

# Sandhill Crane Hunting Season Proposal

## FACT SHEET

### Kentucky Ornithological Society/Kentucky Coalition for Sandhill Cranes

During the past month or so, the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources has made an effort to bolster its case for approving a hunting season on Sandhill Cranes through statements at meetings, press releases, and presentations on its web site. Members of our two groups are aware of a number of mis-statements and “stretches” of reality made by Department staff in support of their arguments. In addition, the Kentucky Conservation Coalition, essentially an advocacy group for the Department, has made similar mis-statements. The items below clarify the false and/or misleading elements of these statements:

1) *Opinion pieces opposing a proposal before the Ky. Dept. of Fish and Wildlife Resources to allow for a limited harvest of sandhill cranes have appeared in several newspapers and on the Internet in recent months.* **SOURCE:** KDFWR Press Release, April 15, 2011 “The Case for Hunting Sandhill Cranes.”

**CLARIFICATION:** This proposal is not “before” the Ky. Dept. of Fish and Wildlife Resources. It was initiated *by* and has been crafted *by* the Department.

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2a) *Some people simply object to hunting. Others enjoy hunting and consider it an integral and important part of our heritage. Kentucky Fish and Wildlife understands both viewpoints.*

**SOURCE:** KDFWR Press Release, April 15, 2011 “The Case for Hunting Sandhill Cranes.”

2b) *The Ky. Dept. of Fish and Wildlife Resources and its nine District Commissioners are receiving comments from anti-hunters voicing opposition to a Sandhill Crane hunting season and Anti-hunters are making their voices heard.* **Source:** Email to members of the Kentucky Conservation Coalition listserv, April 13, 2011.

**CLARIFICATION:** Our groups are not expressing opposition to hunting; please refer to letter (Kentucky Ornithological Society) and web site (Kentucky Coalition for Sandhill Cranes) clearly stating support for hunting overall. The opposition to the Sandhill Crane hunting season proposal by the KOS and the KCFSC is based on some concerns about elements of the *Eastern Population Management Plan* and the negative effect that Sandhill Crane hunting in Kentucky might have on wildlife viewing of the cranes as well as support for wildlife conservation by non-consumptive wildlife enthusiasts.

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3) *Sandhill cranes are the most abundant crane species on the planet, with more than 700,000 spending part of their year in North America. The Eastern Population is the world’s second largest sandhill crane population, numbering between 60,000 and 100,000 birds.* **SOURCE:** KDFWR Press Release, April 15, 2011 “The Case for Hunting Sandhill Cranes.”

**CLARIFICATION:** There has been NO official estimate of more than 60,000 birds in the Eastern Population put out by any source. In addition, while it is true that Eastern Population is

the second largest in the World, the “relative” numbers of this population pale in comparison to hunted populations of most species of waterbirds, which typically are estimated to number in the millions.

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4) *Hunters prize the opportunity to pursue sandhill cranes for the excellent table fare and the challenging hunt they provide.* **SOURCE:** KDFWR Press Release, April 15, 2011 “The Case for Hunting Sandhill Cranes.”

**CLARIFICATION:** Not all hunters prize the opportunity to pursue Sandhill Cranes. Our groups are aware of a number of active hunters who are not interested in pursuing them, and some who oppose the hunting season proposal based on a variety of reasons.

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5) *This population continues to grow and has become increasingly visible in Kentucky in recent years. Peak counts in Kentucky now approach 20,000 cranes in the Barren River Lake area.* **SOURCE:** KDFWR Press Release, April 15, 2011 “The Case for Hunting Sandhill Cranes.”

**CLARIFICATION:** There was *one* recent count survey of approximately 20,000 Sandhill Cranes at Barren River Lake in mid-February 2010. This highly inflated survey count was due to a period of inclement weather that occurred during the late winter 2010 period, thus coinciding with the initial stages of northbound migration. Most other peak counts of Sandhill Cranes in Kentucky have been between 5000 and 10,000 birds. In fact, it is unclear how quickly the number of birds in the Eastern Population has increased due to the fragmented nature of Flyway-wide surveys prior to 2010. It is possible that the remarkably high rate of increase in numbers in recent years can be attributed mostly to better surveys for the species. There is little evidence to suggest that a species with such a low reproductive rate would increase that remarkably in a short period of time.

