

Two Whoops for Whoopers?

In early May Canada's Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC) reminded us there's much to be concerned about when it comes to the future of wildlife in Canada. Twenty-seven wildlife species were added to the "at risk" list pushing the total number of species in COSEWIC's four risk categories to 693: 306 Endangered, 165 Threatened, 200 Special Concern, and 22 Extirpated.

The whooping crane, one of Canada's Endangered species, graced the front cover of the April issue of the *Advocate*. Inside that issue Nigel Douglas told the story of this imposing bird's recovery from the brink of extinction. From a global estimate of 21 birds in 1941 the wild population today numbers nearly 400.

The *Northern Journal* reported in early June that a record number of whooping crane nests have been counted in the annual nest survey conducted in Wood Buffalo National Park and the surrounding area. Eighty-two nests were spotted this year, eight more than were identified in 2013.

This is encouraging news for several reasons. Obviously, more breeding pairs of whooping cranes promises to boost the population. This good news also underlines the importance of protected areas to species recovery programs. Would we even be talking about record nest numbers if Wood Buffalo National Park didn't exist?

Finally, this year's news confirms that whooping cranes are expanding their range. This expansion is taking whoopers outside of Wood Buffalo's boundaries. Seven nests were identified outside the park, five to the north of its boundaries in the Northwest Territories and two on First Nations' reserve lands.

No nests seem to have been identified south of the park's boundaries.

- Ian Urquhart