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Sandhill Cranes

The sight and sound of Sandhill cranes is a reminder of the primitive world. One of the oldest living bird species on the planet, Sandhill cranes are both ungainly and enormously graceful.



A Bit About The Relatives

Cranes are large, long-legged and long-necked birds of the order Gruiformes, family Gruidae. There are 15 species of cranes in the world, but only two are found in North America—the Sandhill crane and the whooping crane. The whooping crane is essentially all white and is slightly larger than the Sandhill crane.

There are six subspecies of Sandhill cranes—greater, lesser, Florida, Cuban, Mississippi and Canadian. However, there is some debate on the Canadian Sandhill crane being a distinct subspecies as it overlaps with lessers in some areas and greater in other areas. Sandhill cranes are the most abundant of the world's cranes, with a total population of around 650,000.

Three subspecies of Sandhill cranes occur in Washington—greater, lesser and Canadian.

Of the 15 crane species, 10 are listed by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) as vulnerable, endangered or critically endangered. Six of the 15 species are also considered "endangered" under the Endangered Species Act, although only the whooping crane is found within the United States. Two of the Sandhill crane subspecies are also considered federally endangered—the Cuban, found only in Cuba, and the Mississippi, found in Mississippi. All three subspecies in Washington—greater, lesser and Canadian—are listed as endangered at the state level by the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife.

Okay, let's learn about cranes in Washington. Read on.

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Drumheller Channels National Natural Landmark

Formed by ancient volcanoes, carved by raging waters, these channeled scablands decorate the landscape with towering, fissures of basalt rock. The Drumheller Channels National Natural Landmark showcases a portion of the vast Ice Ages Floods in the Columbia Basin.

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