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6) *This increasingly visible population of sandhill cranes prompted sportsmen and sportswomen in the eastern United States and Kentucky to request a crane hunting opportunity here.* **SOURCE:** KDFWR Press Release, April 15, 2011 “The Case for Hunting Sandhill Cranes.”

**CLARIFICATION:** There is *no* evidence that has been made available to our groups that sportsmen and sportswomen in the eastern United States and Kentucky had put any substantive pressure or voiced any widespread request for such a season. Moreover, the initial impetus for establishing guidelines by the Mississippi Flyway Council for crane hunting seasons in the Eastern Population originated with a very small minority of individuals in Tennessee who aggressively attempted to “force” the issue with a variety of tactics including state legislation. At that time (circa 2009), we were told by KDFWR that there was no substantial interest in pursuing a crane hunting season in Kentucky.

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7) a) *The interest in the species generated by the hunters pursuing these birds has been instrumental in the successful management of this species;* b) *Hunters have paid the bills for many decades to build the Eastern Population of sandhill cranes to its current record numbers.*

*Hunters now are requesting the opportunity to pursue a limited number of these birds. The hunters have a valid point. And the biology supports them.* SOURCE: KDFWR Press Release, April 15, 2011 “The Case for Hunting Sandhill Cranes.”

**CLARIFICATION:** This is perhaps one of the biggest misconceptions about the increase in the Eastern Population of Sandhill Cranes. According to the International Crane Foundation, there is little evidence to suggest that “hunters’ dollars” have had any meaningful impact on the recovery of this species from the brink of extinction in the early 1900s. A much more significant factor has been the ban on unregulated hunting that was put in place as set forth in the Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918. In the absence of hunting, Sandhill Cranes have simply recolonized formerly inhabited wetland areas, primarily in the western Great Lakes and south-central Canada. For example, data assembled by the International Crane Foundation in Wisconsin in 2007, where 2,159 nesting pairs were counted, showed that only 607 pairs (28%) were on sites that had a significant amount of public lands within the site monitored. This means that nearly  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the nesting cranes were on *private* land. Some Farm Bill programs have probably assisted to some extent in recovery, but sportsmen’s dollars, especially from those residing in Kentucky, have probably contributed very little to the recovery of the Sandhill Cranes in the Eastern Population. Pittman-Robertson monies contributed by Kentucky sportsmen largely come back to Kentucky based on a complicated formula determined by Congress. Federal Duck Stamp dollars have probably contributed in a small manner through the acquisition of some public land in the western Great Lakes states but is impossible to track. The cranes have essentially done it “on their own” with the protection afforded by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

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8) The *Management Plan for the Eastern Population of Sandhill Cranes* was developed with the input and review of more than 50 professional wildlife biologists in the U.S. and Canada. SOURCE: KDFWR Press Release, April 15, 2011 “The Case for Hunting Sandhill Cranes.”

**CLARIFICATION:** While there may be consensus among a majority of the wildlife management agency representatives who make up the membership of the Mississippi Flyway Council, not all of those having input on the *Management Plan* were in agreement with the conclusions stated in it. The International Crane Foundation, an internationally recognized and well-respected non-profit organization that has gone on record as neither endorsing nor opposing hunting of Sandhill Cranes has made several objections to the “biology” upon which the Flyway Councils based the guidelines for hunting seasons in the eastern United States. To date, the Flyway Councils have not addressed these concerns (Jeb Barzen (Int. Crane Foundation), pers. comm.).

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9) *These biologists, with decades of successful experience managing migratory birds, come from state and provincial wildlife agencies, such as the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Canadian Wildlife Service, universities and other conservation organizations. This plan took more than 10 years of careful work to develop and takes a conservative approach toward the harvest of this species. Above all else, the management plan ensures that hunting will not have a negative effect on the population.* SOURCE: KDFWR Press Release, April 15, 2011 “The Case for Hunting Sandhill Cranes.”

**CLARIFICATION:** The Flyway Councils are composed of individuals with a background in wildlife management, but they are also almost all oriented towards hunting as dictated by the traditional constituencies of their respective agencies. This does not necessarily mean that biased decisions are made by those individuals, but there is certainly not equal representation among non-consumptive wildlife management entities such as the International Crane Foundation. Moreover, regarding “more than 10 years of careful work” we understand that the “plan” has only been drafted by the Flyway Councils during the past 2-3 years, and then only in response to desire by a very small number of individuals in the state of Tennessee.

