

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



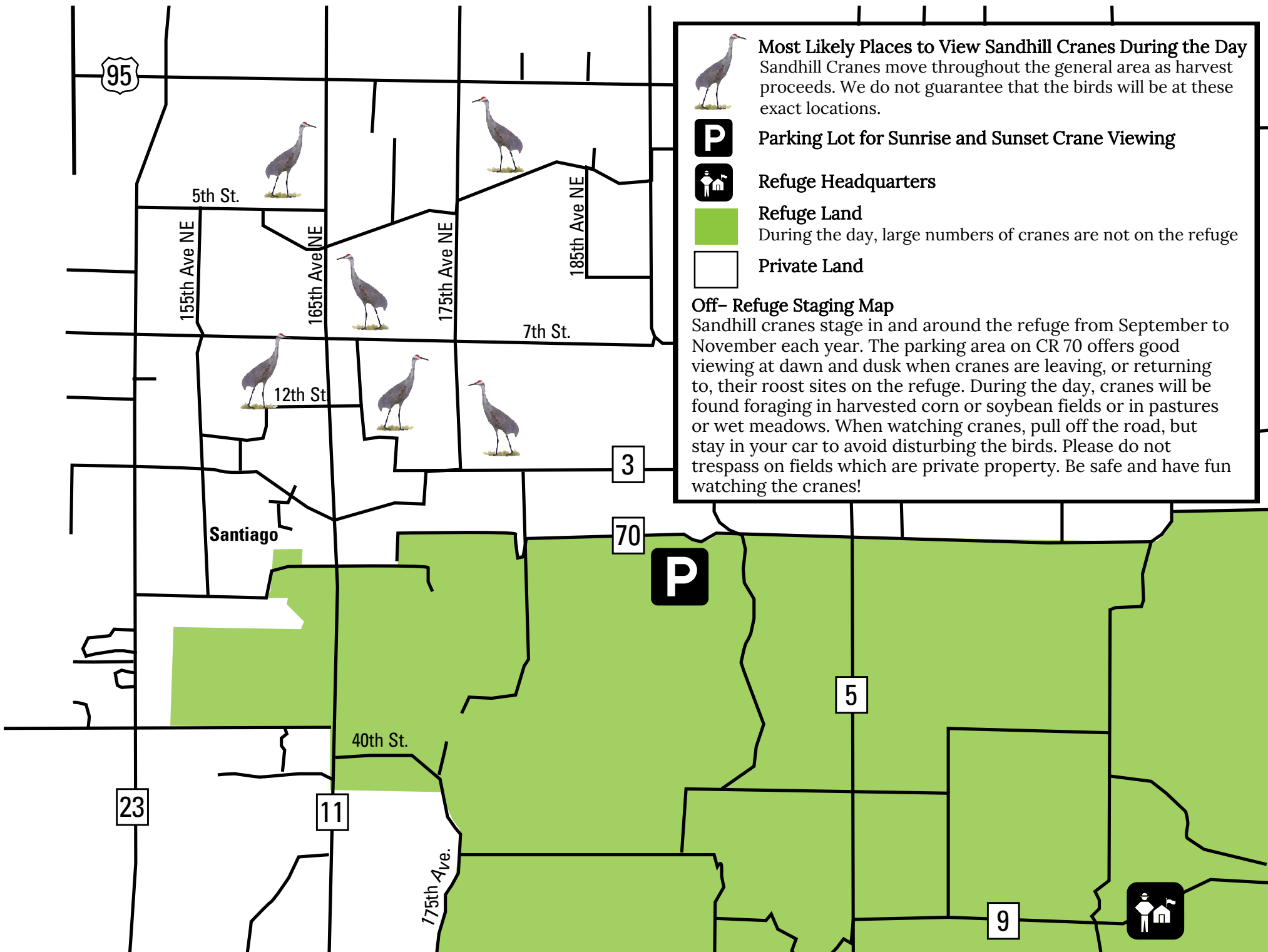
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On the Refuge

- 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.



Most Likely Places to View Sandhill Cranes During the Day
 Sandhill Cranes move throughout the general area as harvest proceeds. We do not guarantee that the birds will be at these exact locations.



Parking Lot for Sunrise and Sunset Crane Viewing



Refuge Headquarters



Refuge Land

During the day, large numbers of cranes are not on the refuge



Private Land

Off- Refuge Staging Map

Sandhill cranes stage in and around the refuge from September to November each year. The parking area on CR 70 offers good viewing at dawn and dusk when cranes are leaving, or returning to, their roost sites on the refuge. During the day, cranes will be found foraging in harvested corn or soybean fields or in pastures or wet meadows. When watching cranes, pull off the road, but stay in your car to avoid disturbing the birds. Please do not trespass on fields which are private property. Be safe and have fun watching the cranes!