



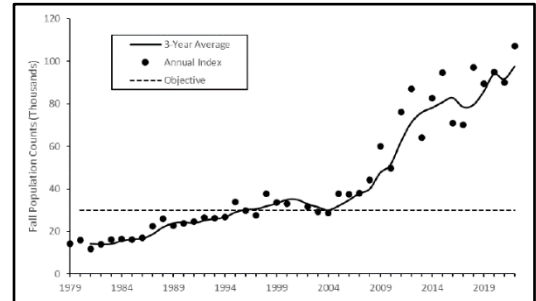
# Sandhill Crane Fact Sheet for Policymakers

(October 2023)

*US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) management of sandhill cranes (SHC) has created a strong, healthy, and expanding population. This population imposes an economic cost on farmers and presents opportunities beyond watching them. A Wisconsin SHC hunt will not impact the SHC population health or birdwatching opportunities.*

## **Sandhill crane population: The SHC population in Wisconsin is very strong... and growing fast.**

- There are more than 1.4 million sandhill cranes in North America. (USFWS 2022 data)
- Wisconsin's 51,000 SHC are managed as part of the Eastern Population, which is growing 5% per year. (USFWS data)



## **Ramifications of a growing SHC population: The growing population of Wisconsin SHC is creating challenges for farmers, wildlife managers and increasingly, suburban communities.**

- Human-SHC conflicts are the major concern for managing a growing SHC population. (WDNR website)
- Treating seed corn to repel SHC cost state farmers an estimated \$2M in 2022. (WDNR data)
- Additionally, 2022 saw 260 crop damage claims by state farmers, valued at nearly \$1.6M. (WDNR data)
- IN 2022, USDA authorized 1200 crop depredation kills of SHC in WI, up 300% in the past decade. (USDA data)
  - The 9,975 SHC killed under such permits in the last decade had to be left in the field – consumption is not authorized (USDA guidelines)

## **SHC hunting considerations: There is no science to support that a USFWS-overseen hunt would hurt SHC population health or birdwatching opportunities.**

- SHC are a game species (since 1962), hunted in 17 states and 3 provinces. (USFWS EP management plan)
- *International Crane Foundation's* three concerns<sup>1</sup> for SHC do not include hunting. (ICF SHC Program document)
- USFWS can authorize a Wisconsin SHC hunt if the eastern population > 30,000. (USFWS EP management plan)
  - The population is 3.5x that number => 107,000 (USFWS data)
  - USFWS establishes annual harvest levels to ensure no risk to SHC population health. (USFWS Mississippi flyway data).
- Legislation would be required for the DNR to apply for a USFWS “experimental” SHC hunting season. (WDNR)
- States must follow strict guidelines in any hunt, including the establishment of
  - Controls to ensure the SHC harvest does not exceed authorized levels. (USFWS EP Mgmt. Plan)
  - Training to prevent accidentally shoot other species (e.g., whooping cranes). (USFWS EP Mgmt. Plan)
- No legally permitted sandhill crane hunter has misidentified and shot a whooping crane. (ICF study)



### Sources:

1. US Fish and Wildlife Service, Status and Harvests of Sandhill Cranes, 2023
2. USFWS, Management Plan for the Eastern Population of Sandhill Cranes, 2011
3. International Crane Foundation, [https://savingcranes.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/north\\_america\\_sandhill\\_crane\\_program\\_web.pdf](https://savingcranes.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/north_america_sandhill_crane_program_web.pdf)
4. ICF, <https://savingcranes.org/2022/01/whooping-crane-shootings-what-we-know-and-why-it-matters/>

<sup>1</sup> The ICF focus areas are human-crane conflicts caused by crop depredation, collisions with power lines / windmills, wetland protections.