**10) Q –** *Were Sandhill Crane populations in Kentucky adequately studied prior to recommending a hunting season be established? A – Wildlife biologists have studied the Eastern Population of Sandhill Cranes extensively. **We have conducted surveys of population size, studied movements and survival through banding and satellite telemetry, studied nesting success, and many more parts of the life history of cranes.** Many of these research projects continue to be underway and new projects continually are being developed. As scientists and wildlife managers, we always strive to increase our knowledge of species which fall under our protection. **Protections and management based on this science and provided by State, Provincial, and Federal Wildlife Agencies have been critical to the recovery of this species. Under this scientific management, the eastern population’s numbers have grown more than 300% over the past three decades.** As the amount of scientific knowledge increases, seasons will be adjusted, if necessary, to ensure the best protection of the species. This is a normal part of managing any species. **Source:** Q & A on Sandhill Cranes at KDFWR web site (<http://fw.ky.gov/sandhillcraneqanda.asp>)*

**CLARIFICATION:** This answer is quite disingenuous; first of all, *almost all* of the work cited has been conducted by the International Crane Foundation, not state or federal wildlife management agencies. Also, as noted in Item #7 above, most of the increase in Sandhill Crane numbers can be attributed to the Migratory Bird Treaty Act ban on unregulated hunting, not efforts by state and federal wildlife agency actions. Finally, the basis for the 300% increase in the population over the past 30 years may simply be the result of better surveys rather than the results of any particular management efforts.

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**11) Beyond hunting, a management plan directs wildlife professionals to needed areas of research and management. The Eastern Population crane management plan, which would allow for a limited hunting opportunity in the eastern United States and Canada, was approved by the Atlantic and Mississippi Flyway Councils in July 2010. **SOURCE:** KDFWR Press Release, April 15, 2011 “The Case for Hunting Sandhill Cranes.”**

**CLARIFICATION:** Although “research and management” are noted, we are aware of *no* substantive elements of “research” or “management” proposed by the Ky. Dept. of Fish and Wildlife Resources for Sandhill Cranes in Kentucky.

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**12a) Once the management plan was in place, Kentucky Fish and Wildlife personnel began the careful process of considering if a season would be appropriate in the Commonwealth. Countless hours were spent studying all aspects of hunting cranes in Kentucky. Biologists dedicate their lives to wildlife conservation and will not support a plan they believe might pose**

a threat to the cranes or any other wildlife species. **SOURCE:** KDFWR Press Release, April 15, 2011 “The Case for Hunting Sandhill Cranes.”

**12b)** *When the Ky. Dept. of Fish and Wildlife Resources and the Ky. Fish and Wildlife Commission make decisions about such issues as the proposed hunting season on Sandhill Cranes, they must take into consideration the desires of their constituency, the hunters and anglers of the Commonwealth.* **Source:** Statements by a variety of Ky. Fish and Wildlife Resources staff and Ky. Fish and Wildlife Commission members.

**12c) Q -** *Is the opposition to this proposed season generally anti-hunting? And will this infringe on my choice to hunt game in Kentucky? A – While we welcome discussion and comment on the scientific basis for the proposed sandhill crane season, some recent comments indicate a moral opposition to this proposal. Some groups are simply opposed to hunting any game species and see this as a chance to impose their beliefs on the sportsmen and women of Kentucky. The mission of this department is to conserve and enhance fish and wildlife resources and provide opportunities for hunting. We will continue to do so, provided the best available science indicates that there will not be a negative impact on the population. **Our proposal has been through rigorous scientific scrutiny, and as we move forward, we hope that further discussion is based on the merits of the proposal and not on a moral opposition to hunting.*** **Source:** Q & A on Sandhill Cranes at KDFWR web site (<http://fw.ky.gov/sandhillcraneqanda.asp>)

