Realizing that Whooping Cranes once occurred in eastern North America the Whooping Crane East-

ern Partnership (WCEP), a group of non-profit organizations and government and state agencies, was formed in 1999. Its purpose is to facilitate the restoration of that migratory population as an integral part of the overall recovery of the species. Member organizations conduct a number of research, educational and management actions throughout eastern North America.

Alabama has benefited directly from WCEP programs. Since the appearance of the three cranes in 2004, Alabama has become a haven for migrating and wintering Whooping Cranes. Many now spend all or a portion of their winters



## FESTIVAL OF THE CRANES

See the exhibit, Symbols of Transformation by Sophie McVicar. Sophie is a visual artist who lives and works in Birmingham, Alabama. Her work celebrates the gentle beauties and tragedies of nature featuring the crane, hare, snake, vulture and more.

### **Festival of the Cranes Gallery Hours:**

Thursday & Friday, 10:00 am-5:00 pm

Saturday, 10:00 am-3:00 pm

Sunday, 11:00 am-3:00 pm

### **Watercolor Workshop with Sophie McVicar**

Saturday, Jan 14th, 9:00-11:00 am. \$35

Space is limited. Register at [carnegiearts.org](http://carnegiearts.org)

### **Watercolor/Gouache Workshop with Timothy Joe,**

Saturday, Jan 14th, 1:00-3:00 am. \$35

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here. North Alabama appears particularly attractive to them. They have been seen in Lauderdale, Lawrence, Limestone, Morgan, Madison and Cherokee counties.

Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge, with its 35,000 acres of wetlands, forests and cropland, has provided a sanctuary for migrating and wintering Whooping Cranes since at least 2004. The number of Whooping Cranes using the Refuge annually varies from 10-20 birds with a high of 26. From their primary roost sites in the Refuge's shallow waters surrounding Flint Creek Island and Garth Slough, they spend much of the day foraging and loafing in

Garth Slough, Limestone Bay, in the Tennessee River backwaters off White Springs Dike and often around the Refuge Visitor Center and Wildlife Observation Building. In late afternoon, prior to making their way to their roost site, upwards of 10,000 Sandhill Cranes gather around the Wildlife Observation Building. It's an awesome challenge sorting through all those Sandhills for Whooping Cranes.

Accept that challenge and join us for the next Crane Festival scheduled for January 13-15, 2023!



# WHEELER NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE... AT THE CENTER OF WINTERING WHOOPING CRANES IN EASTERN NORTH AMERICA



In an attempt to re-establish a migratory population of Whooping Cranes in eastern North America, the Whooping Crane Eastern Partnership, a coalition of conservation organizations and state and federal agencies, had chosen two re-introduction techniques to establish the Eastern Migratory Population. One technique trained cranes to follow costumed pilots flying ultralight aircraft from Wisconsin to Florida. The other, Direct Autumn Release, released young birds into wild Sandhill Crane populations nesting in Wisconsin hoping they would “learn” how to migrate. The ultralight aircraft-led program, dubbed Operation Migra-

tion, kicked off in 2001 when the first captive-reared young Whooping Cranes followed Operation Migration ultralight aircraft pilots from Wisconsin to Florida.

Shortly after Operation Migration started, the first Whooping Cranes recorded near Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge were three found just north of the refuge on the 2004 Christmas Bird Count. Unfortunately, one of the three was found dead shortly thereafter and the remaining two quickly made their way to St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge in Florida. This was big news for local birding enthusiasts, Whooping Cranes had never been

reported in north Alabama before.

Not knowing if Whoopers would be seen in subsequent years, we were pleasantly surprised when two showed up on the refuge in December of 2007. To our great joy, those same two birds, 13-02 and 18-02 from the 2002 cohort of birds led by ultralight aircraft to Florida, would become regular wintering birds for the next several years. How did we know they were the same birds? All birds released were fitted with a metal leg band and plastic color bands in unique combinations allowing individual identification if those band combinations can be recorded. In

addition, most whooping cranes were also fitted with telemetry transmitters with different frequencies on their legs so they could be monitored, at least as long as the transmitter batteries lasted.

The two birds that wintered in 2007 heralded increasing numbers of cranes using the refuge and that usage continues today. It is not unusual for 10 to 20 Whoopers to use the refuge while twenty-six is the highest number recorded. Not all Whoopers recorded on the refuge winter here. Some stop during their autumnal migration to Florida and others stop on their return to their nesting grounds.

