

A photograph of a crane in flight over a body of water. The crane is in the center, with its wings spread wide, showing brown and white feathers. It has a long neck and a red patch around its eye. The water is dark and reflects the crane. Other cranes are visible in the background, some standing and some in flight.

LEVELED BOOK • I

# Here Come the *Cranes!*

Written by Susan Lennox

[www.readinga-z.com](http://www.readinga-z.com)

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## Where Sandhill Cranes Live



## Flying North to Nest

Sandhill **cranes** spend the winter in warm areas in the south. They **migrate** north in the spring. They go north to make nests, lay eggs, and raise chicks.

Cranes fly north in **flocks**.  
They fly many miles each day.



Sandhill cranes travel about  
200 to 300 miles (322–483 km)  
each day when migrating.

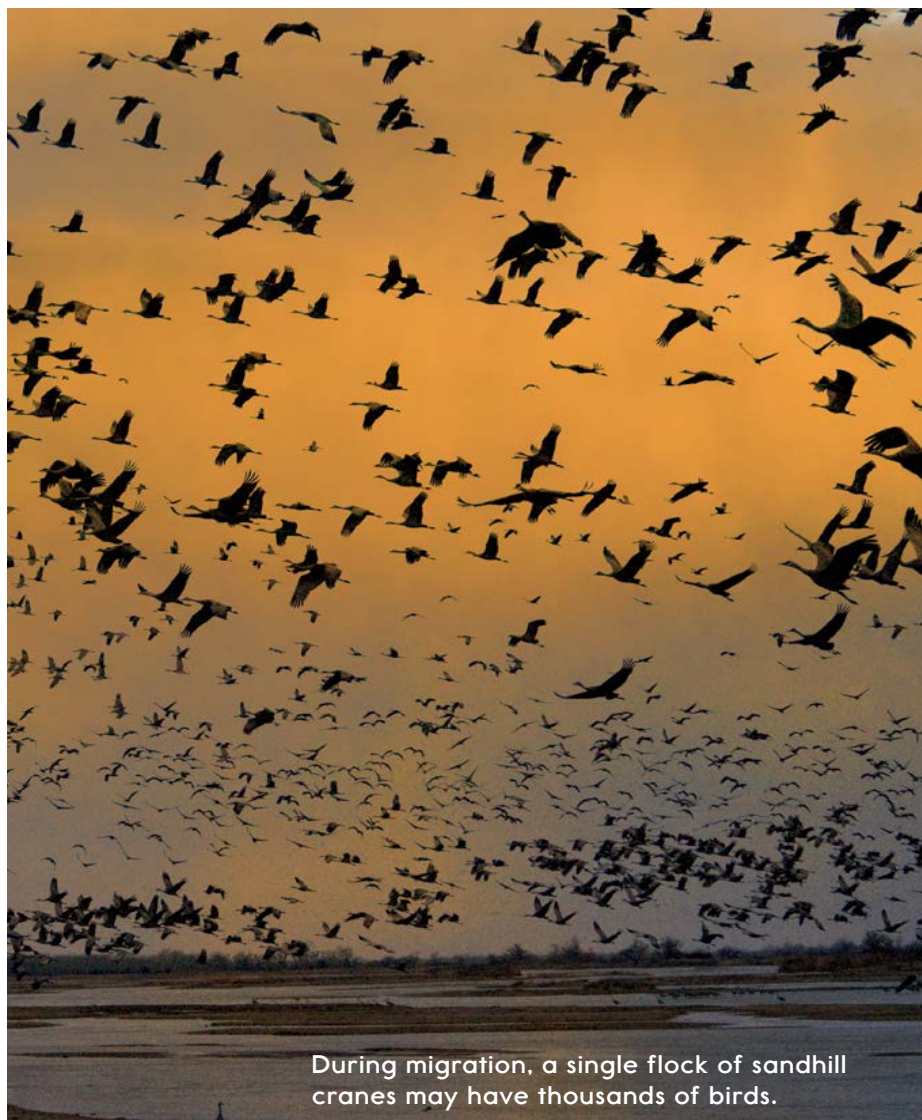
## **Eat Up!**

The cranes get hungry and tired.  
They need a place to eat and rest.  
They know just where to go.



### **Wonderful Wings**

A sandhill crane's wings reach over 6 feet (1.82 m).  
A crane can soar on the wind without flapping its wings. It looks as if it's floating in the sky!



During migration, a single flock of sandhill cranes may have thousands of birds.

The sky grows dark over Nebraska.  
It's not a storm.  
It's the sandhill cranes!





Sandhill cranes stop at a river.  
The river offers water, food,  
and **shelter**.