**CLARIFICATION: (12a)** Our groups question the time spent devoted to the “careful process of considering if a season would be appropriate in the Commonwealth.” Prior to 2010, almost all of the data compiled on Sandhill Cranes in Kentucky had been gathered and published by the birdwatching community. Yet these individuals have been given no specific relevance in their opposition to the proposed hunting season. **(12b/12c)** Dr. Jonathan Gassett, at this past winter’s “town hall meetings” expressed that divisive issues were decided on a combination of “biological” issues and “social” issues. The social issue of opposition to the hunting season from citizens of the Commonwealth is not being fully considered. According to the North American Wildlife Conservation Model, the wildlife of Kentucky belongs to all of its citizens, not just those who choose to take advantage of the opportunity to harvest it. We believe that non-consumptive wildlife enthusiasts should have a say in the matter, but we do not seem to be receiving any substantive relevance or consideration. No mention of the consideration of the opposition is being made, rather it is being cast aside as irrelevant. The opposition to the Sandhill Crane hunting season proposal by the Kentucky Ornithological Society and the Kentucky Coalition for Sandhill Cranes is *not* based on anti-hunting sentiment. See Item #2 above.

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**13) Q:** *What is the process for this proposal to become a regulation? A: There is a state process and a federal process for a crane season to be initiated or considered. These two processes both provide opportunity for public input. Public input is reviewed and considered prior to final decisions being made on state and federal regulations. **Each of these regulatory processes can be suspended or stopped for several reasons, but usually due to public input and/or lack of adequate biological information.*** **Source:** Q & A on Sandhill Cranes at KDFWR web site (<http://fw.ky.gov/sandhillcraneqanda.asp>)

**CLARIFICATION:** KDFWR has not assigned criteria for establishing whether or not public comment is relevant to the issue. It appears from posturing by KDFWR staff including whoever

drafted the Q & As, that not all public comment is being considered in the process. Moreover, the International Crane Foundation has asked that several aspects of the biology of the Eastern Population be more closely studied prior to any further consideration of the establishment of hunting seasons in the eastern states. These requests have not been adequately addressed.

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**14a)** *The plan that would allow hunting of sandhill cranes in Kentucky has been carefully crafted to: 1) have no impact on the eastern population of sandhill cranes as a whole or in Kentucky; 2) have as small an impact on nature watching as possible; 3) protect the experimental eastern population of whooping cranes; and 4) provide hunting opportunity for those who are passionate about hunting cranes.* **SOURCE:** KDFWR Press Release, April 15, 2011 “The Case for Hunting Sandhill Cranes.”

**14b)** *The proposed sandhill crane plan will provide hunting opportunity for those who are passionate about hunting migratory birds and still provide for the needs of nature viewing public.* **SOURCE:** KDFWR Press Release, April 15, 2011 “The Case for Hunting Sandhill Cranes.”

**14c) Q –** *Will the hunting of Sandhill Cranes negatively impact those whose simply enjoy watching or photographing them? A – No. KDFWR carefully considered the impact of hunting on the viewing of cranes before considering a season. The season in Kentucky would be closed before the largest groups traditionally arrive in Kentucky and **well before the Crane Weekends held at Barren River State Park.** Sandhill cranes are a naturally wary species and thus do not allow a close approach. For most viewers, the spectacle of sandhill cranes is in seeing the large concentrations of birds. This spectacle will remain a natural treasure in Kentucky whether the birds are hunted or not. Currently, at least five states which have hunting seasons for cranes have successful “Crane Festivals” as well.* **Source:** Q & A on Sandhill Cranes at KDFWR web site (<http://fw.ky.gov/sandhillcraneqanda.asp>).

**CLARIFICATION: (14a/14b)** there is no way to predict how viewable Sandhill Cranes will be in Kentucky or anywhere within the range of the Eastern Population if a hunting season in Kentucky is approved, especially a hunting season that extends into mid-January. To date, “viewing opportunities” for this species that have been designed to occur during late January and early February. **(14c)** The first of two Barren River Lake Crane Weekends has traditionally been held within only one to two weeks of closure of the proposed season. Contrary to the statement that cranes do not allow close approach, this is typically dependent upon the level of perceived threat by the cranes. There are times and locations where cranes can be viewed at close range. At the viewing platforms at Jasper Pulaski Game Preserve in northwest Indiana, cranes feed and loaf at leisure just hundreds of feet from numerous wildlife enthusiasts. Efforts to develop such a rapport with migrating cranes has not been initiated in Kentucky. Also, Nebraska, the state for which “crane watching” is most renowned, does *not* allow crane hunting.

