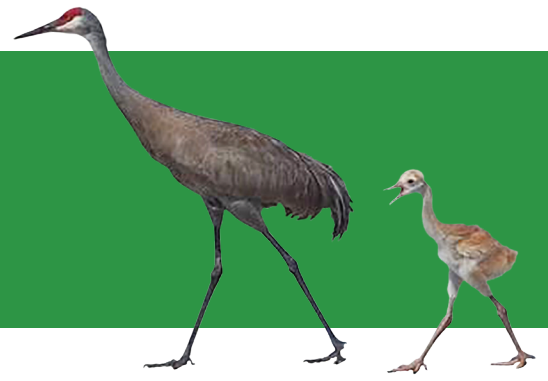


Living with Sandhill Cranes



General information

Sandhill cranes (*Grus canadensis*) are integral to the Florida ecosystem. They are long-legged, long-necked birds that stand almost 4 feet tall with a patch of bald, red skin on top of their heads. Their bugling or rattling calls are haunting and beautiful. Sandhill cranes are found in pastures, open prairies, and freshwater wetlands. Cranes are omnivorous and feed on seeds, grain, berries, insects, earthworms, mice, small birds, snakes, lizards, frogs and crayfish.

Two subspecies of sandhill crane inhabit Florida. The Florida sandhill crane (*Grus canadensis pratensis*) is a non-migratory year-round breeding resident. They are joined every winter by large flocks of migratory greater sandhill cranes (*G. c. tabida*), which is the larger of the two subspecies. The greater sandhill crane migrates to Florida for the wintertime but nests in the Great Lakes region. Sandhill cranes nest during late winter and spring on vegetation mats about two feet in diameter and in shallow water. Florida sandhill cranes are present in rural, suburban, and urban areas such as golf courses, airports and subdivisions. Cranes are attracted by open settings (such as mowed grass) and food availability.



Even though many people enjoy watching sandhill cranes, this species has been known to damage lawns and golf courses when searching for food. Sometimes they will also peck on windows, screens or vehicles, occasionally even hurting themselves. Male sandhill cranes can be protective of nests and young and may chase people or pets that venture too close.

What can you do to reduce conflicts with sandhill cranes?

- Never feed sandhill cranes. If they are attracted to human-provided food sources such as bird feeders, remove the source of food until the cranes stop visiting the site. Intentional feeding of sandhill cranes is prohibited by Florida Rule 68A-4.001.
- Cover or move vehicles so cranes cannot see their reflections in shiny surfaces.
- Temporarily cover reflective surfaces such as windows or glass doors with material or by rubbing a bar of soap on the surface to make it less reflective.
- Protect windows or screens by erecting an exclusion “fence” of strings or ropes mounted on stakes about 2.5-3 feet off the ground and 3 feet away from structures.
- Plant shrubs or bushes in front of windows and screens to make the area less accessible to cranes.
- Place visual deterrents such as streamers, mylar ribbons or other shiny objects on houses or other structures.
- Using loud noises such as air horns, vehicle horns, motion activated alarms or propane cannons. Noise deterrents may only be used outside of the sandhill crane breeding season or when adults are not accompanied by flightless young.
- Chasing cranes from the property on foot or by vehicle in a manner that does not result in physical contact with the birds, does not involve chasing adults accompanied by flightless young, and does not involve entering nesting areas.

***Note: No aversive conditioning methods are approved to be used within 400 feet of an active sandhill crane nest without a permit.**

Legal status

Sandhill cranes are federally protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) and state protected by Florida's adoption of the MBTA (Florida Rule 68A-16), making it illegal for anyone to "take, possess, import, export, transport, sell, purchase, barter, or offer for sale, purchase, or barter, any migratory bird, or the parts, nests, or eggs of such a bird." Sandhill cranes, their feathers, nests, and eggs are also protected from take, possession, and sale as a state of Florida Threatened Species (Florida Rule 68A-27).



FWC photo by Marty Folk

"Take" means to harass, harm, pursue, hunt, shoot, wound, kill, trap, capture, or collect, or to attempt to engage in such conduct. Options to reduce or eliminate property damage must not be harmful to the birds. A permit is required to remove an active nest (see below for permitting information). Inactive nests can be removed and destroyed outside nesting season without acquiring a permit (Florida Rule 68A-16.003). A nest is considered inactive when it does not contain viable eggs and does not contain young that are incapable of permanently leaving the nest. Possession of removed nests is prohibited without a federal permit (Florida Rule 68A-27, Florida Rule 68A-16, and MBTA). For more information, please see the FWC's Florida Sandhill Crane Species Conservation Measures and Permitting Guidelines: myfwc.com/media/11565/final-florida-sandhill-crane-species-guidelines-2016.pdf.

