

Southern Appalachian Creature Feature Podcasts

Whooping crane deaths

Greetings and welcome to the Southern Appalachian Creature Feature

I recently spoke about a flock of critically endangered whooping cranes flying across a corner of the Southern Appalachians on their way from Wisconsin to Florida. Things were going well for the small group of birds, except for one who was hampered by a leg injury, but still had a long and healthy life ahead of him as a breeding, education, or research bird.

While those ultra-light-led birds have entered Florida and begun arriving at their wintering grounds, there is some unfortunate news. This fall and winter another group of young cranes was released to make the migration south, following older cranes instead of an ultra-light aircraft. Of this group of five birds, three were found dead by hunters in southwest Georgia on December 30th. A recently completed necropsy confirms the birds had been shot.

The deaths are being investigated by the Fish & Wildlife Service and the Georgia Department of Natural Resources, and people with any information can call 404-763-7959. A reward of up to \$12,500 is being offered for information leading to the arrest and prosecution of the perpetrator. As a federally endangered species, the birds are protected under the Endangered Species Act and Migratory Bird Treaty Act, both of which prohibits unauthorized killing.

For WNCW and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, this is Gary Peeples.