## CENTER OF WINTERING CONTINUED

However, 10 to 15 usually spend their winter here.

To add spice to the saga, consider this. The first ten years of effort to establish an eastern migratory flock proceeded almost without a hitch. Operation Migration led young cranes from Wisconsin to Florida each year. However, as we all know, even the best laid plans can go awry. In 2011, after flying over seven hundred miles with several multi-day stops, a group of ultralight-led cranes made it to their planned rest site in Franklin County, Alabama on December 11th.

A few days rest for the birds and it's on to the next site. But it was

not to be. The cranes and ultralight pilots were grounded because of a potential Federal Aviation Administration rule violation. Ultralight aircraft are licensed as light sport aircraft which prevents them being flown for compensation under rules that took effect in 2008. Eventually, the FAA provided a temporary waiver allowing them to continue their trip.

Now, the cranes could head toward Florida. They could but they didn't! They refused to follow the ultralights. After considering all options, the decision was made to transport the young cranes by truck to Wheeler NWR. They made the 70-mile trip on February 4, 2012

and were released to mingle with thousands of Sandhill Cranes and seven Whooping Cranes already wintering on the refuge. They remained on the refuge until April 12 when they took wing, soared high, and headed north. They spent the next night in Kentucky and eventually made it back to Wisconsin.

Several of those birds returned to winter on the refuge over the years, joining other Whooping Cranes that form a core group that continues to return to Wheeler NWR every year.



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# A BRIEF HISTORY OF SANDHILL CRANES

## ON WHEELER NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

Sandhill Cranes are a conspicuous winter bird on Wheeler NWR. However, that has not always been the case. The reason...historically, Sandhill Cranes in the eastern population migrated well east of Wheeler, moving from northern Canada and the Great Lakes area through Indiana, eastern Kentucky and Tennessee to spend their winter in southern Georgia and northern Florida.

The earliest known reference to them occurring in Alabama can be found in A.H. Howell's *Birds of Alabama* (1928). He noted that "A few

pairs are resident and breed in the pine flats of Baldwin County. D.R. Peteet reports a small bunch living within two miles of Foley, and a few are known to occur about the shores of Perdido Bay, having been frequently heard calling in January, 1912, by the residents of Orange Beach. A pair was reported in the same vicinity in August 1911, and during the same summer an adult and a young bird were captured near the mouth of Perdido Bay, on the Alabama side."

In the early 1990's, for reasons unknown, small groups began to

linger and spent the winter in east Tennessee near Hiwassee. The number of birds wintering there increased dramatically and about the same time small numbers found their way to Wheeler. Three wintered on the Refuge in 1995; 11 in 1997; 50 in 2000; 500 in 2005; 1200 in 2007; 10,000 in 2015...doubling and tripling in number some years.

Fast forward to now. Walk outside the Refuge Visitor Center on any winter day and you will probably see hundreds, if not thousands, of Sandhill Cranes. At

their seasonal peak we now expect to see up to 10,000 in the fields surrounding the Visitor Center and Wildlife Observation Building while 15,000 to 20,000 use the Refuge in most years and, in good years, upwards of 25,000 have been recorded. They proclaim their presence in flight and on the ground by raucous call....some might even call it a noisy din.

If we travel back to the winter after July 7, 1938 when Franklin D. Roosevelt established Wheeler NWR by Presidential Proclamation, we wouldn't hear a Sandhill Crane



whimper. As a matter of fact, we would have to wait 25 years, when on November 28, 1963, the first Sandhill was reported on the Refuge and we wouldn't see it because only Ernest Jemison of the Refuge staff saw the bird! Fast forward 17 years to 1980 and we might have gotten to see the next Sandhill because it hung around for most of December.

Sandhill Crane sightings in late fall and early winter increased through the late 1980's but the first wintering birds were in 1992 when three birds remained through

January 1993. Small numbers wintered each year through 1997 when numbers started to increase dramatically. Wintering numbers seemed to double each year from 2000 through 2008, establishing the Refuge as an important Sandhill Crane wintering site.

To witness this spectacle, join us January 13-15, 2023 for the upcoming Festival of Cranes. Hope to see you there!



