

Whooping crane population gets vital boost

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A spate of recent egg hatchings at Maryland's Patuxent Wildlife Research Center is giving new hope for the dwindling global population of whooping cranes.

The Baltimore Sun reported Monday six whooping crane eggs have hatched at the center in the last two weeks, assisting in the recovery of the endangered animal population.

In February that population was devastated when a strong storm killed 17 fledglings that were residing in a Florida refuge.

But center officials are expecting nearly 18 more births by the end of May. But even those new births would still leave the birds' global population below 500.

To help the new population additions adapt, center officials mimic the presence of adult whooping cranes with audio tapes and puppets.

The Sun said that after two months, the new hatchlings will then be relocated to a Wisconsin refuge where a specialized plane will serve as their makeshift flight instructor.

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