



248-02 1991

SANDHILL CRANE AT GREEN LANE RESERVOIR, Montgomery

Late on the evening of October 12, 1991, I received a telephone message from Rick Wiltraut about a Sandhill Crane (*Grus canadensis*) at Church Road, Green Lane Reservoir. Rick related that he had seen the bird well and that it was clearly an adult, but that he was unable to get a photograph.

On October 13, Michelle Goldstein and I arrived at the site at 1145 hours. After scanning the expansive mudflats without success, we encountered two other birders who had not seen the crane. We began wondering if this rare visitor had left town when we heard the unmistakable low bugling of a Sandhill Crane! We froze in place, looking to the north for what must have been seconds before a large bird flew toward us. Upon lifting our binoculars, we identified it as a Great Blue Heron, not the bird we sought. Several seconds later, a second bird followed in the heron's path, but unlike the Great Blue, its long neck was outstretched. As it flew past in profile, I could distinguish a light-colored cheek and a red crown. I squeezed off two pictures of the bird in flight, but was much relieved when it landed on the flats some 450 feet southwest of us. The bird was now directly between us and a bright sun now, and I noted the time (1215 hours). We took a round-about route using the dense Purple Loosestrife for cover and got within 200 feet of the bird without flushing it. Using 8.5 x binoculars and a 25 x spotting scope, I could now see the uniform gray coloration of the bird, the whitish cheek patch, and the impressive red crown. The characteristic 'shaggy' appearance of the standing bird was also evident. This was a life-bird for me, and certainly a memorable one. After a brief discussion, our group of four decided to retreat to the parking lot. We reasoned that parked cars would be less threatening to the bird than standing people. The bird walked about the mudflats for a time, but did not appear to be feeding there.

By 1245 hours, a few other birders had arrived, and the bird was moving slowly toward us. It moved onto a weedy field adjacent to the parking lot, and was within 90 feet now. The bird walked slowly through the foot-high weeds, and appeared to be feeding as it did. While I could not determine what it was eating, I did note an abundance of grasshoppers that day. (A Great Blue Heron feeding alongside the crane was seen catching, and swallowing a Meadow Vole.) On at least three occasions, I noted the crane stopping and arching its head over its back, as if looking directly overhead. On each of these occasions, I was able to locate flocks of Canada Geese passing high overhead. All of these were well beyond my hearing range, and could only be detected with binoculars.

I observed the Sandhill Crane for a total of 75 minutes in fair to good lighting. I understand from conversations with other observers that it was last seen at about 1430 hours that day. (As I left the site, I was able to get several identifiable photos of the bird from my car.)

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Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee

Voting Tabulation - Round # 1 of

Species: **Sandhill Crane**
 Date of Sighting: **12 October 1991 to 13 October 1991**
 Observer(s): **Kevin Crilley**
 Date of Submission: **1992 Montgomery**
 Submitted by: **Kevin Crilley**

Member	Class I	Class II	Class III	Class IV	Class V		
					A	B	C
E. Kwater	X						
B. Haas	X						
F. Haas	X						
R. Ickes	X						
G. McWilliams	X						
S. Santner	X						
J. Skinner	X						
TOTALS	7						
DECISION	X						

Comments:

Signature (Secretary):

B. Haas

Date:

2-27-93