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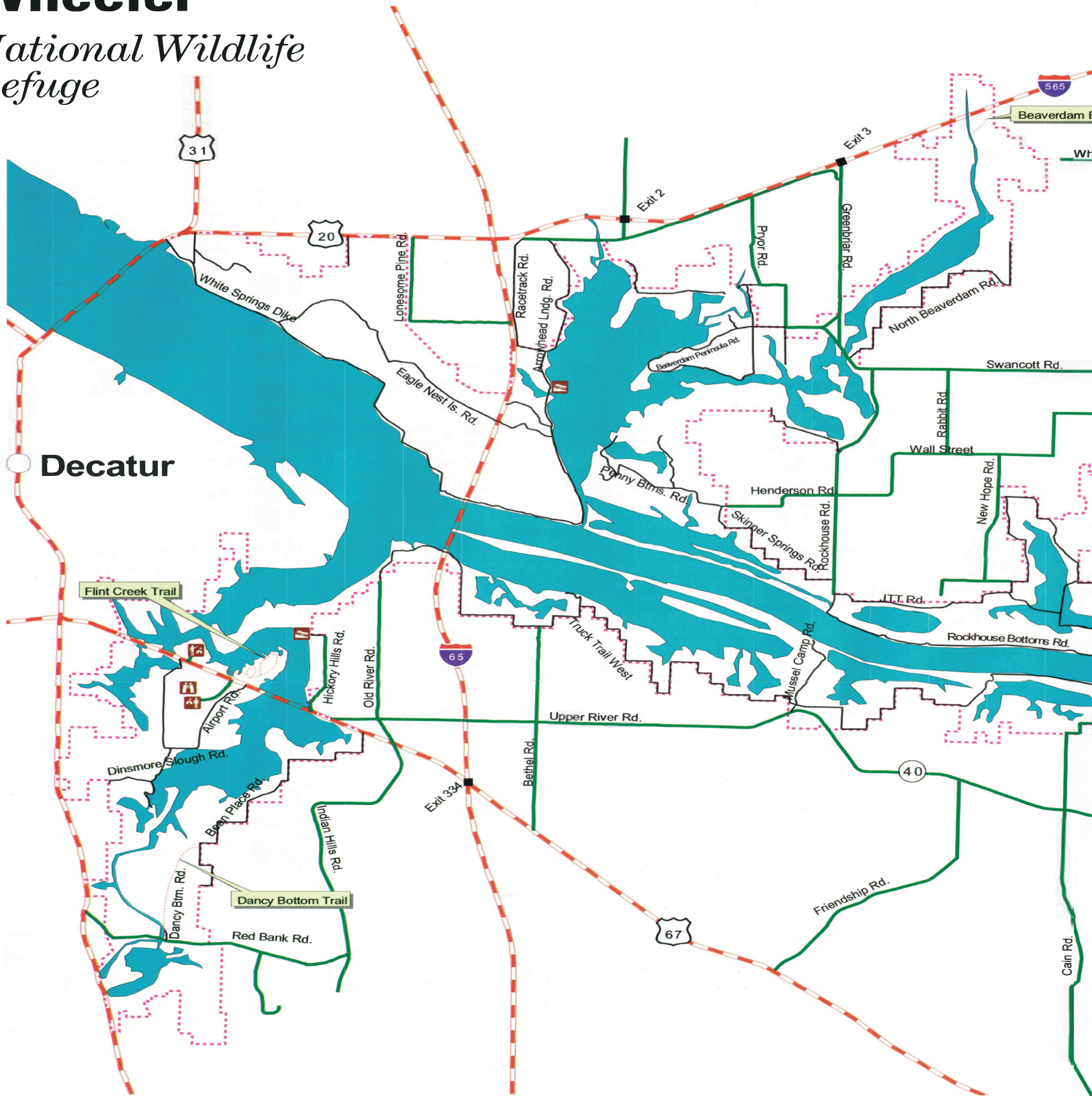


