U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Sherburne

National Wildlife Refuge

Sandhill Crane Fall Migration



Tom Koerner/USFWS

Identification Tips

- Height: 4.5-5 ft.
- Weight: 10-14 lbs.
- Wingspan: 6 ft.
- Red, featherless skin on the crown
- White to pale gray feathers
- In fall, juveniles look very similar to their parents but are more rusty brown and do not have a red crown.

Did you know?

- Cranes are among the oldest living birds on the planet with fossil records placing cranes in Nebraska more than nine million years ago.
- Sandhill cranes are long lived (20+ years) and typically form life-long pair bonds around the age of 5.
- At Sherburne, due to preening in iron rich mud, the white to pale gray appearance in the feathers turns to a rusty brownish color in the summer.

Sherburne National Wildlife Refuge 17076 293rd Ave. NW Zimmerman, MN 55398 (M-F 8:00AM-4:00PM) Phone: (763) 389-3323 Email: Sherburne@fws.gov Website: www.fws.gov/refuge/sherburne

People with hearing Impairments may reach Sherburne through Relay Service at 1-800/947-3529 (TTY)

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service 1-800-344-WILD October 2022





On the Refuge

USFWS

- Sandhill cranes found at Sherburne are the largest of the 6 recognized subspecies - Greater Sandhill Crane (Grus canadensis tabida).
- Cranes that migrate through the refuge are part of the Eastern Population (EP). These birds overwinter in the southeast U.S.
- Sherburne has become one of the largest EP staging areas in the fall with up to 14,000 individuals.
- Crane numbers start building in September and October with the peak typically in early November.

A Day in the Life at Sherburne in the Fall

- Sunrise: Cranes staging in wetlands at the refuge wake up for the day and take off to find food. Most leave within an hour after sunrise.
- Daytime: The birds prepare for migration by eating cultivated foods such as corn, wheat and sorghum in harvested agricultural fields to the north and west of the refuge.
- Sunset: Sandhill cranes will start to arrive back to the refuge an hour before sunset.
- Nighttime: The cranes will roost on the refuge in up to 2 feet of water, usually standing on one foot to sleep.