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**15)** *This proposed season is structured to minimize impact to bird and nature watchers as well. Kentucky Fish and Wildlife considers bird and nature watchers important members of the conservation community. Department employees have kept the Kentucky Ornithological Society (KOS) and other birding groups informed of the status of the management plan’s development.* **SOURCE:** KDFWR Press Release, April 15, 2011 “The Case for Hunting Sandhill Cranes.”

**CLARIFICATION:** While members of the birdwatching community have been fully informed about the hunting season proposal process, there is little if any evidence to support that the widespread and abundant opposition to the proposal is being given any relevance and consideration.

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**16)** *Bird watching and hunting are not mutually exclusive. Sandhill cranes are hunted in many of the states where people also go to see them. Kentucky hunters and bird watchers already pursue such migratory bird species as ducks, geese and mourning doves with little or no impact to each other's groups.* **SOURCE:** KDFWR Press Release, April 15, 2011 "The Case for Hunting Sandhill Cranes."

**CLARIFICATION:** The states west of the Mississippi River in which Sandhill Cranes are hunted *and* watched have much larger populations. Also, Nebraska, the state for which "crane watching" is most renowned, does *not* allow crane hunting. Also, while neither of our groups are opposed to hunting, we *do* easily recognize how much more wary and less approachable waterfowl species are than other non-hunted species. This difference in behavior is a direct result of hunting activity, and while we do not oppose such hunting, it is one reason why we are wary of how the Sandhill Cranes will react to a hunting season.

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**17)** *As an agency of professional biologists, we have carefully considered if hunting a sandhill crane is somehow different than hunting a mourning dove, a wood duck or a wild turkey. We believe there is no difference.* **SOURCE:** KDFWR Press Release, April 15, 2011 "The Case for Hunting Sandhill Cranes."

**CLARIFICATION:** There are substantial differences between the Sandhill Crane and other hunted species: a) the populations of those other species are *much* greater; b) Sandhill Cranes are highly revered among non-consumptive wildlife enthusiasts as unique for a number of characteristics including their large size, slow reproductive rate, lifetime monogamy, etc.; c) the non-consumptive wildlife enthusiast "community" does not oppose the hunting of *any* other species of game animal in Kentucky, nor do we ask KDFWR to consider abolishing hunting of any game species in the Commonwealth; we are only asking that this *one* species be left unhunted.

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**18a)** *The biology is indisputable. The Eastern Population of sandhill cranes can sustain limited hunting. Cranes have been hunted in the United States for 50 years, and flock numbers in all of the hunted populations are at all-time highs.* **SOURCE:** KDFWR Press Release, April 15, 2011 "The Case for Hunting Sandhill Cranes."

**18b)** *Everyone, including the Ky. Coalition for Sandhill Crane and the Ky. Ornithological Society, is in agreement that the biology is there to support the hunting season.* **SOURCE:** Statement by Commissioner Jonathan Gasset at Ky. Fish and Wildlife Commission Wildlife Committee Meeting, Frankfort, KY, February 4, 2011.

**CLARIFICATION:** This is simply not true. The International Crane Foundation *has* disputed the biology upon which the Flyway-wide numbers in the Eastern Population is based as well as how Flyway-wide hunting quotas have been determined. The Eastern Population uses a much more focused migration corridor with much larger relative percentages of the population present in only a few prime locations at several points in time during their migratory season. Moreover, the proposed Flyway-wide quotas amount to approximately one-half of the documented population, a percentage that has alarmed the International Crane Foundation and indicated to them how prudent it would be to formulate a sound biological model for this population (something that has not yet been devised by wildlife managers). Such a model is needed before further consideration of hunting of the Eastern Population is pursued. Both the KOS and KCFSC are in agreement with points outlined by the International Crane Foundation. Remember that even though Kentucky has proposed a “limited” harvest, one must assess the overall impact of Flyway-wide harvests in critiquing the biology on which the Flyway-wide parameters were set.

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**19)** *In addition to Kentucky, the states of Tennessee, Indiana, and Ohio are proposing Sandhill Crane hunting seasons.* **SOURCE:** Statement by Commissioner Jonathan Gasset at Ky. Fish and Wildlife Commission Wildlife Committee Meeting, Frankfort, KY, February 4, 2011.