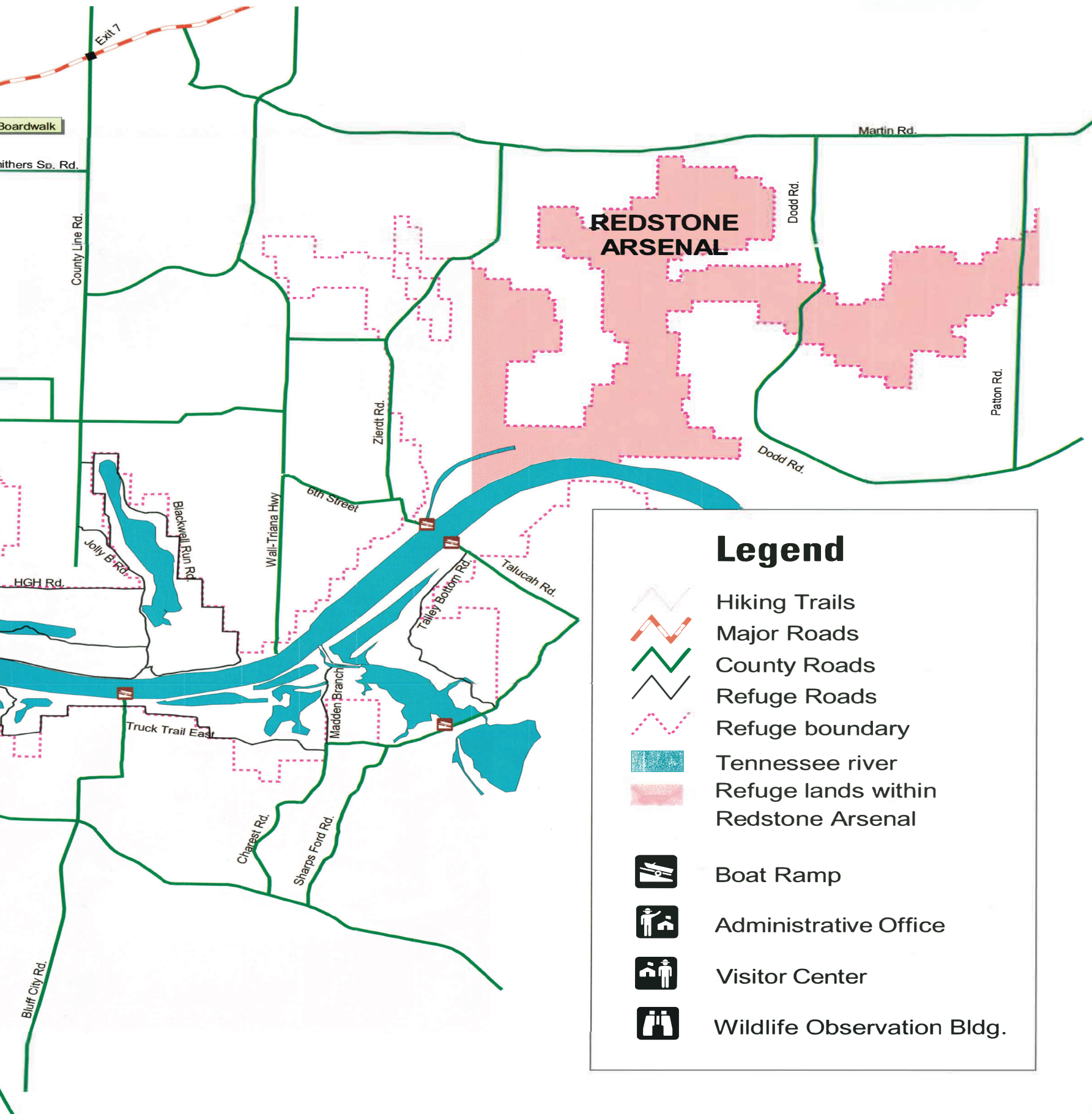
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# Wheeler

## National Wildlife Refuge





### Legend

-  Hiking Trails
-  Major Roads
-  County Roads
-  Refuge Roads
-  Refuge boundary
-  Tennessee river
-  Refuge lands within Redstone Arsenal
-  Boat Ramp
-  Administrative Office
-  Visitor Center
-  Wildlife Observation Bldg.



3121 Visitor Center Road, Decatur, AL  
[friendsofwheelernwr.org](http://friendsofwheelernwr.org)

## WNWR Visitor Center

### **SATURDAY** **January 14, 2023**

8:00 am - 9:00 am

#### **Bird Walk**

Join former Refuge Manager Dwight Cooley on a morning bird walk. Watch the cranes and other waterfowl begin their day.

