

aving these birds has been found believe we should seriously considering this. The first objection will be taking the eggs, so I suggest that eggs of a Sandhill Crane be substituted when this is done. This, of course, will require the co-operation of the wildlife departments in Canada and the United States.

do not think it will be difficult to find interested people with the means, time and space, willing to raise the young birds until they are able to fly. Then, when the migratory adults return in the autumn, the young can be transferred to the winter quarters of the wild birds. Or it might be considered advisable to trim the wings of the young ones and not give them complete freedom during their second year. Probably the greatest difficulty would be in finding nests; everything, of course, depends upon this.

have perhaps, emphasized the affection displayed by the young cranes more than the affection felt by the male for them. The affection is really mutual. I still remember hearing a farmer say some thirty or forty years ago that he planned to build an addition to his stable to house a crane if they succeeded in rearing it! If any eggs can be secured and hatched it will probably be wise to keep the chicks apart—two birds to one person—at least in the earlier stages.

H. H. Pittman.

My Experience With The Sandhill Crane

FRED S. BAINES, Kelowna, B.C.

In 1883 when I was eight years old we arrived in the Crescent Lake district 18 miles south of Yorkton, Saskatchewan, by the way, wasn't there at that time. The sky was yearly darkened by immense flocks of wild fowl migrating south and I have witnessed the passing of millions of swans, geese, Cranes, Sandhill Cranes, and many varieties, pelicans, ducks and snipe, owls, hawks and countless types of all lesser kinds of birds.

Once I picked up two young Sandhill Cranes (escorted by their parents). They were about a month

old. These I took home to my ranch and homestead. It took me several days to find a menu acceptable to these birds. I tried soaked bread, small frogs (of which there were thousands at the time), boiled eggs, chopped meat and soaked grain of different kinds and plenty of good fresh water. For nearly four years all they would eat was wheat. I filled a three pound baking powder tin with my best wheat and they would drive their long bills into it and gobble it like ducks or geese. I filled another similar tin with sand and gravel and a third receptacle with strictly fresh water.

During the summer they lived in a 6 by 14 foot pen with a shed at one end which they seldom used. I provided a shallow four foot wide pan which I daily replenished with cold, clear water. Every morning just as the sun peeped over the horizon they splashed and bathed for at least 10 minutes and then spent an hour or so performing an elaborate toilet.

These cranes and I became fast friends. The male bossed me around and whanged at me with his long sharp bill. He gave me to understand that he only just tolerated me because I fed and watered them. The female, about six inches smaller, treated me with respect and caution and never once struck at me. As I made my exit from the pen the male

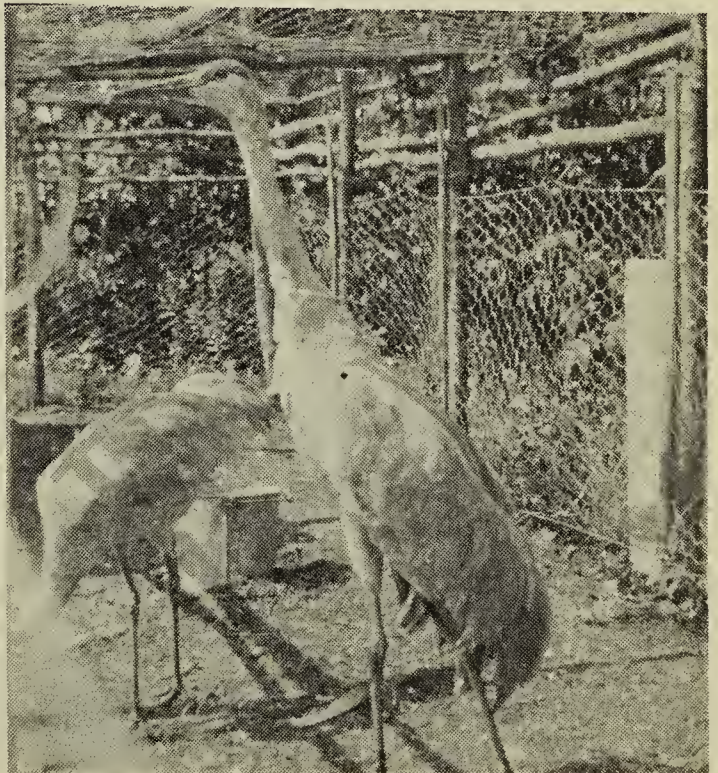


Photo by Fred S. Baines
SANDHILL CRANES, 1906

always made a vicious onslaught at me, so I wore a heavy overcoat, a cap pulled well down over my ears and a pair of buckskin mitts. I took it all as a friendly joke and he always finished up by cursing me heartily in an exceedingly high voice.

Their pen was just by the house and I passed and spoke to them every time I went to the barn. I learned their language and they talked back to me. I became so adept in their language that you couldn't tell which of us was talking.

During the winter I placed them in the hen-house. I hung their cans up out of reach of the hens. They lived in perfect peace with both hens and roosters. The hen-house was made of logs, chinked with mud. They pierced holes through the mud and stuck their heads through and carried on a conversation with me every time I crossed the yard. They wintered very well. Occasionally I let them out for an hour or two and they were quite easily herded back in.

The third spring the female laid one egg, but they made no attempt to incubate it. The fourth summer they incubated one egg and it hatched normally. They didn't know how to feed it. I provided boiled egg and milk and everything I had, but on the seventh morning it was dead.

That fall I built a new wooden hen-house. I didn't know enough to provide air holes for the cranes. They contracted tuberculosis and died in April. I had had these cranes for nearly four years.

My Sandhill Cranes remained healthy on a very simple diet. I think that Sandhills could be raised successfully at very little expense and with not too much trouble.

Raising Cranes in the San Antonio Zoo

Mr. Fred W. Stark, director of the San Antonio Zoo in Texas, tells in the GAZETTE, April 1957, of his experiences in raising 22 cranes in San Antonio. His young birds are fed on a "wide variety of foods, such as raw meat, fish, shrimp, hard-boiled eggs, turkey mash, and many other things." He says that these birds

will develop rickets if they are given a diet high in minerals. Young birds that were raised artificially were always started on meal worms and no difficulty was experienced in bringing them through to maturity.

Cranes in the San Antonio Zoo do not lay eggs until they were two years old. The 22 cranes raised at the zoo include nineteen Sandhill Cranes, two Crown Cranes and one little Lilford Crane. Some of the birds were raised by their parents but others were raised artificially. Mr. Stark says, "We do know that by removing the eggs from cranes breeding in captivity, they sometimes lay as many as six times. If this could be done with Whooping Cranes, it would certainly give a chance to increase the flock which it would not face the problem of becoming extinct."

Mr. Stark reports that the Manchurian Crane, so similar to the Whooping Crane, has been raised successfully in the Honolulu Zoo and in the Munich Zoo.

Information on Cranes Wanted

Mr. Fred Bard, Director of the Saskatchewan Museum of Natural History, is anxious to compile a distribution and migration data on Sandhill Cranes. If you know of feeding or roosting or nesting areas, please send the information to the Museum, Regina.

Sandhill Cranes begin arriving in Saskatchewan about April 5. Usually they have areas of preference where they congregate to roost for the night and feed in nearby fields. The earliest cranes to arrive will disperse and travel to their nesting grounds. The last to arrive from the south will move on further north to the limit of suitable country. These are generally considered to be the Lesser Sandhills. It is impossible in the field to distinguish between these northern Sandhills and southern cranes that nest in the muskegs of our forested regions.
