

# Songbird Protection Coalition

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:** February 28, 2021

## ***MICHIGAN SONGBIRD PROTECTION COALITION OPPOSES SR 20 KEEP CRANES PROTECTED AS TRADITIONAL NON-GAME SPECIES!***

LANSING, MI — The Michigan Songbird Protection Coalition denounces the introduction of a state Senate Resolution 20 that encourages the Michigan Natural Resources Commission (NRC) to remove the non-game protected status of Sandhill cranes, to add them to the game species list, and seek U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service approval to establish an annual Sandhill crane hunting season. The resolution, SR 20, was introduced on February 25th by Sen. Edward McBroom (R-38<sup>th</sup> District) and is scheduled for immediate hearing in the Senate Natural Resources Committee this Wednesday, March 3<sup>rd</sup> at 8:30 a.m.

“There is no scientific or wildlife management justification for opening a recreational shooting season on Michigan’s Sandhill cranes,” said Julie Baker, Director of the Michigan Songbird Protection Coalition. “Non-lethal mitigation measures already exist to protect crops from conflict by Sandhill cranes, and farmers can also obtain lethal control permits when necessary. Even the USDA has acknowledged a lack of evidence that hunting or other lethal means of removing Sandhill cranes actually reduces localized corn crop conflicts near prime wetland habitats.”

Michigan citizens have clearly demonstrated that they oppose recreational hunting seasons on traditional non-game species, rejecting a mourning dove hunt proposal in a landslide ballot referendum vote in 2006, the trophy hunting of wolves in two ballot referendum votes in 2014, and more recently Sandhill crane hunting in 2017 (and 2019) - where mis-information and false photos were used to promote the unwanted change in status.

“There has not been a population ‘explosion’ of greater Sandhill cranes, as SR 20 suggests,” said Baker. “Politicians should not tamper with the decades-long protection of Sandhill cranes, and should not cater to the misguided demands of a small minority of radical lobby interests. The majority of Michigan citizens want to keep traditional protections in place for Michigan’s non-game birds.”

Sandhill cranes are a vulnerable and recovering species that was nearly wiped out in Michigan by the mid-20th century due to hunting and loss of wetland habitat. Because of sound, scientific non-game conservation policy, their population has begun to stabilize to a natural carrying capacity. Often described as majestic in flight, their trumpeting call is considered one of the most unique sounds in nature. They are so beloved by “birders” and other nature enthusiasts that each October, “CraneFest,” a Sandhill crane festival, is held near Bellevue in southern Michigan, attracting thousands of visitors from across Michigan and beyond.

More facts about Sandhill cranes:

- Michigan has a strong hunting tradition, and there are already dozens of game species for hunters to pursue.
- The Sandhill crane is Michigan's largest bird, with a wingspan reaching up to seven feet. Sandhill cranes mate for life, but pair bonding and breeding takes time. It often takes four to seven years before the cranes breed, making them among the slowest reproducing birds in North America.
- There is no clear consensus on Sandhill crane population numbers in Michigan. This, combined with other existing challenges to Sandhill crane persistence that include a slow reproduction and recruitment rate, disease, poisoning by ingesting lead ammunition and tackle, collisions with power lines, climate change, and other hazards, indicates a lack of sufficient evidence that a sport hunting season would not hinder continued recovery of Sandhill cranes.
- Michigan farmers may obtain a special permit from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to control conflicts caused by migratory birds on corn plantings adjacent to prime wetland habitats. But biologists and researchers agree: a fall hunting season would not provide direct assistance to crop areas impacted by Sandhill cranes occurring in the spring. Groups like the International Crane Foundation have worked at developing an affordable non-toxic and non-lethal chemical deterrent, called Avipe!, which is more effective than lethal control in reducing crop issues by Sandhill cranes.

For a more information, please visit [SongbirdProtection.com](http://SongbirdProtection.com)

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*The Michigan Songbird Protection Coalition is an all grassroots group of Michigan citizens that includes hunters, biologists, bird hobbyists, environmentalists, farmers and animal welfare advocates, among others. For more information about our call to action to prevent hunting of mourning doves and Sandhill cranes and, please visit the Michigan Songbird Protection Coalition website: [www.songbirdprotection.com](http://www.songbirdprotection.com)*