9:00 am - 10:00 am

#### **Birding 101**

Learn the basics of birding on a bird walk around the visitor center grounds with Christopher Joe.

9:00 am - 5:00 pm

#### **Visit the Observation Building**

View thousands of Sandhill cranes, Whooping cranes, waterfowl, geese, raptors, and perhaps a bald eagle from the comfort of a heated building.  
 (Building capacity limited)

### **SUNDAY**

### **January 15, 2023**

9:00 am - 5:00 pm

#### **Visit the Observation Building**

View thousands of Sandhill cranes, Whooping cranes, waterfowl, geese, raptors, and perhaps a bald eagle from the comfort of a heated building.  
 (Building capacity limited)

9:00 am - 5:00 pm

#### **Periodic Art demo**

Alabama artist Timothy M. Joe will be painting various nature scenes around the visitor center.



ALL TIMES CENTRAL STANDARD TIME





ALABAMA CENTER FOR THE  
**A R T S**

133 2nd Avenue NE, Decatur, AL  
alabamacenterforthearts.org

## Alabama Center for the Arts

### **SATURDAY** **January 14, 2023**

11:00 am - 12:00 pm

#### **Connecting with Birds and Nature**

Christopher and Timothy Joe will be screening the film “Barriers to Bridges” followed by their talks about their interest in birding, art, guided bird tours; their father’s influence in agriculture, and their video creation process.

1:00 pm - 2:30 pm

#### **Tammie Clark Junior Duck Stamp Workshop**

1-1/2 hour “one stop shop” guide to drawing tips, composition ideas, and contest entry guidelines for the Jr. Duck Stamp Conservation and Design Contest. Supplies provided.

3:00 pm - 4:00 pm

#### **International Crane Foundation George Archibald & Richard Beilfuss**

Learn about the history of this organization and the role it is playing in protecting the crane and saving endangered Whooping cranes from extinction.

11:00 am - 5:00 pm

#### **International Crane Foundation Booth & North Alabama Zoological Society Booth**

Performing Arts building lobby

### **SUNDAY**

### **January 15, 2023**

11:00 am - 12:00 pm

#### **Jimmy Stiles: Herpetologist & Nature Lover**

Mr. Stiles will share information about the reptiles and amphibians of Alabama. This hands-on experience is always a hit!

1:00 pm - 2:00 pm

#### **International Crane Foundation George Archibald & Richard Beilfuss**

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3:00 pm - 4:00 pm

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Performing Arts building lobby

ALL TIMES CENTRAL STANDARD TIME

PRINCESS  
THEATRE  
*Center for*  
*the Performing*  
*Arts*

112 2nd Avenue NE, Decatur, AL  
princesstheatre.org

## Princess Theatre

### FRIDAY

**January 13, 2023**

7:00 pm

#### **Three On A String**

Enjoy an evening of musical entertainment mixed with humor performed flawlessly by a group that has been together for 50 years!

Tickets available at  
[www.princesstheatre.org](http://www.princesstheatre.org)



ALL TIMES CENTRAL  
STANDARD TIME

### SATURDAY

**January 14, 2023**

9:00 am - 10:00 am

#### **Joe Duff: Operation Migration**

Canadian Naturalist who helped pioneer micro-ultralight-led migration efforts with Canada geese and Whooping cranes.

11:00 am - 12:00 pm

#### **Wings to Soar**

Enjoy seeing a selection of live raptors and hearing about the role they play in nature.

1:00 pm - 2:00 pm

#### **Condors - Photographer Andrew Orr**

Enjoy photographs of the amazing California Condor and hear about their comeback from the edge of extinction.

2:30 pm - 3:30 pm

#### **Wings to Soar**

Enjoy seeing a selection of live raptors and hearing about the role they play in nature.

6:00 pm

#### **Steve Trash: Totally Rockin' Environmental Science Show**

This program makes science fun for children as Mr. Trash explores a wide range of themes, from ecosystems to solar energy.

Tickets at [www.princesstheatre.org](http://www.princesstheatre.org)

### SUNDAY

**January 15, 2023**

11:00 am - 12:00 pm

#### **Joe Duff: Operation Migration**

Canadian Naturalist who helped pioneer micro-ultralight-led migration efforts with Canada geese and Whooping cranes.

