

MICHIGAN SAYS NO TO THE HUNTING OF OUR SANDHILL CRANES!

Michigan residents do not want our state's migratory birds shot for trophies.



Sandhill cranes, Michigan's largest bird and the oldest living bird species, have been protected in the Great Lakes State since 1916 under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. With their numbers low from habitat loss and hunting, this protection was desperately needed.

Now, after decades of protection, hunting lobby groups are urging the Michigan Natural Resource Commission (NRC) to authorize an open season on our state's sandhill cranes. As a result, the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) may soon issue a proposal for a sandhill crane hunting season to the NRC for a vote.

Hunting sandhill cranes is unnecessary and serves no wildlife management purpose. Sandhill cranes are gentle birds that feed on insects, fish, and vegetation. Michigan farmers can apply for a permit from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to kill sandhill cranes for crop depredation, and tribal hunts are also permitted. A statewide trophy hunting season on these birds is completely unnecessary. A fall shooting season would not reduce crop issues near prime wetland habitat.

Significant economic value as live birds. Standing at almost five feet tall with a six- to seven-foot wingspan, these long-necked, majestic birds attract attention from admiring Michigan birdwatchers where they gather to breed on their annual migration south. Events such as Battle Creek's 20-year-old CraneFest, jointly sponsored by Michigan Audubon and Kiwanis Club of Battle Creek, continue to be popular attractions where people gather to watch this great wildlife spectacle. More people participate in wildlife watching in Michigan than in all forms of hunting combined, and nationwide, wildlife watchers outspend hunters by a nearly three to one margin.ⁱ



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 hunts 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.



Their population is still recovering. Studies have shown that sandhill crane populations are increasing, which may indicate a conservation success story. But the 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 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, and collisions with power lines, could further imperil the still-recovering population of sandhill cranes.

There are plenty of other species for hunters to pursue. At least 38 species are classified as “game” in Michigan—many of which are birds. Turkeys, pheasants, geese, ducks, woodcock, rails, snipe, and many other bird species give recreational hunters more than ample shooting opportunities at all times of the year in Michigan. In fact, hunting seasons are longer and bag limits are larger than ever for many species.

More toxic lead shot discharged into the environment. Cumulative lead deposits pose a significant risk to ground-feeding sandhill cranes and to other wildlife that directly and indirectly ingest toxic shot—including protected birds of prey such as eagles, falcons, hawks, and owls. Sandhill cranes nest on the ground and over marshes, so they can be susceptible to lead present in the environment.

NO to the hunting of our sandhill cranes!

Please submit your comments on this issue to the Michigan Natural Resources Commission at **NRC@michigan.gov** or by calling them at **(517) 284-6237**.

***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 mourning doves and sandhill cranes. For more information, visit www.songbirdprotection.com.*



Songbird Protection Coalition

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¹ U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service: 2016 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation.