

PHOTOGRAPHS OF NEW YORK STATE RARITIES

17. Sandhill Crane



Photograph by Harold P. Burrell

Near Whitehall, N.Y., 2 April 1967

The Sandhill Crane (*Grus canadensis*) has apparently been an occasional visitant to New York State in the post-colonial period, but verifiable records are rare. Specimens obtained were probably more often masticated than mounted. Eaton (*Birds of New York*, vol. 1, 1914) gives evidence of two obtained around 1880 and 1885 respectively in western New York. Thereafter, the bird was unreported for over 50 years, until a single bird was noted July 30, 1948 on the Montezuma marshes by R. Fischer and E. Chalif. Since that observation, at least five other sightings, all of single birds, have occurred and one specimen has been obtained. These recent records are:

1. The above 1948 record [*Wilson Bulletin* 64(3):163, 1952].
2. An adult May 16, 1965 at a small marsh on the west side of Center Road, Town of Schroepfel, Oswego County, seen by C. G. Spies, J. R. Bart, F. G. Scheider [*Kingbird* 15(3):157, July 1965].
3. November 11, 1966 – one noted from that date to approximately two weeks later on the Leland Prescott farm on Dry Bridge Road, Town of Meredith, Delaware County; a report on file from Mrs. Lynn Clark

of Delhi who confirmed the identification, [*Kingbird* 17(1):36, Jan. 1967].

4. An adult mid-February through March 26, 1967, on the Mountain View Farm near Whitehall, N.Y. — first reported by Mrs. Dora Bullock and subsequently confirmed by W. B. Sabin, E. Hallenbeck, and Guy Bartlett [*Kingbird* 17(2):112, May 1967]; a detailed account by J. A. Munoff of this occurrence appears in *Kingbird* 17(3):147, July 1967; this is the only record in the series of a wintering individual.
5. November 12–19, 1967 — a young bird reported on a farm (Gibson's) five miles north of Kinderhook, Columbia County; initial identifier not given but seen by many members of Alan Devoe Bird Club and Schenectady Bird Club and confirmed by E. M. Reilly of the New York State Museum [*Kingbird* 18(1):53, Jan. 1968].
6. October 20, 1968 — an adult at Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge near Rt 89, seen by R. B. Jacobs, Margaret Otis, Katharine Price, and



Photograph by Office of Public Information, Cornell University
Dr. George Ross and George Archibald with Sandhill Crane, Ithaca, November 1968

Sam Sweet; this bird was seen regularly by many observers to October 24, then again on November 9 by Clayton Hardy, the Refuge manager; on Nov. 13 the bird was found with a broken left wing (secondary to a shotgun wound) on a back road near MNWR by Richard Brand of Tyre, captured (no mean feat), taken to Cornell University where pinning of the broken wing and wound dressing ensued; it unfortunately died some five days later; this individual was determined by George Archibald, a graduate student working on cranes, to be *Grus canadensis tabida* [Kingbird 19(1):18, Jan. 1967].

The A.O.U. *Check-list* (1957) lists three subspecies of the Sandhill Crane — *Grus c. canadensis*, the essentially Arctic form with an enormous breeding range across the eastern Siberian, Alaskan, and Canadian Arctic as far east as Southampton Island and Baffin Island. This population apparently migrates exclusively west of Hudson Bay through the prairie provinces and states to wintering areas from south-central California to southern Texas. *Grus c. tabida*, the subspecies of the New York State specimen, occupies a large, essentially western, continental range with the easternmost component in Michigan's Upper Peninsula and in a few counties in the southeastern quarter of the Lower Peninsula of that state. The proximity of this Michigan population plus the occurrence of three of the six records in October and November suggests that the New York State individuals may well be derived from this small eastern remnant of *tabida*. The Arctic race *canadensis* reputedly has left the Arctic breeding grounds and foregathering places prior to early October. *Grus c. pratensis* occurs in Florida and Georgia and is apparently accidental north of South Carolina. Whatever the source, the presence of this spectacular bird in every year for the past four years (1965–68) could suggest some recent change in dispersal of the species, and it behooves every Regional editor to check out reports of the species' suspected or suggested occurrence by birder and non-birder alike. It is an unmistakable bird really, although an unknown indifferent or incredibly stupid hunter apparently could not tell the difference between it and a goose.

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CUT-OFF DATE, STATE BIRD BOOK RECORDS

Cut-off date for records for the New York State bird book will be July 31, 1969.

John Bull