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TO: Michigan Senate Natural Resources Committee  
Jackie Mosher, Committee Clerk, [jmosher@senate.michigan.gov](mailto:jmosher@senate.michigan.gov)  
CC: [ofcsc@senate.michigan.gov](mailto:ofcsc@senate.michigan.gov)  
FROM: Michigan Audubon, on behalf of its 32 statewide chapters  
RE: Opposing SR 20, designating the Sandhill Crane as a game species in Michigan  
DATE: March 1, 2021

Members of the Michigan Senate Natural Resources Committee:

As an organization and collaborative network of established bird conservationists, educators, and researchers, Michigan Audubon opposes proposed Senate Resolution 20 to designate the Sandhill Crane a game species and to open a hunting season of the Sandhill Crane in Michigan.

Our organization, a statewide conservation nonprofit, represents 32 statewide chapters and thousands of constituents — your voters — who reside throughout the Upper and Lower peninsulas of Michigan. Michigan Audubon has helped to protect the Sandhill Crane for 117 years, from establishing and overseeing annual crane counts to preserving suitable habitat for cranes to hosting the annual “CraneFest” outdoor festival in southwest Michigan from 1994 to 2019. At this most vulnerable time for human and non-human systems alike, Michigan Audubon finds that the Sandhill Crane deserves permanent full protection under the MBTA as a non-game species in our state. We urge you to not report SR 20 out of committee and to reflect in your decision the wise use of the power and information you’ve received to do your due diligence as Natural Resources Committee members.

**In reviewing proposed SR 20, Michigan Audubon finds the following:**

1. The claims related to this particular species of the Greater Sandhill Crane are not scientifically or ornithologically accurate, including claims that hunting the Sandhill Crane would offer viable solutions for Michigan farmers whose farms are near protected wetlands;
2. SR 20’s description of the Sandhill Crane’s “population explosion” is exaggerated, inaccurate, and misleads the Committee;
3. SR 20 does not reflect actual Sandhill Crane annual census numbers in Michigan nor does it present an accurate scientific depiction of this species or its life history, conservation status,

- or population dynamics;
4. SR 20 does not offer a review or understanding of the various risks associated with a potential open hunting season, including negative press, vehement public outcry, etc.;
  5. Claims made by supporters of a proposed crane hunt fail to understand key differences and data as they relate to how migratory populations of Sandhill Crane differ from resident populations of Sandhill Crane.

**From ornithological and ecological perspectives, Michigan Audubon believes that removing the non-game status of the Sandhill Crane in the state of Michigan would have negative, long-lasting effects and would be unwise and undue. Michigan's Sandhill Crane is considered a vulnerable and recovering sub-species of the Greater Sandhill Crane, and is actually still considered at risk from several factors, including continued loss of wetland habitats.** In our state specifically, scientists consistently agree that the Greater Sandhill Crane's subspecies in Michigan is *not* suitable to hunt. Sandhill Cranes just don't express the population dynamics that can tolerate an annual recreational harvest — a principle that has governed conservation and hunting for the past century.

**It is only because of our state's historic protection of the Sandhill Crane that we see them in Michigan today.** The Sandhill Crane population was able to rebound from near extinction and now serves as a badge of pride, a Michigan conservation success story. **The Sandhill Crane's conservation success story in Michigan is one that Governor Whitmer can share with her constituents as an example of how Michigan has led the way in the sustainable management of its precious Great Lakes ecosystems and their integrity.** Preserving the crane's protected status also reflects positively and accurately what a rich, committed cultural history and heritage the state of Michigan carries when it comes to scientifically-informed, best natural resources management.

**Currently, the Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918 is under federal review by the Biden administration and the USFWS.** The timing is not lost on us. And we hope the timing of this proposal is not lost on the committee. Should you require more input or involvement on how to best manage avian species such as the Sandhill Crane in the future, please feel free to contact Michigan Audubon's headquarters at 517-580-7364. We would be happy to provide the Committee with further data and support from expert researchers and ornithologists. Thank you for not reporting SR 20 out of committee and for continuing to extend the protection to this non-game species according to the Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918.

Thank you,



Heather Good  
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*Official Chapters of Michigan Audubon:*

Audubon Society of Kalamazoo  
AuSable Valley Audubon, Oscoda  
Benzie Audubon Club, Frankfort  
Blue Water Audubon Society, Port Huron  
Battle Creek Brigham Audubon  
Capital Area Audubon Society, Lansing  
Chappee Rapids Audubon Society, Menominee  
Chippewa Valley Audubon Club, Mt. Pleasant  
Copper Country Audubon Club, Houghton  
Genesee Audubon Society, Flint  
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Huron Valley Audubon Society, Brighton  
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Kirtland's Warbler Audubon Society, Comins  
Lapeer County Audubon Society  
Laughing Whitefish Audubon Society, Marquette  
Macomb Audubon Society, Sterling Heights  
Manistee Audubon Society  
Michiana Audubon Club, White Pigeon  
Muskegon County Nature Club  
Oakland Audubon Society, Birmingham  
Owashtanong Islands Audubon Society, Grand Haven  
Petoskey Regional Audubon Society, Petoskey  
Sable Dunes Audubon Society, Pentwater  
Sault Naturalists Club, Sault Ste. Marie  
Straits Area Audubon Society, Cheboygan  
Thunder Bay Audubon Society, Alpena  
Washtenaw Audubon Society, Ann Arbor