

248-01-1994

## SANDHILL CRANE

*Grus canadensis*

Location: Melhorn and Middle Roads, Fairview Twp

Date: March 22, 1994

Time: 11:40 AM to 11:50 AM and 3:30 PM

Weather: Clear, wind west-southwest to approximately 20 mph

Observer: Jerry McWilliams

Optics: Zeiss 10 X 40 Binocular and Kowa TSN 4 with variable eyepiece set at 35X

Viewing distance: about 1/2 to 3/4 of a mile away in the AM and approximately 100 to 200 feet away in the PM.

Details of sighting & description: At 11:30 AM I drove down Melhorn Rd. on my lunch break to record the hawk flight that was already in progress. Upon arriving at my selected viewing point, I immediately scanned the sky and within seconds the first bird I saw was a Sandhill Crane. It flew in tight circles slowly flapping its wings as it drifted eastward. As it approached Melhorn Rd. it changed direction and began to fly towards the southwest in the vicinity of several cornfields and a large gravel mining area. It had to flap its wings more vigorously as it was flying against a rather strong wind. When it dropped to a particular level above the ground it was able to begin descending on a glide. The crane eventually was lost below the tree line and I suspected it had landed. At 3:30 PM I saw the crane again as it was leaving the area where I suspected it had gone down. I was driving east on Middle Road when it suddenly appeared flying directly towards me. I slowed down so the bird and I might meet at the same time as it was going to fly directly over middle Rd. and I wanted to be under the bird as it passed by. The crane beat me there, but only by a few seconds and I was easily within 200 feet of it at the time it flew in front of me. The sun was behind me so the light was good. The bird seemed huge almost eagle-like in wing span. The entire bird was medium gray except for the patch of red skin on the crown. The fully extended neck was long and thickened at the base. The head was fairly large and bulbous not slim and streamlined like a herons head. The bill was black, dagger-like and only a little longer than the length of the head. The wing beats were slow and shallow and they were quite broad. The outer primaries were nearly always separated very similar to the outer primaries of a soaring eagle. The primaries were spread less when the bird was flying in a straight line. The legs were long, black and fully extended. The tail

was short and when circling the tail was nearly always spread. A side-on profile gave the bird a hunched back appearance, probably due to the bird holding its feet and head slightly below the horizontal. When I watched it in the AM I noticed that it occasionally opened its mouth. I assume the bird was calling when it would do this, but because the crane was so far away and the wind was blowing I was unable to hear it.

*W. T. Jones*

**Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee**

**Voting Tabulation - Round # 1 of**

Species: Sandhill Crane (*Grus canadensis*)

Date of Sighting: 22 March 1994 to 22 March 1994

Location: FAIRVIEW TWP

County: ERIE

Observer(s): Jerry McWilliams

Date of Submission: 1994

Submitted by: Jerry McWilliams

Written Description: YES      Photo: NO      Specimen: NO

Recording: NONE

Member	Class I	Class II	Class III	Class IV	Class V			Abstain
					A	B	C	
F. Haas			X					
N. Pulcinella			X					
E. Kwater			X					
R. Ickes			X					
G. McWilliams			X					
P. Schwalbe			X					
J. Skinner			<del>X</del>					
TOTALS			7					
DECISION			X					

Comments:

Signature (Secretary):

*F. C. Haas*

Date:

9-25-94