



# LOUISIANA WILDLIFE FEDERATION

*The voice of Louisiana's wildlife and natural resources since 1940.*

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Resolution No. 5, 2021

## **SUBJECT: INCREASING INADEQUATE STATE CIVIL RESTITUTION PENALTIES FOR THE SHOOTING OF WHOOPING CRANES IN LOUISIANA**

WHEREAS, by 1950, Louisiana's historical population of Whooping Cranes, the tallest bird in North America, was previously wiped out by shooting and habitat destruction, with the last remaining bird being captured and sent to join an existing Texas flock; and

WHEREAS, in 2011, the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF) commenced a program to reintroduce Whooping Cranes into southwest Louisiana where they once thrived; and

WHEREAS, the entire population of this bird, wild and captive, is approximately 808 with around 71 currently in the Louisiana non-migratory flock; and

WHEREAS, Louisiana can make a major contribution to saving whooping cranes if the reintroduction project is successful; and

WHEREAS, the expense of raising the young birds in captivity and preparing them for a life in the wild costs the State of Louisiana \$85,000 per bird; and

WHEREAS, there is also an additional, significant investment in hours of work and dedication by LDWF and its partners in this project which is critically important but intangible and therefore not subject to monetary value; and

WHEREAS, Louisiana's Whooping Crane population has been subject to criminal shootings at a rate far in excess of other states, which is threatening the success of LDWF's reintroduction program with shooting deaths totaling 12 since inception of the program; and

WHEREAS, the maximum State of Louisiana civil restitution for shooting a Whooping Crane is only \$4,351.49 under existing Louisiana regulations, which is a small fraction of the cost of raising them; and

WHEREAS, there is no current reimbursement to LDWF Law Enforcement for resources expended in tracking down these shooters and bringing them to justice; and

WHEREAS, the current restitution penalties are totally inadequate to provide the needed deterrent to combat this shooting problem; and

WHEREAS, there is now specific precedent for a higher level of restitution, as a US Magistrate Judge in Louisiana recently ordered \$25,000 in civil restitution and a \$10,000 fine payable to LDWF's Whooping Crane project following a Lacey Act conviction for a double shooting, which is precedential.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Louisiana Wildlife Federation supports rulemaking by the Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries Commission to raise the State civil restitution penalties for shooting a whooping crane to at least \$85,000 per bird.

*Adopted by Louisiana Wildlife Federation in Convention Assembled virtually on August 21, 2021.*