Who can I contact for additional assistance?

Active Nest Permits:

For an active nest removal, you must apply for both a federal permit from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and a state permit from the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission.

To apply for a federal permit from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, visit the USFWS website:

fws.gov/service/3-200-13-migratory-bird-depredation. Contact the U.S. Department of Agriculture Wildlife Services (352-377-5556) if you have additional questions related to the federal permit application.

To speak with FWC biological staff about conflicts with Sandhill Cranes, contact the regional office for your area (see map below).

Northwest Region

3911 Highway 2321
Panama City, FL 32409-1659
850-265-3676

North Central Region

3377 East U.S. Highway 90
Lake City, FL 32055-8795
386-758-0525

Northeast Region

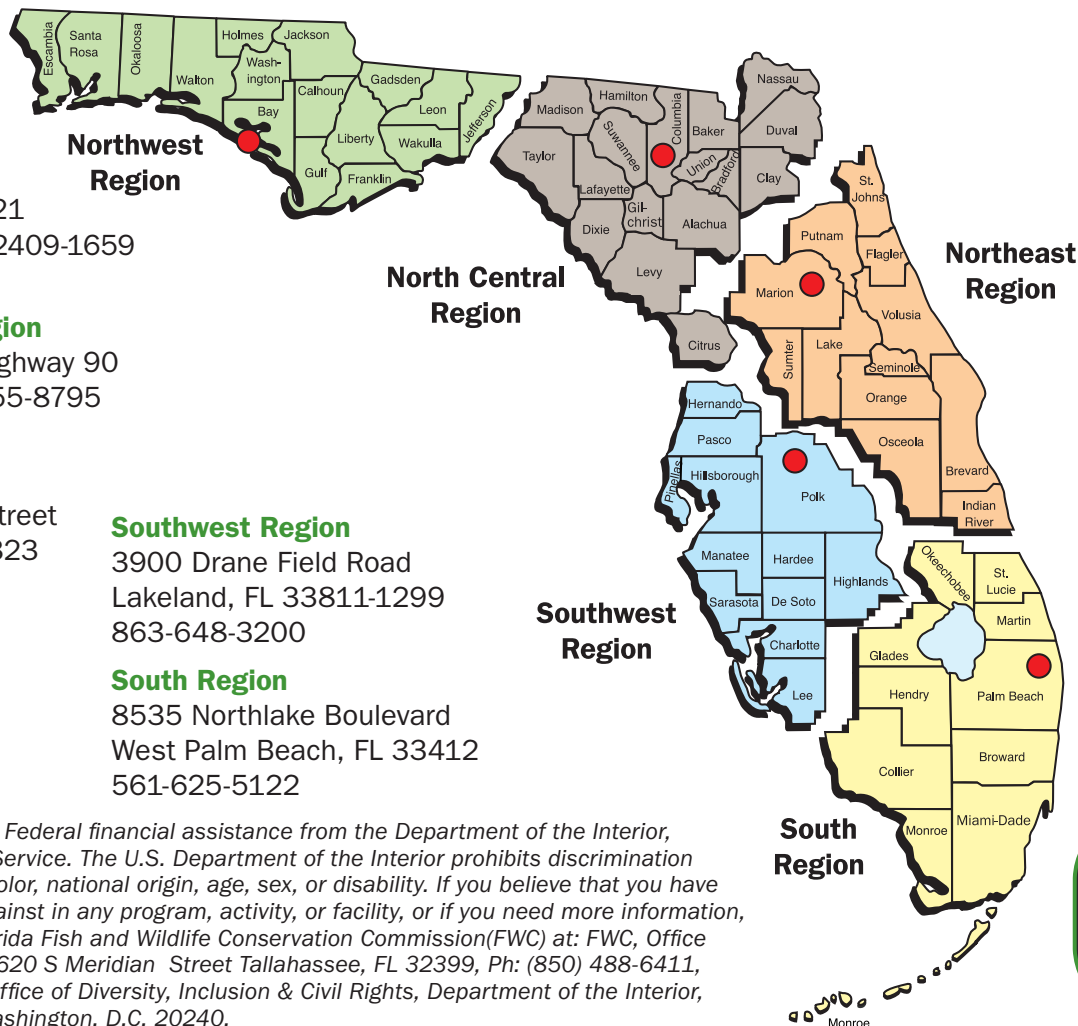
1239 S.W. 10th Street
Ocala, FL 3441-0323
352-732-1225

Southwest Region

3900 Drane Field Road
Lakeland, FL 33811-1299
863-648-3200

South Region

8535 Northlake Boulevard
West Palm Beach, FL 33412
561-625-5122



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