**CLARIFICATION:** This is simply not true. Tennessee’s proposal has been put on hold for two years for additional study, and the state of Ohio considers the Sandhill Crane to be Endangered as a breeding species and has not publicly expressed any movement towards a season. In addition, the Indiana Dept. of Natural Resources’ Non-game Bird Technical Advisory Committee came to consensus that it was not in favor of supporting establishment of a Sandhill Crane hunting season there (Ken Brock [committee member], pers. comm.).

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**20)** *Q – Aren’t Sandhill Cranes considered to be a threatened or endangered species? A – No. Sandhill Cranes are not threatened or endangered. In fact, Sandhill Cranes are the most abundant crane species in the world. The continental population is estimated to be at least 600,000 birds.* **Source:** Q & A on Sandhill Cranes at KDFWR web site (<http://fw.ky.gov/sandhillcraneqanda.asp>).

**CLARIFICATION:** This is not completely true. Individuals of Ohio’s limited breeding population are considered Endangered there. Radio telemetry has established that at least a portion of that Endangered population migrate through Kentucky each year.

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**21)** *Sandhill Cranes are hunted in almost half the country.* **SOURCE:** Statement by Commissioner Jonathan Gasset at Ky. Fish and Wildlife Commission Wildlife Committee Meeting, Frankfort, KY, February 4, 2011.

**CLARIFICATION:** Of the 50 states in the U.S., only 13 have Sandhill Crane hunting seasons.

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22) *Cranes have become so numerous that they are becoming a problem - "like the Snow Geese."*  
**SOURCE:** Unidentified KFWC member heard on audio of Ky. Fish and Wildlife Commission Wildlife Committee Meeting, Frankfort, KY, February 4, 2011.

**CLARIFICATION:** This statement is not true. The increase in Sandhill Crane numbers has likely been gradual and not been well-documented by the fragmented attempts to survey the Eastern Population prior to 2010. It is true that *nesting* Sandhill Cranes have been responsible for an increased amount of crop predation (especially on emerging corn immediately after spring planting); however, the International Crane Foundation and state wildlife entities in the Great Lakes region have been working on a chemical treatment that serves as a distasteful deterrent to crop depredation and is being shown to be quite effective. Along the migratory path and on the wintering grounds, crop depredation by Sandhill Cranes has been minimal, and isolated instances can be handled with standard nuisance techniques of scaring away problem flocks and with an occasional lethal depredation permit. Cranes that are disposed of by lethal means can be donated to food banks per arrangements with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

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23) *Wayne Pacelle, president of Humane Society of the United States, has stated "We are going to use the ballot box and the democratic process to stop all hunting in the United States ... We will take it species by species until all hunting is stopped... Then we will take it state by state."*  
**Source:** Email to members of the Kentucky Conservation Coalition listserv, April 13, 2011.

**CLARIFICATION:** This statement by the president of the Humane Society is taken completely out of context. It was not uttered in respect to Sandhill Crane hunting. It must be a statement made at some other point about some other issue. As far as the Kentucky Coalition for Sandhill Cranes and the Kentucky Ornithological Society are concerned, none of the opposition to the proposed hunting season deals with anti-hunting.

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24) *Q - How does establishing a Sandhill Crane hunting season benefit the species? A – Since the advent of regulated hunting and scientific management practices, game species have prospered. Kentucky sportsmen and sportswomen who buy licenses pay, through permit fees and federal excise taxes on their shooting and hunting equipment, about \$50 million a year toward conservation. **Elevating sandhill cranes to game status allows and mandates fish and wildlife professionals to devote more of these resources to conservation of the species, and these conservation and wildlife habitat improvements benefit nongame species too.** Source: Q & A on Sandhill Cranes at KDFWR web site (<http://fw.ky.gov/sandhillcraneqanda.asp>).*

**CLARIFICATION:** The Sandhill Crane is already a game species. This statement is quite disingenuous in that KDFWR could devote resources to crane conservation in Kentucky without establishing a hunting season, especially if they chose to utilize the species for Watchable Wildlife opportunities and constituency development. Also, elevation to "hunted" status does not "mandate" fish and wildlife professionals to devote more resources to species conservation; this is another largely "demand" driven decision process. In this case, large numbers of individuals are asking for withdrawal of the hunting season proposal, but that opposition is being cast aside rather than considered objectively.