12:30 pm - 1:30 pm

#### **Wings to Soar**

Enjoy seeing a selection of live raptors and hearing about the role they play in nature.

2:00 pm - 3:00 pm

#### **Arctic to Antarctica - Photographer Andrew Orr**

Join Mr. Orr on a journey of photographs and information that will take you from the Arctic to Antarctica.

3:30 pm - 4:30 pm

#### **Wings to Soar**

Enjoy seeing a selection of live raptors and hearing about the role they play in nature.



504 Cherry Street NE, Decatur, AL  
mydpl.org/cranes

## Decatur Public Library

### FRIDAY

**January 13, 2023**

2:00 pm

DPL's Story Time  
at Delano Park

*(near the intersection of 8th Avenue  
and Prospect Drive)*

Ms. Mary from DPL and Jessie  
from the International Crane  
Foundation will sing songs and  
read books with the kids. Hope,  
the International Crane Foundation  
mascot, will also be there.

All are invited to this free event.

### SATURDAY

**January 14, 2023**

10:00 am - 4:00 pm

at the Decatur Public Library

#### Activities for kids:

- Assorted Crafts/Activities
- Photo Opportunity
- Scavenger Hunt
- Goodie Bags

12:30 pm - 1:30 pm

#### Free Meet & Greet

Photo Opportunity with Hope,  
the International Crane Foundation  
mascot, at DPL!

### SUNDAY

**January 15, 2023**

10:00 am - 4:00 pm

at the Decatur Public Library

#### Activities for kids:

- Assorted Crafts/Activities
- Photo Opportunity
- Scavenger Hunt
- Goodie Bags

2:30 pm

#### Story Time with Zellie the Zoologist

*(courtesy of Magical Memories AL)*

## StoryWalks®

The StoryWalk® Project was created by Anne Ferguson of Montpelier, VT and developed in collaboration with the Kellogg Hubbard Library. StoryWalks® is a registered service mark owned by Ms. Ferguson.

### at Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge

on the Atkeson Cypress Trail  
behind the Visitors Center

December 19 -  
January 30



### at Delano Park

Outside RiverWild  
*(begins at the intersection of  
8th Avenue & Prospect Drive)*

