



Audubon Great Lakes is a regional office of the National Audubon Society, serving Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Ohio, and Wisconsin. Audubon protects birds and the places they need, today and tomorrow, throughout the Americas using science, advocacy, education, and on-the-ground conservation. In Michigan, Audubon represents over 23,000 members.

The National Audubon Society is committed to creating practical solutions for the benefit of birds and people. As such, we offer the following statement in response to House Resolution 154¹ introduced by Representative James A. Lower to the Michigan House of Representatives Natural Resource Committee on Wednesday October 4, 2017.

House Resolution 154 was presented as a means of reducing the damage to agricultural crops caused by Sandhill Cranes. We have concerns about this rationale for opening a hunting season for Sandhill Crane. There is no scientific evidence suggesting that the establishment of a Sandhill Crane hunting season in Michigan under the proposed conditions would result in any reduction in crop damage in the state. However, there are effective techniques for reducing crop predation by Sandhill Crane. Studies have determined that the application of anthraquinone, a biopesticide, to seeds is an effective repellent².

Additionally, we would like to respectfully correct erroneous testimony from the October 4th hearing. A photograph introduced by Representative Lower and referenced several times throughout the hearing was incorrectly used as evidence of Sandhill Cranes preying on crops in the State of Michigan. However, this photograph depicts Eurasian Cranes in Israel responding to a successful crop depredation control method, where farmers provide food to bait cranes as a means of drawing them away from agricultural fields¹.

Also, we respectfully offer a more nuanced overview of the breeding population of Sandhill Cranes than what was presented during the introduction of H.R. 154 in the October 4th hearing. Sandhill Cranes in Michigan are part of the smaller Eastern population of the species. In the Midcontinent, the population of Sandhill Cranes is more numerous and hunting occurs on the birds' wintering grounds. A hunt implemented in Michigan would occur on the species' breeding grounds for a much smaller population of birds, which may disproportionately harvest breeding birds and could lead to rapid declines in population.

If Sandhill Cranes are to be considered for listing as a game species by this Committee, the Michigan Natural Resources Commission, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Audubon Great Lakes encourages the resolution to be amended so that the decision is made outside the context of agricultural damage. Rather, we would encourage the committee to take action using sound science in cooperation with partner organizations and with a thorough understanding of potential impacts to the Eastern population of the species.

¹ A resolution to encourage the Natural Resources Commission to add Sandhill Cranes to the game species list and seek U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service approval to establish a Sandhill Crane Hunting season

² <https://www.savingcranes.org/sandhill-crane-crop-damage/>



**DAMAGE CAUSED BY
SANDHILL CRANES**



Flocks of cranes, as pictured, are a nuisance to farmers as they damage their crops, often by removing planted seeds and seedlings.