



248-01-2005

"Lesser" Sandhill Crane
Grus canadensis canadensis

Location: Along Rt. 89 about one half mile north of the junction of Rt. 89 and Rt. 86, Greenfield Twp., Erie Co., Pa.

Date: December 30, 2005

Time: 10:45 to 11:45AM

Weather: Mostly cloudy

Observer: Jerry McWilliams

Optics: 10 X 40 Zeiss binocular and Kowa TSN 4 spotting scope set at 40X

Viewing distance: as close as 150 yards.

Viewing conditions: good

I am submitting this report because it is possible that this subspecies of Sandhill Crane has not been described in Pennsylvania. Perhaps not all nominate Sandhill Cranes can be distinguished from the larger *G. canadensis tabida*, but the distinction between the two subspecies was quite apparent with these birds. It has only been in recent years that Sandhill Cranes have been reported in large flocks in Pennsylvania, so it would not be surprising that a few of the northern "Lesser" Sandhill Cranes might get caught up in one of these flocks.

Details of sighting and description: I had received third hand reports of a large flock of Sandhill Cranes consisting of from 50 to 74 birds that were observed feeding near a standing field of corn along Rt. 89 just south of Northeast. I had checked the site once immediately after receiving the first report, but it was snowing heavily and was foggy, so visibility was quite poor and I did not see the birds. I went back to the site again on December 30 following another report of 74 or more cranes in the same area. I did not see the large flock of cranes in the field when I arrived, but I did see seven birds scattered about in the field. Shortly after I arrived I heard a single adult bird calling, which appeared flying in from the east and then moments later two more adults appeared from the opposite direction. I could clearly see the difference in size between the two birds that were coming in to join the original flock on the ground. The larger bird being *G. c. tabida* and the smaller one being a *G. c. canadensis*. The smaller "Lesser" became even more apparent when it joined the flock on the ground that were all *G. c. tabida*. The overall size of the "Lesser" was about 2/3 the size of the "Greater." The legs were very short and much thinner than the "Greater." In flight just the feet, and perhaps an inch or two of the tarsus, extended past the tail in the "Lesser" where all of the tarsus extended past the tail in the "Greater." The leg difference between the two subspecies was quite obvious when the birds were in flight. Plumage characteristics were similar between the two subspecies except that the black in the primaries and secondaries was more extensive in the "Lesser" than in the "Greater." The primary shafts were noticeably white to the tip on the spread wings of the "Greater", where the white was faint on the primary shafts of the "Lesser" extending only about a third or perhaps half way up the primary shafts. The paler shafts of the "Lesser" were not always easy to see, but the paler shafts of the "Greater" were always quite visible. The "Lesser" was mainly grayish overall with a red patch on the forehead, similar to the adult "Greater", but the neck appeared to be a paler gray on the "Lesser" Sandhill Crane. All but two of the "Greater" Sandhill Cranes were adult birds, the young birds being distinguished from the adults by the minimum amount of red on the head. I was able to obtain numerous photographs of the "Lesser" Sandhill Crane and the "Greater" Sandhill Cranes in flight and on the ground.

Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee

Voting Tabulation – Round One

Species: Sandhill Crane (Grus Canadensis)

Date of Sighting: 30 Decemermber 2005 to 30 Decemermber 2005

Location: GREENFIELD TOWNSHIP

County : ERIE

Observer(s): Jerry McWilliams

Date of Submission: 2005

Submitted by: Jerry McWilliams

Written Description: Yes

Photo: Yes

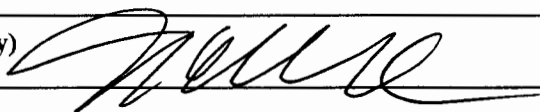
Specimen: No

Recording: No

Member	Class I	Class II	Class III	Class IV-A	Class IV-B	Class IV-C	Class V	Abstain
R. Wiltraut	X							
A. Guarente	X							
P. Guris	X							
J. Stanley	X							
E. Witmer	X							
J. Heller	X							
M. Sharp				X				
TOTALS	6			1				
DECISION	X							

Comments: 6/1

Signature (Secretary)



Date:

8/4/06