December 19 -  
January 30



ALL TIMES CENTRAL STANDARD TIME



**cook museum**  
of NATURAL SCIENCE

133 4th Avenue, Decatur, AL  
cookmuseum.org

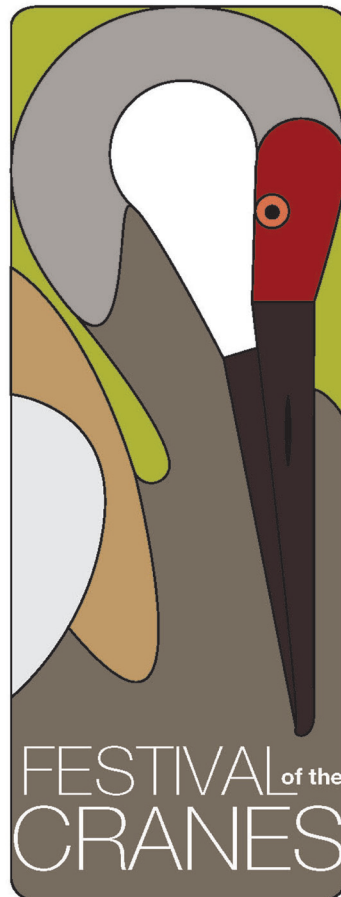
## Cook Museum

### FRIDAY

**January 13, 2023**

10:30 am - 11:30 am

**Meet & Greet Hope, International  
Crane Foundation Mascot**



### SATURDAY

**January 14, 2023**

10:00 am - 2:00 pm

**Wild About Whoopers!**

10:00 am, 11:00 am, Noon, 1:00 pm

**Cool Cranes! Science on the spot**

10:00 am - 2:00 pm

**Whooping Crane Selfie Station**

10:00 am - 2:00 pm

**Craft: Coloring Activity**

All Day

**Crane Dance Party!**

All Day

**The Whoopers of Wheeler Video**

ALL TIMES CENTRAL STANDARD TIME

# The Old State Bank

925 Bank Street NE, Decatur, AL  
decaturoparks.com

## Old State Bank

**FRIDAY**

**January 13, 2023**

9:30 am - 11:30 am

Open for tours and  
Student Art Show

**SATURDAY**

**January 14, 2023**

9:30 am - 11:30 pm

Student Art Show



207 Church Street NE, Decatur, AL  
carnegiearts.org

## Carnegie Visual Arts Center

**SATURDAY**

**January 14, 2023**

9:30 am - 12:00 pm

Birding Journaling workshop with  
artist Timothy Joe

**Saturday Special Hours**

10:00 am - 4:00 pm

Birding Journaling workshop with  
artist Timothy Joe

**Sunday Special Hours**

12:00 pm - 4:00 pm

Featuring Wildlife artist Sophie McVicar

ALL TIMES CENTRAL STANDARD TIME





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256-303-7381

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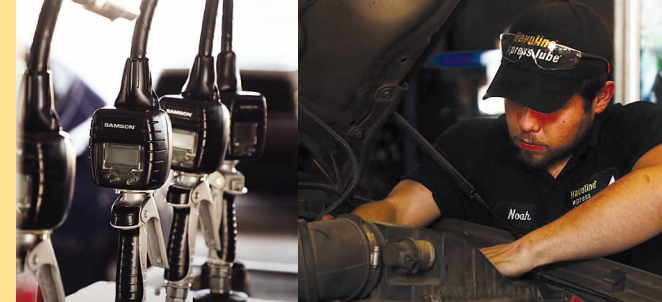
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Romans 5:8 

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# HISTORY OF THE FESTIVAL OF THE CRANES

The Festival of the Cranes has come a long way in a short period of time, mostly due to those fabulous whooping cranes deciding they really like the fields around the Visitor Center! No where else in the country can you walk 200 yards to a heated building with seats and spotting scopes and view the tallest bird and one of the most endangered birds in North America.

The first whooping cranes appeared on the refuge in 2007 and generally stayed in remote refuge locations. In 2010 the whooping cranes started showing up in front of the Observation Building, presenting the refuge with an opportunity to showcase these special birds. The refuge had initiated a program called “Crane Watch” in December 2009 to showcase the thousands of Sandhill cranes

visible from the Visitor Center and Observation Building. With the ever-increasing number of both Sandhill and Whooping cranes, we decided to expand the program and initiated the first Festival of the Cranes.

With an initial donation from Toray, Inc we kicked off the first festival in January, 2013. The festival was an immediate success

and attracted almost 1000 attendees. Our program lineup included storyteller Brian “Fox” Ellis as John James Audubon, Raptor Trek! live birds of prey presented by the Alabama 4-H Center and the Operation Migration film “Hope Takes Wing”.

Buoyed by the success of the inaugural festival we expanded our program offerings and the next year on January 11, 2014 we



had 2,500 visitors to our one-day event and 6,920 total visitors in January. Featured programs were Auburn University's Southeastern Raptor Center live birds of prey and an International Crane Foundation presentation with Joan Garland.

Our third festival in 2015 attracted 2,500 visitors from ten different states and three foreign countries. Brian "Fox" Ellis as John James Audubon, Auburn University's Southeastern Raptor Center live birds of prey and the Operation Migration film "Hope Takes Wing" were return presenters. This was also the first year for the Festival of the Cranes Art Exhibit.

In 2016 we expanded the event to two days, Saturday and Sunday, January 9 & 10, 2016 and had 3,000 visitors. Presenters included: Joe Wiegand as Theodore Roosevelt, Auburn University's Southeastern Raptor Center live birds of prey, ICF Co-Founder George Archibald, Film Premiere of "The Power of One Voice: A 50-year Perspective on the Life of Rachel Carson", a Nature Photography Workshop, Art Exhibit and Children's Activities.

Attendance substantially increased in 2017 as awareness of the event spread and we had 4,200 visitors. There were visitors from 22 states and five foreign countries. Brian "Fox" Ellis made his third festival appearance as John James Audubon & Meriwether Lewis, Auburn University's Southeastern Raptor Center live birds of prey returned and we added a concert and workshops with Erica Wheeler. The International Crane Foundation presented a program and we offered birding nature



walks, an art exhibit and children's activities.

