

# Interesting Crane Facts and Viewing Information



Cranes roost at night in area marshes including Haehnle Sanctuary where up to 8,000 may be seen in October and November.



The Crane above flies with its neck out stretched in typical crane fashion. Great blue heron fly with their necks in an S curve and their heads resting on their shoulders.



Cranes appear brown most of the year, but turn gray when they molt in the fall. The brown color is acquired by preening in the marsh waters.

Late in the summer, Sandhills abandon their nesting territories and flock to staging areas like the Haehnle Sanctuary. Staging areas typically provide abundant food, protected night roosting sites and the benefits of congregating in flocks during migration. Here the routes and traditions of older, experienced birds can be passed on to less experienced individuals.

Cranes from southern Michigan migrate to Florida. Depending on the weather, most leave in November, but some have stayed through December. They usually return to Michigan in late February or early March.

Sandhills prefer to migrate when the sun causes warming thermals to rise and there is a tail wind. By taking advantage of tail winds, flying in formation and by soaring, they are able to reduce energy expenditure by up to 30%. Flying at speeds up to 50 miles per hour, they can cover nearly 500 miles a day, often reaching altitudes of over a mile.

Cranes leave the sanctuary around sunrise to feed in nearby farm fields. They begin to return one to two hours before sunset. During the day, flocks can be located by driving the roads within 5 miles of their roosting sites.

## Crane Facts

The Greater Sandhill Crane (*Grus canadensis tabida*) is found in mid-continental North America including Michigan.

### Description:

Height: 4 feet (tallest bird in Michigan)

Wing Span: 6 feet

Weight: males 12 lbs., female 9 ½ lbs.

**Coloration:** The body is a mousy gray with white cheeks and a red forehead. They purposely rub iron rich soil and vegetation on their newly molted feathers, staining them a rusty brown, which provides camouflage during nesting. Juvenile cranes lack the red forehead. Both males and females are colored alike.

**Voice:** The trumpet-like resonating *gar-ooo-a-a* call can be heard for over a mile depending on the wind. This loud, penetrating call is produced by a remarkably long 4-foot windpipe. The neck is only 2 feet long. To accommodate the extra length, the windpipe forms a loop next to the breastbone before attaching to the lungs.

**Living Dinosaurs:** Sandhill Cranes hold the record as the oldest living bird species. A fossil wing bone of a Sandhill was found in the Nebraskan deposit dating back 10 million years. Fossils from other members of the Order that cranes belong to, Gruiformes, date back some 60 million years at a time when dinosaurs roamed the earth.

**Food:** A wide variety of plants and animals are eaten including snails, crayfish, worms, mice, birds, frogs, snakes, insects, acorns, roots, seeds, berries, but seldom fish. They are very fond of waste grains following the harvest of corn, wheat, barley. They can cause crop damage to newly planted corn.

### Longevity:

Estimated average life expectancy is 7 years.

Best Time to see Cranes At Haehnle Sanctuary is one to two hours before sunset.

### Sunset Times (Eastern Daylight Time)

Oct.	Oct.	Nov.
1 7:18 p.m.	17 6:51 p.m.	1 5:30 p.m. std
3 7:15 p.m.	19 6:48 p.m.	3 5:27 p.m.
5 7:11 p.m.	21 6:45 p.m.	5 5:25 p.m.
7 7:08 p.m.	23 6:42 p.m.	7 5:23 p.m.
9 7:04 p.m.	25 6:39 p.m.	9 5:20 p.m.
11 7:01 p.m.	27 6:37 p.m.	11 5:18 p.m.
13 6:58 p.m.	29 6:34 p.m.	13 5:16 p.m.
15 6:55 p.m.	31 6:31 p.m.	15 5:14 p.m.



The best viewing times for cranes feeding in fields is prior to 10:00 a.m. and after 2:00 p.m. Some cranes return to roosts during mid-day, and all do before sunset.

