

MICHIGAN REPRESENTATIVES: VOTE NO ON HR 154

A resolution calling for a recreational hunting season on Michigan's Sandhill cranes

Michigan residents do not want our state's traditional non-game migratory birds hunted for recreation.

Sandhill cranes, Michigan's largest bird and the oldest living bird species, have been protected in our state since 1916 under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. With their numbers low from habitat loss and hunting, this protection was desperately needed. But recently Michigan legislators introduced House Resolution (HR) 154, which urges the state's Natural Resources Commission (NRC) to designate Sandhill cranes as a game species and seeks authorization to establish an annual recreational Sandhill crane hunting season.

Hunting Sandhill cranes serves no wildlife management purpose. Cost-effective, nonlethal methods are available to protect corn crops from Sandhill cranes and other seed-eating birds, and Michigan farmers may also obtain a lethal control permit from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service if needed. A fall recreational hunting season would not reduce spring Sandhill crane crop issues near prime wetland habitat, and a 2017 USDA report has acknowledged a lack of proof that hunting or lethal control of Sandhill cranes actually reduces conflicts with crops.ⁱ



Significant economic value as live birds. Sandhill cranes are worth much more to Michigan alive than dead. Bird enthusiasts eagerly gather at events like the annual CraneFest near Battle Creek to view Sandhill cranes where they gather to breed on their annual migration south. More people participate in wildlife watching in Michigan than in all forms of hunting combined, and nationwide, wildlife watchers now outspend hunters by a margin of nearly three to one.ⁱⁱ

Their population is still recovering. While Sandhill crane numbers may be increasing, their population is still far from stable. Sandhill cranes mate for life, but are slow to mature—in fact, it could take up to four years or more before their first successful breeding cycle. Even then, they lay only two eggs each breeding cycle, and it is rare that more than one of the fledglings survive. Adding an annual hunting mortality to their already slow reproduction, combined with other common threats to survival like disease, ingestion of toxins, hailstorms, lightning, lead poisoning, predation, avian tuberculosis, genetic bottleneck vulnerability, and collisions with power lines, could further imperil the ongoing recovery of this species.

Hunting Sandhill cranes could orphan dependent young. While Sandhill crane chicks hatched in late spring are able to leave the nest within a day, it can be nine or 10 months before they are completely independent from their parents. If Michigan has a recreational hunt on Sandhill cranes early in the fall before they migrate to their wintering grounds, either of the parents—or even the still-dependent young—could be killed. Imperiled bird species like whooping cranes could also be the victims of mistaken-identity kills in a Sandhill crane hunt.

Ask your state Representative to vote NO on HR 154.

Find your Representative at <http://house.mi.gov/> or by calling the House Clerk's Office at (517) 373-0135.

The Michigan Songbird Protection Coalition is a group of Michigan citizens that includes hunters, biologists, bird hobbyists, environmentalists, farmers, and animal welfare advocates, all working to prevent the hunting of our state's Sandhill cranes and mourning doves.



Songbird Protection Coalition

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ⁱ J.Barzen, K. Ballinger: *Sandhill and Whooping Cranes*, U.S. Department of Agriculture Animal & Plant Health Inspection Service Wildlife Service 2017, Wildlife Damage Management Technical Series.

ⁱⁱ U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service: *2016 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation*.