

Counting cranes from page 18

-ered to over 600,000 cranes and is now the most abundant crane species in the world. It is widely distributed, extending from northeastern Siberia, across North America from coast to coast and as far south as Cuba. During migration, sandhills are well known for congregating at staging areas in numbers in the tens to hundreds of thousands.

Sandhill cranes are heavy bodied, long-necked, long-legged birds inhabiting open grasslands, meadows and shallow freshwater marshes. Migrating cranes often are readily observed foraging in cereal fields, particularly the stubble of harvested corn, and roosting along slow moving rivers and other fresh water bodies. Six subspecies of *Antigone canadensis* breeding from the northeastern United States through central Canada to Alaska and eastern Siberia.

Cranes can live for over 35 years in the wild. First breeding is deferred until 2 to 8 years of age,

depending on the subspecies, population, and individual development, and



Sarah Giddings
A pair of cranes that make their summer home in a field on Brule Dam Road in Florence County came back from their southern migration only to be hit with a spring snow storm.

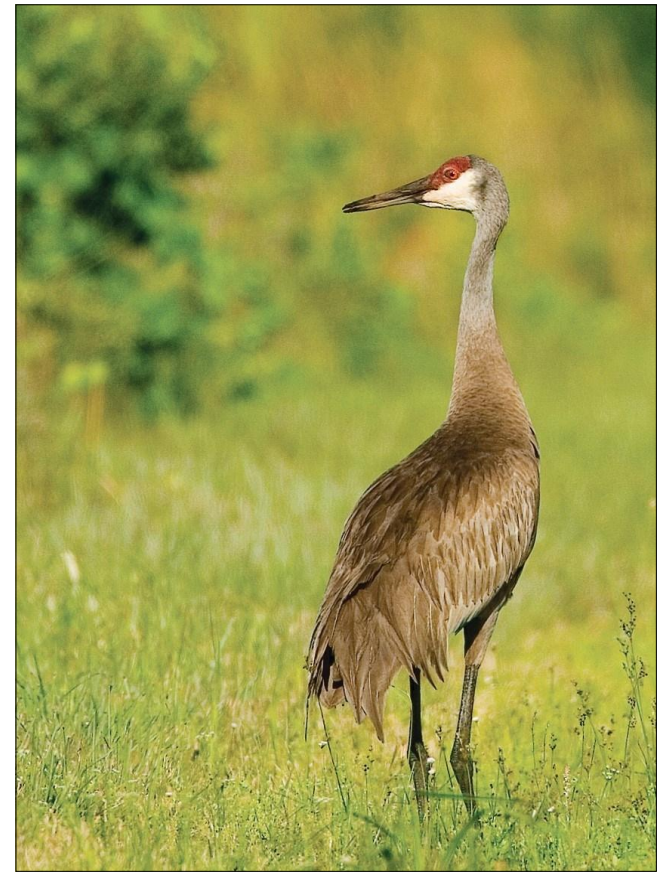
roughly 0.3 young are raised per year to the age of independence. Together, delayed age at first breeding and low annual productivity explain the slow population growth inherent in this species. This slow growth has been a key obstacle in the

conservation and management of at-risk popula-

tions. Pairs and families constitute the primary social units, but at times cranes are highly gregarious with extended family members and unrelated birds roosting communally and feeding in large flocks, particularly during

migration and on wintering grounds. Cranes are socially monogamous, often with long-term pair bonds and extended biparental care of young. Clutch size is normally 2 eggs, occasionally 1, and rarely 3. Failed nesting often leads to renesting.

To participate in the Crane Count you first need to contact your county coordinator to be assigned a site and receive additional instructions. Coordinator for Forest County is Nicole Shutt, who can be reached by email at nshutt@fs.fed.us. Florence County does not currently have a coordinator. If you are interested in becoming a coordinator, contact the International Crane Foundation's Crane Count Coordinator at (608) 356-9462 or email cranecount@savingcranes.org.



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