



MICHIGAN AUDUBON

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STATEMENT REGARDING HOUSE RESOLUTION NO. 154:

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.

House Natural Resources Committee Meeting: October 4, 2017

Michigan Audubon opposes the proposed establishment of a Sandhill Crane hunting season and the listing of Sandhill Cranes as a game species. The Sandhill Crane's history is a conservation success story, and we believe these birds should continue being protected as an important, iconic, non-game species in Michigan.

Michigan's Sandhill Crane population has recovered from very low numbers and has only recently stabilized. **Sandhill Crane hunting can harm populations. In contrast to other game species, Sandhill Cranes reproduce very slowly.** Considering the total number of cranes in our state is not the most determining factor -- we must understand the unique population dynamics of this bird that differentiate it from other game species and put it at risk. There has not been sufficient, consistent data presented that suggest Sandhill Cranes require management, or that regulated hunting as a form of population control would be a safe, sound, or effective measure.

The potential for overharvesting in localized breeding populations poses a threat to the species. To protect these populations, it is important to identify the number and location of fall migratory birds in relation to local breeding birds in the state. Total estimated numbers can be misleading and poorly represent actual breeding populations. **We do not believe enough discussion, research, and consideration of sound wildlife management practices have taken place in regard to this decision, nor do we understand enough about Michigan's breeding populations to put the crane population at risk as a game species.**

Hunting is not a solution for Sandhill Crane crop damage. Opening a season to hunt Sandhill Cranes won't address farmers' concerns. Hunting cranes in the fall would not address the spring problem farmers share where cranes feed on germinating corn seeds. The issue remains that germinating crops in close proximity to suitable wetland

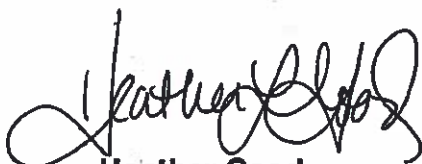
habitat are at high risk of being damaged by foraging Sandhill Cranes. The direct solution is to make the habitat less suitable, or more specifically, to make the crops unpalatable, to Sandhill Cranes. Sandhill Crane hunting would not likely directly benefit farmers.

Michigan has already established a management tool for farmers. Sandhill Cranes are managed every year by Michigan farmers under legal crop damage permits issued by the USFWS. A limited hunt for agricultural reasons is insufficient logic to support the rationale of a hunt, as there is a management tool and permitting process in place for farmers. Additionally, there is an effective chemical deterrent (Avipel) that offers a much better alternative for reducing crop damage than a limited crane hunt.

Cranes and the habitats they use are valued and supported by wildlife enthusiasts, farmers, recreationists, and landowners.

Michigan Audubon is Michigan's oldest conservation organization, with nearly 3,000 members statewide who are committed to continuing the Sandhill Crane's success story.

On behalf of our mission, values, and our membership, we ask that you vote no on House Resolution No. 154.



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