

SHORT COMMUNICATIONS

A WHOOPING CRANE FROM THE PLEISTOCENE OF NORTH FLORIDA

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In a small collection of bird fossils given to me for study by Dr. Richard Ohmes of Chaires, Florida, there is a distal two-thirds of a right tibiotarsus of a Whooping Crane (*Grus americana*). It was collected in 1969 by Dr. Ohmes from river-bottom deposits in a branch of the Aucilla River on the west side of Ward Island in the NE ¼ sec. 13, T. 4 S., R. 3 E., Jefferson County, Florida, and is now number 170878 in the paleontological collections of the U.S. National Museum. Because of its manner of deposition, it is not possible to age the bone precisely, but it was associated with numerous remains of Pleistocene to Recent vertebrates including such forms as *Megalonyx*, *Mammut*, *Tapirus*, *Equus*, *Camelops*, and *Geochelone*, which are either extinct or no longer present in Florida, and it is safe to assume its contemporaneity with these animals. Analysis of the other avian elements is not yet complete but so far indicates a mixture of fresh and salt water avifaunas of extant species.

Recent Florida records of Whooping Cranes have generally been subject to doubt (Sprunt 1954), but Hallman (1965) has published photographs of a mounted specimen said to have been obtained in 1927 or 1928, 12 miles N of St. Augustine, St. Johns County. Other Florida fossil records are from Ich-tucknee River, Columbia County; Seminole Field,

Pinellas County; and Melbourne, Brevard County (Wetmore 1931). In addition, Brodkorb (pers. comm.) informs me that his record (Neill et al. 1956) of a Sandhill Crane (*Grus canadensis*), based on a proximal portion of a left carpometacarpus from Lemon Bluff on the St. Johns River, Volusia County, actually pertains to *G. americana*. The Aucilla River specimen represents the westernmost locality for the state and is the first indication of the species in the panhandle. The Whooping Crane is also known from Pleistocene fossils or prehistoric remains from California, North Dakota, Illinois, Idaho, Michigan, Kentucky, Virginia (Brodkorb 1967), and Arizona (Craft 1968).

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THE INCREDIBLE TERATORN AGAIN

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Under grants from the National Science Foundation, the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County (LACM) has been, since 1958, studying the extensive fossil deposits in the Vallecito-Fish Creek area of the Anza-Borrego Desert State Park, San Diego County, California. The birds from the upper 4000 ft in Vallecito Creek sites (of Middle Pleistocene, Irvingtonian age) were recorded in a previous paper (Howard 1963). Continuing work (under National

Science Foundation Grant no. GB 5116) has carried the collecting to a depth of 8000 ft in Fish Creek sites, where the mammalian forms found are of the type characteristic of the Plio-Pleistocene (Blancan) of Kansas and Arizona (Downs and White 1968:43). Found with these early mammals, at LACM locality 6747, is the fragment of a beak of a large bird (LACM no. 26697).

The specimen represents the anterior portion of the upper mandible, anterior to the nasal opening (fig. 1). The outer surfaces are badly weathered, but the shape and contours are retained, and structural characters of the ventral side are preserved. Both the shape of the beak and the characters of this ventral portion bear marked resemblance to specimens of *Teratomis merriami* from the late Pleistocene of Rancho La Brea, except for more than 40% larger size.