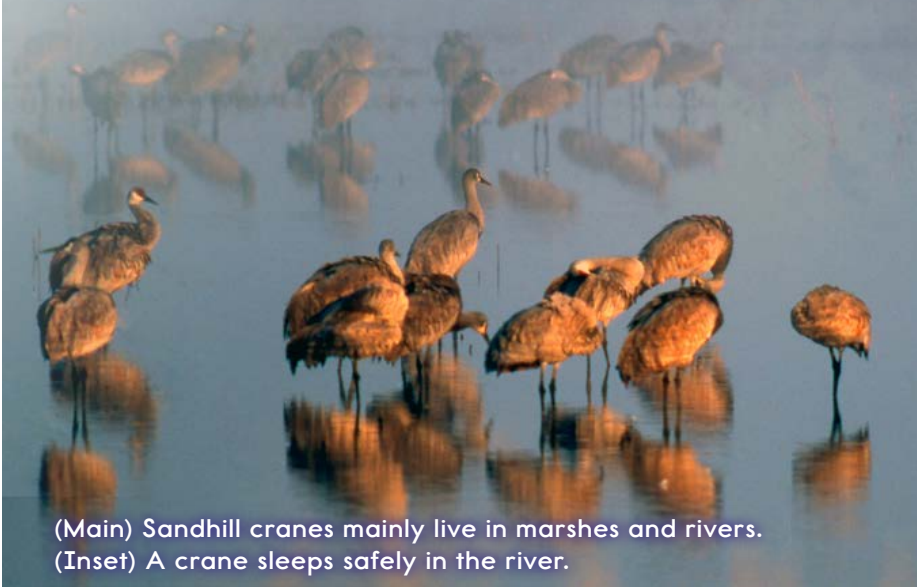


The cranes eat corn from  
nearby farm fields.

They also eat insects, snails,  
and frogs.



A sandhill crane's long beak helps it pick  
out seeds and insects on the ground.



(Main) Sandhill cranes mainly live in marshes and rivers.  
(Inset) A crane sleeps safely in the river.

## First Rest, Then Dance

At night, the cranes sleep in the river.  
They stand in the water on their  
long legs.

**Predators** cannot reach them there.

The cranes stay at the river  
for about three weeks.  
They eat and grow strong.  
They also dance with each other.



### **Stay Away!**

A sandhill crane's long  
legs make good weapons.  
The cranes use them to kick  
attackers that get too close.





Sandhill cranes dance the most during the mating season.

Crane dances are a beautiful sight!  
The cranes stretch their wings.  
They bow their heads.  
They jump high in the air.

Sandhill cranes dance to find a **mate**.  
Most crane mates will stay together  
for life.



A pair of sandhill cranes may sing to each other when they mate.

## **There and Back Again**

It is time to leave the river.

The sandhill cranes fly north.

Their calls can be heard for miles.

Crane mates build a nest  
when they reach the north.

The mates will raise their  
chicks together.



Sandhill crane mates build a nest on the ground made of plants.





Sandhill cranes can fly as high as 2 miles (3.22 km) in the sky.

The cranes will return to Nebraska in the fall.

They will bring their chicks with them. They will stop again to rest and feed. Then they will fly back to the warm waters in the south.

## Glossary

|                                |  |
|--------------------------------|--|
| <b>cranes</b> ( <i>n.</i> )    | wading birds with long legs and long necks (p. 4)                                |
| <b>flocks</b> ( <i>n.</i> )    | groups of the same type of bird (p. 5)   |
| <b>mate</b> ( <i>n.</i> )      | the partner of an animal (p. 13)   |
| <b>migrate</b> ( <i>v.</i> )   | to move from one habitat or region to another at a certain time each year (p. 4) |
| <b>predators</b> ( <i>n.</i> ) | animals that hunt and eat other animals to survive (p. 10)                       |
| <b>shelter</b> ( <i>n.</i> )   | a place that gives protection from bad weather or danger (p. 8)                  |

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Front and back cover: More than three-fourths of all sandhill cranes migrate along the Platte River in Nebraska.

Title page: A sandhill crane takes off over water after getting a running start.

Page 3: Sandhill crane chicks stay with their parents for close to a year after hatching.

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Level I Leveled Book  
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# Here Come the Cranes!

*A Reading A-Z Level I Leveled Book*  
*Word Count: 252*

A photograph of a crane in flight over a body of water. The crane is in the foreground, with its wings spread wide, showing a mix of white and brown feathers. It has a distinctive red patch on its forehead. The background is slightly blurred, showing other cranes and a warm, golden light, suggesting a sunset or sunrise scene.

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