Weather affected our attendance in the following year as a cold and drizzly weekend reduced attendance to 3000. We added the Princess Theatre as an additional venue to accommodate the number of visitors and provided shuttles between downtown and the refuge. Popular storyteller Brian "Fox" Ellis was back again as John James Audubon & Meriwether Lewis, along with Auburn University's Southeastern Raptor Center live birds of prey. A photography workshop with David Akoubian, Musician/Composer Michael Graham Allen, and a George Lee video premier were added to our recurring birding nature walks, art exhibit and children's activities.

Our seventh festival 2019 recorded 5,721 visitors for the expanded 4-day event. Part of the

expanded event included a Friday night concert with John Paul White at the Princess Theatre, Journey of the Whooping Crane film premier with producer Rhett Turner at the Alabama Center for the Arts, IBEX Puppetry "Celebration of Flight", Auburn University's Southeastern Raptor Center live birds of prey, a photography workshop with David Akoubian, Musician/Composer Michael Graham Allen, Joe Wiegand as Theodore Roosevelt, Auburn University's Southeastern Raptor Center live birds of prey and the Discovering Alabama Whooping Crane Video with Doug Phillips.

The 2020 festival was interrupted due to severe thunderstorms and tornado warnings for the area on Saturday. Power was lost to the Visitor Center at noon on Saturday and as a consequence visitor numbers dropped to 2500. Our Friday concert featured Kathy Mattea at the Princess Theatre. Presenters

included the IBEX Puppetry show, Paul Bannick, yet another appearance by then popular Brian "Fox" Ellis, a Dr. John Dindo presentation Coastal Birds and Dr. Doug Phillips with Discovering Alabama.

Our 2021 festival was a very limited one day event due to the COVID outbreak. The Visitor Center and Observation Building were closed to the public but the refuge grounds were open. Hundreds of people were able to view the cranes from around the Visitor Center as well as from two newly constructed blinds overlooking the adjacent fields. All the presentations took place at the Princess Theatre on Saturday. Strict protocols were followed including social distancing, cleaning between presentations and masks requirements. Two of the scheduled presenters, Lauren McGough and Paul Bannick, provided video presentations. The AU Southeastern Raptor

program was a live presentation. Musician Gareth Laffely also presented live. Total numbers for the one day event were 500.

For our tenth annual festival on January 14 - 16, 2022 a stellar list of presenters welcomed COVID weary visitors. John Paul White returned for the Friday night concert at the Princess Theatre. President Theodore Roosevelt, Joe Wiegand returned for his third FOC. The Auburn University-SE Raptor Center also returned for their ninth FOC appearance. A special Saturday night film premiered at the Princess Theatre. "OVERLAND" featured three falconers from different parts of the world. The director/producers were on hand for a question and answer session. Lauren McGough, one of the featured falconers and Dr. Rich-

ard Beilfuss, President and CEO of the International Crane Foundation presented both days. Author/Photographer Paul Bannick prerecorded presentations were shown at the Princess. New additions to the presenter lineup included birder Christopher Joe and artist brother Timothy Joe. Our other partner venues - Alabama Center for the Arts, Carnegie Center, Cook Museum, Decatur Public Library and the Old State Bank, offered additional events for the whole family. Total attendance for the three day event was 3550.

We are excited to see you at our eleventh annual Festival of the Cranes on January 13-15!



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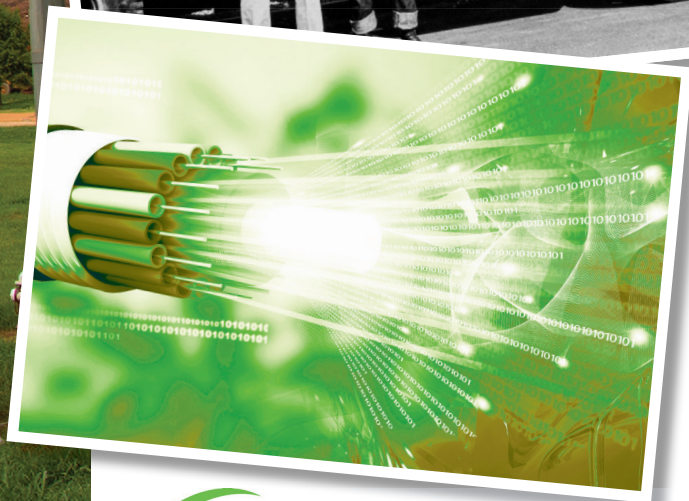




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