

Washington State Species and Communities of Special Concern

information for family forest owners

As a good land steward, it is important to be aware of plant and animal species of special concern that may occur on your lands, and how forest management activities may affect these species. The Washington State Implementation Committee (WA SIC) for the Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) is pleased to provide a series of factsheets on species of special concern that may occur on forested lands within Washington State. Each species factsheet includes a description of the species, habitat, range, and information on known threats to populations in Washington.



Photo of Sandhill Crane (*Grus canadensis*)
By Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife



Map source is NatureServe with following reference:

Data provided by NatureServe in collaboration with Robert Ridgely, James Zook, The Nature Conservancy - Migratory Bird Program, Conservation International - CABS, World Wildlife Fund - US, and Environment Canada - WILDSpace. Downloaded September 5, 2006

The information provided in this sheet has been compiled by the Washington SFI Implementation Committee. This species is one example of many that depend on family forest owners in Washington State for protection. To view other accounts, visit www.wdfw.wa.org or www.dnr.wa.gov/nhp, or www.natureserve.org.



Species: Sandhill Crane (*Grus canadensis*)

Group: Bird

Natural Heritage Rank: G5, S1

Legal Status: State Endangered

General Description

This species is a very large crane with a long neck and long legs. Adults stand 3-5 feet in height and have a wingspan of 5-6 feet. Adult cranes are tawny gray with a lighter colored head, white cheeks, and a red crown. Immature sandhill cranes are similar in color without the red crown. Cranes are easily recognized in flight with their legs and necks extended. This species migrates north in spring to breeding habitat in the northern US and Canada. Nests are built on the ground and tended by both adults. This species has a loud and rattling call that can be heard for some distance. Their diet includes tubers, plants, grain, worms, insects, mice, frogs, birds, and snakes.

Habitat

Sandhill cranes that breed in Washington generally use wet meadows and the edges of wetlands for nesting. These areas are often surrounded by shrublands or pine forests. Wetlands areas are also used for staging areas during migration. Foraging often occurs on nearby grain fields and other agricultural lands.

Range in Washington

There are several subspecies of sandhill cranes. Small numbers of the greater sandhill cranes (*Grus canadensis tabida*) breed in Yakima and Klickitat counties. In addition, large numbers of lesser sandhill cranes (*Grus canadensis canadensis*) migrate through eastern Washington on their way to and from breeding grounds in Canada. Smaller populations of sandhill cranes fly through western Washington.

Threats

The primary threat to sandhill cranes is nest mortality from coyotes, raven, raccoons, and other predators. Other threats include changes in wetland habitat from agricultural, development, and other activities that alter hydrology and vegetation.