



## Ontario Nature Statement on Opening a Hunting Season for Sandhill Cranes

February 9, 2026

Ontario Nature is aware that Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC) is proposing to open a hunting season on Sandhill cranes, which is embedded in this [document](#).

Ontario Nature, many of its Nature Network groups and individual members are concerned about this proposal. The recovery of Sandhill cranes is a conservation success story to be celebrated. Given that they were extirpated from Ontario in the last century because of overhunting, reinstating a sandhill crane hunt is an understandably controversial and concerning proposal.

In this proposal, ECCC asserts that the population can sustain a loss of birds due to hunting. At first glance, this appears to be evidence-based.

We note the following concerns expressed by the Ontario Field Ornithologists:

"The proposed 14-day season with a daily bag limit of one crane may appear

conservative, but it fails to account for the Sandhill Crane's unique biology. Sandhill Cranes are very long-lived and have one of the lowest recruitment rates of any North American bird species. In the eastern population, lifetime reproductive success is estimated at just 1.86 young per adult and 2.70 per established breeder, with more than half of all offspring produced by fewer than 30% of adults (Nesbitt, 1992). As a result, population impacts depend not only on the number of birds harvested but also on which birds are taken--something that counting the number of permits issued cannot capture.

Mandatory harvest reporting, standard in big-game hunting and required in several U.S. states with crane seasons (e.g., Kentucky, Tennessee, Alabama), is not mentioned in Ontario's proposal. Without such reporting, the loss of juveniles or established breeders would go undetected, and recognition of population decline could be delayed.

Enforcement also remains unclear: if hunting is only permitted on agricultural land, do the CWS have the resources or capacity to effectively monitor compliance?"

Ontario Nature encourages the federal government to keep the allowable hunt conditions very cautious, to include hunter reporting on the type of bird taken, and to re-assess frequently to determine what impact the hunt is having on the birds. At the first sign of a population decline or of any unsustainable population demographics, we recommend that the government stop or adjust hunting rules.

Further, the information gathered through hunting programs and monitoring must be readily accessible to the public. Any hunting regulations must respect Indigenous values, rights and perspectives.

Ontario Nature encourages groups and individuals to submit their own comments to ECCC by the February 15 deadline. To do so, contact the Director of Wildlife Management and Regulatory Affairs Division at the National Office of the Canadian Wildlife Service of Environment and Climate Change Canada: 351 St. Joseph Boulevard, Gatineau QC K1A 0H3 or by email: [MbregsReports-Rapports-Omregs@ec.gc.ca](mailto:MbregsReports-Rapports-Omregs@ec.gc.ca)