Florida sandhill crane

*Grus canadensis pratensis*

![Photo by FWC](image)

**Taxonomic Classification**

- **Kingdom:** Animalia
- **Phylum:** Chordata
- **Class:** Aves
- **Order:** Gruiiformes
- **Family:** Gruidae
- **Genus/Species:** *Grus canadensis*
- **Subspecies:** *Grus canadensis pratensis*
- **Common Name:** Florida sandhill crane

**Listing Status**

- **Federal Status:** Not Listed
- **FL Status:** State-designated Threatened
- **FNAI Ranks:** G5T2T3/S2S3 (Globally: Demonstrably Secure, Sub sp. Insufficient data for specific rank, but ranges from imperiled to rare/State: Insufficient data for specific rank, but range from imperiled to rare)
- **IUCN Status:** Not ranked

**Physical Description**

The Florida sandhill crane can reach a height of 47.2 inches (120 centimeters) with a wingspan around 78.7 inches (200 centimeters) (Nesbitt 1996). This species is gray with a long neck and
legs, and a bald spot of red skin on the top of its head. The sandhill crane is unique in flight as it can be seen flying with its neck stretched out completely.

**Life History**

The diet of the Florida sandhill crane primarily consists of grain, berries, seeds, insects, worms, mice, small birds, snakes, lizards, and frogs.

Florida sandhill cranes are a non-migratory species that nests in freshwater ponds and marshes. This species is monogamous (breeds with one mate). Courtship consists of dancing, which features jumping, running, and wing flapping (International Crane Foundation, n.d.). Sandhill crane nests are built by both mates with grass, moss, and sticks. Females lay two eggs that incubate for 32 days. Both male and female participate in incubating the eggs (Nesbitt 1996). The offspring will begin traveling from the nest with their parents just 24-hours after hatching. At ten months old, juveniles are able to leave their parents (Nesbitt 1996). Bonding between pairs begins at two years old.

**Habitat & Distribution**

Florida sandhill cranes inhabit freshwater marshes, prairies, and pastures (Florida Natural Areas Inventory 2001). They occur throughout peninsular Florida north to the Okefenokee Swamp in southern Georgia; however, they are less common at the northernmost and southernmost portions of this range. Florida’s Kissimmee and Desoto prairie regions are home to the state’s most abundant populations (Meine and Archibald 1996).

**Threats**

Degradation or direct loss of habitat due to wetland drainage or conversion of prairie for development or agricultural use are the primary threats facing Florida sandhill cranes. The range of the Florida sandhill crane diminished in the southeastern United States during the 20th century, with breeding populations disappearing from coastal Texas, Alabama, and southern Louisiana due to degradation, habitat loss, and overhunting. (Meine and Archibald 1996).

**Conservation & Management**

The Florida sandhill crane is protected by the U.S. Migratory Bird Treaty Act and as a State-designated Threatened species by Florida’s Endangered and Threatened Species Rule.
-Biological Status Review (BSR)
-Supplemental Information for the BSR

Other Informative Links

Birds of North America
Encyclopedia of Life
Florida Natural Areas Inventory
FWC Species Profile
FWC Breeding Bird Atlas
International Crane Foundation
Southwest Florida Water Management District
The Cornell Lab of Ornithology
U.S. Geological Survey

References


