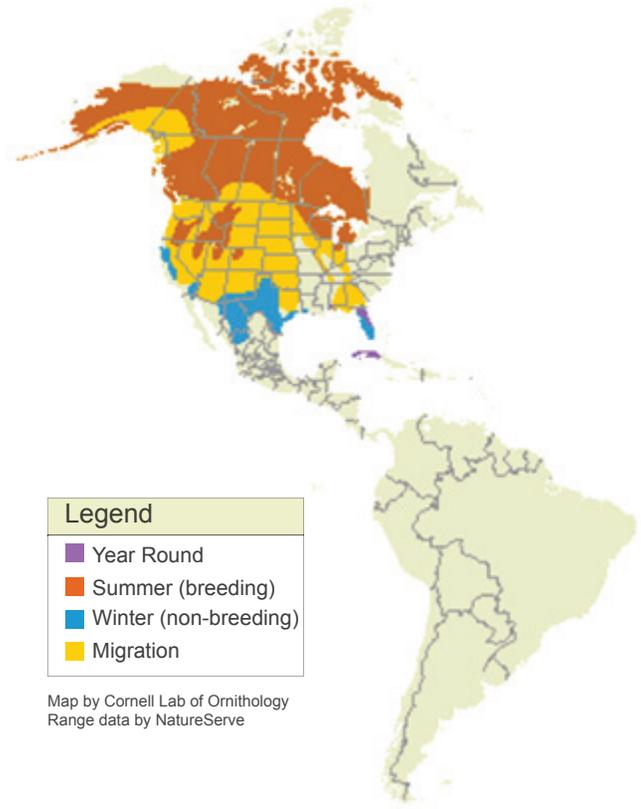


# Sandhill Crane

*Antigone canadensis*

Whether stepping singly across a wet meadow or filling the sky by the hundreds and thousands, Sandhill Cranes have an elegance that draws attention. These tall, gray-bodied, crimson-capped birds breed in open wetlands, fields, and prairies across North America. They group together in great numbers, filling the air with distinctive rolling cries. Mates display to each other with exuberant dances that retain a gangly grace. Sandhill Crane populations are generally strong, but isolated populations in Mississippi and Cuba are endangered.



## Keys to Identification

### Size and Shape

Sandhill Cranes are very large, tall birds with a long neck, long legs, and very broad wings. The bulky body tapers into a slender neck; the short tail is covered by drooping feathers that form a “bustle.” The head is small and the bill is straight and longer than the head.

### Color Pattern

These are slate gray birds, often with a rusty wash on the upperparts. Adults have a pale cheek and red skin on the crown. Their legs are black. Juveniles are gray and rusty brown, without the pale cheek or red crown.

### Behavior

Sandhill Cranes forage for grains and invertebrates in prairies, grasslands, and marshes. They do not hunt in open water or hunch their necks the way herons do. Sandhill Cranes form extremely large flocks—into the tens of thousands—on their wintering grounds and during migration. They often migrate very high in the sky.

### Habitat

Sandhill Cranes breed and forage in open prairies, grasslands, and wetlands. Outside of the breeding season, they often roost in deeper water of ponds or lakes, where they are safe from predators.

## Cool Facts

- Although some start breeding at two years of age, Sandhill Cranes may reach the age of seven before breeding. They mate for life—which can mean two decades or more—and stay with their mates year-round. Juveniles stick close by their parents for 9 or 10 months after hatching.

## Measurements

### Both Sexes

- Length - 47.2 inches
- Wingspan - 78.7 inches
- Weight - 119.9 - 172.8 ounces