

sandhill crane *Antigone canadensis*

Kingdom: Animalia

Division/Phylum: Chordata

Class: Aves

Order: Gruiformes

Family: Gruidae

ILLINOIS STATUS common, native

FEATURES

The sandhill crane averages about 40 to 48 inches in length (tail tip to bill tip in preserved specimen). This bird has a wingspan of six to seven feet. A red patch can be seen on the top of the bird's head extending to the back edge of the bill. The feathers are gray in adults and brown in immature cranes. The crane has long legs and a long neck. The feathers over the rump stick out in a "bustle."

BEHAVIORS

The sandhill crane is common in northern Illinois. It lives in prairies, fields (especially in corn fields), the edges of swampy areas, lakes and marshes. Spring migration begins in late February. The bird flies on good weather days and often does not land in Illinois. The sandhill crane has its nesting area in northern Illinois. The nest is a large pile of vegetation on the ground in a marshy area. Two, brown eggs with dark markings are deposited by the female. The male and female alternate incubation duties for the 31- to 32-day incubation period. Fall migration begins in mid-September. The sandhill crane winters in the southern United States from Florida to Texas. Cranes fly with the neck and legs extended. When migrating, they fly in flocks that are linear or in a "v" shape. The sandhill crane eats plant and animal materials. Its call is "garooo-a-a-a."

HABITATS

Aquatic Habitats

lakes, ponds and reservoirs; marshes; peatlands; swamps; wet prairies and fens

Woodland Habitats

none

Prairie and Edge Habitats

black soil prairie; dolomite prairie; edge; gravel prairie; hill prairie; sand prairie; shrub prairie

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