

**GREATER SANDHILL CRANE
(GRUS CANADENSIS TABIDA)**

Federal/California status: --/Threatened

DFG: Fully protected



Description

The greater sandhill crane is a long-legged, long-necked bird with a wingspread that reaches 6-7 feet (1.8-2.1 m). This subspecies is slightly larger than the lesser sandhill crane (*Grus canadensis canadensis*) and up to 50% longer-billed. Greater also has paler primaries, noticeable in flight. Adults have a gray coloration with dull red skin on the crown and lores, whitish coloration on the chin, cheek, and upper throat, and black primaries. Immatures lack the red patch and the gray coloration is irregularly mottled with brownish-red.

Habitat

This species forages on open grasslands, grain fields, and open wetlands. The diet consists of grasses and forbs as well as roots, seeds, grains, and earthworms that it probes out with its long bill. It will also consume mice, small birds, snakes, and frogs when available. The greater sandhill crane participates in elaborate courtship behaviors which sometimes include social dancing. These displays can involve as many as 50-80 individuals and consist of head bobbing, deep bows, leaps, and running with wings flapping.

Range/distribution

Greater sandhill cranes are winter residents to the San Joaquin Valley.

Photo: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Image Library, URL: <http://images.fws.gov>, accessed September 11, 2002.

References

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