# Crane Viewing Map

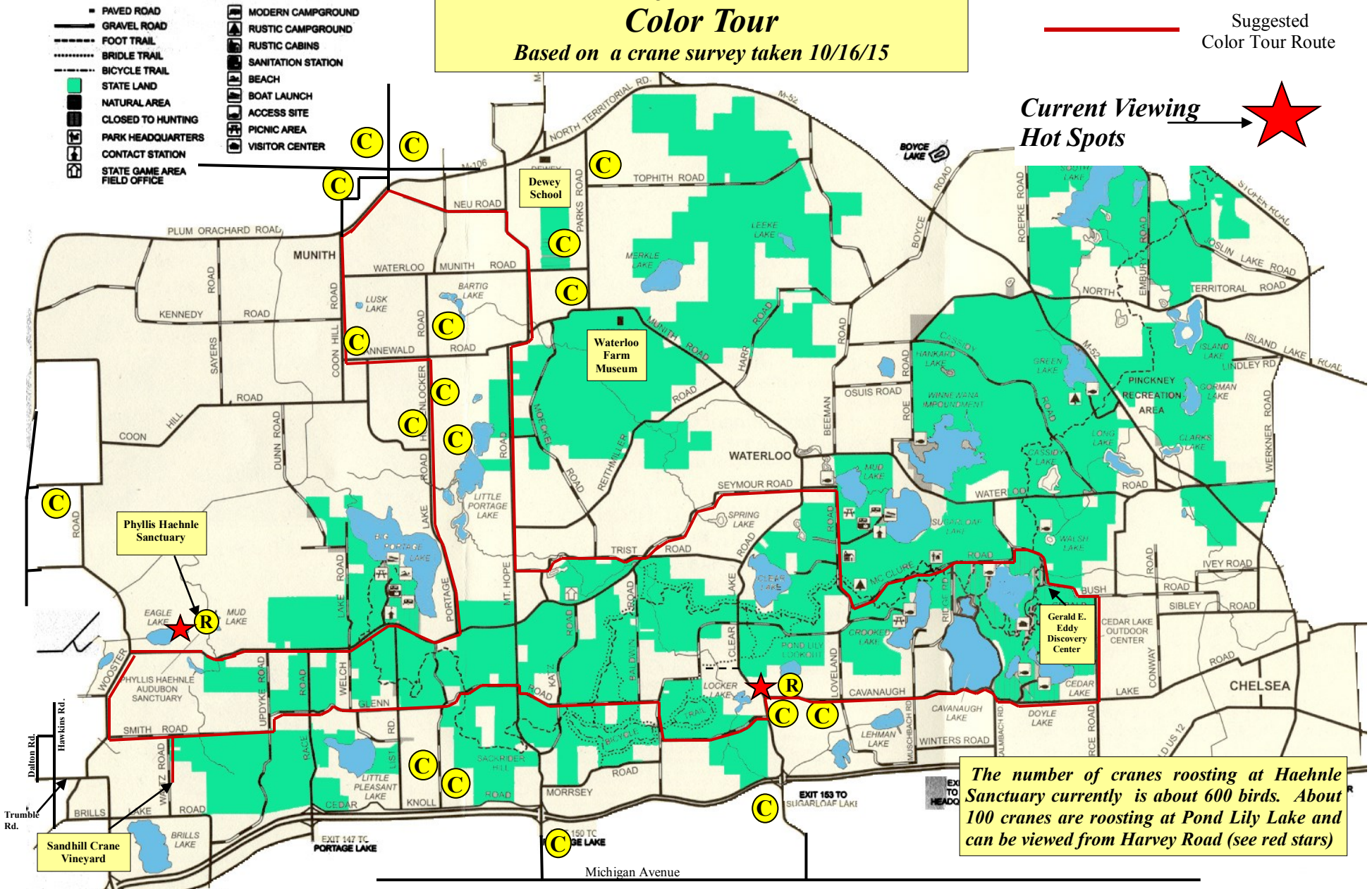
## & Self-Guided Color Tour

Based on a crane survey taken 10/16/15

- C = Cranes in Fields
- R = Night Roosts

Suggested Color Tour Route

Current Viewing Hot Spots ★



The number of cranes roosting at Haehnle Sanctuary currently is about 600 birds. About 100 cranes are roosting at Pond Lily Lake and can be viewed from Harvey Road (see red stars)