

Rare cranes make detour

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Rare whooping cranes have appeared in an Illinois county for the first time since the 1800s.

Six young whooping cranes have made themselves at home for the past month on Bill Neff's 28-acre property in northeastern Peoria County, The Springfield (Ill.) Journal-Register reported Sunday.

What makes the event so significant is that in his 1892 book "Birds of Peoria and Tazewell Counties, Illinois," W.E. Loucks said whooping cranes were rare migrants even then.

"We feel real privileged just to have a spot the cranes like," Neff said. "It's really pretty exciting."

The six big birds on his property were bred in captivity and were released into the wild Oct. 30 in Wisconsin's Necedah National Wildlife Refuge in hopes they would join other whoopers or sandhill cranes when those birds began migrating south to Florida.

Instead, the birds flew 215 miles before stopping at Neff's property.

"It's kind of amazing because they had to fly over a lot of lakes before they chose this spot," Neff said. "And we're not far from the Illinois River and all its marshes."

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