

Wisconsin Sandhill Crane Population

Taylor Finger - WDNR Game Bird Ecologist



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Sandhill Crane Population Background

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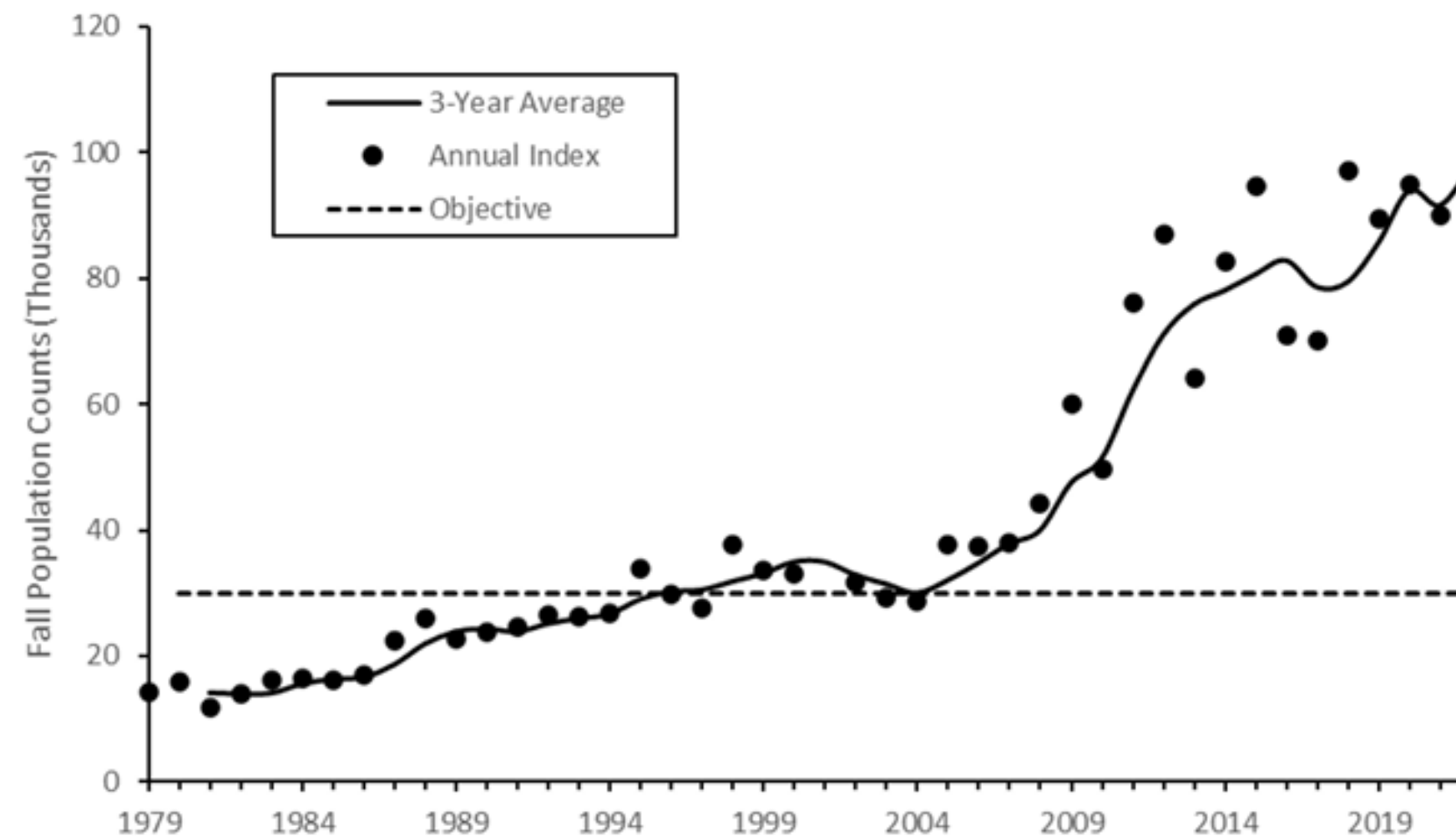
- 6 populations of Sandhill Cranes in North America.
- Total of +1,000,000 sandhill cranes and all populations are stable to increasing.
- Currently 5 of the 6 populations are hunted in 18 states and 3 Canadian provinces.
- Wisconsin is part of the Eastern Population which 2023 fall population index totaled ~110,000.
- Core breeding range of Eastern Population is Wisconsin, Michigan and Ontario.



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Eastern Population Growth

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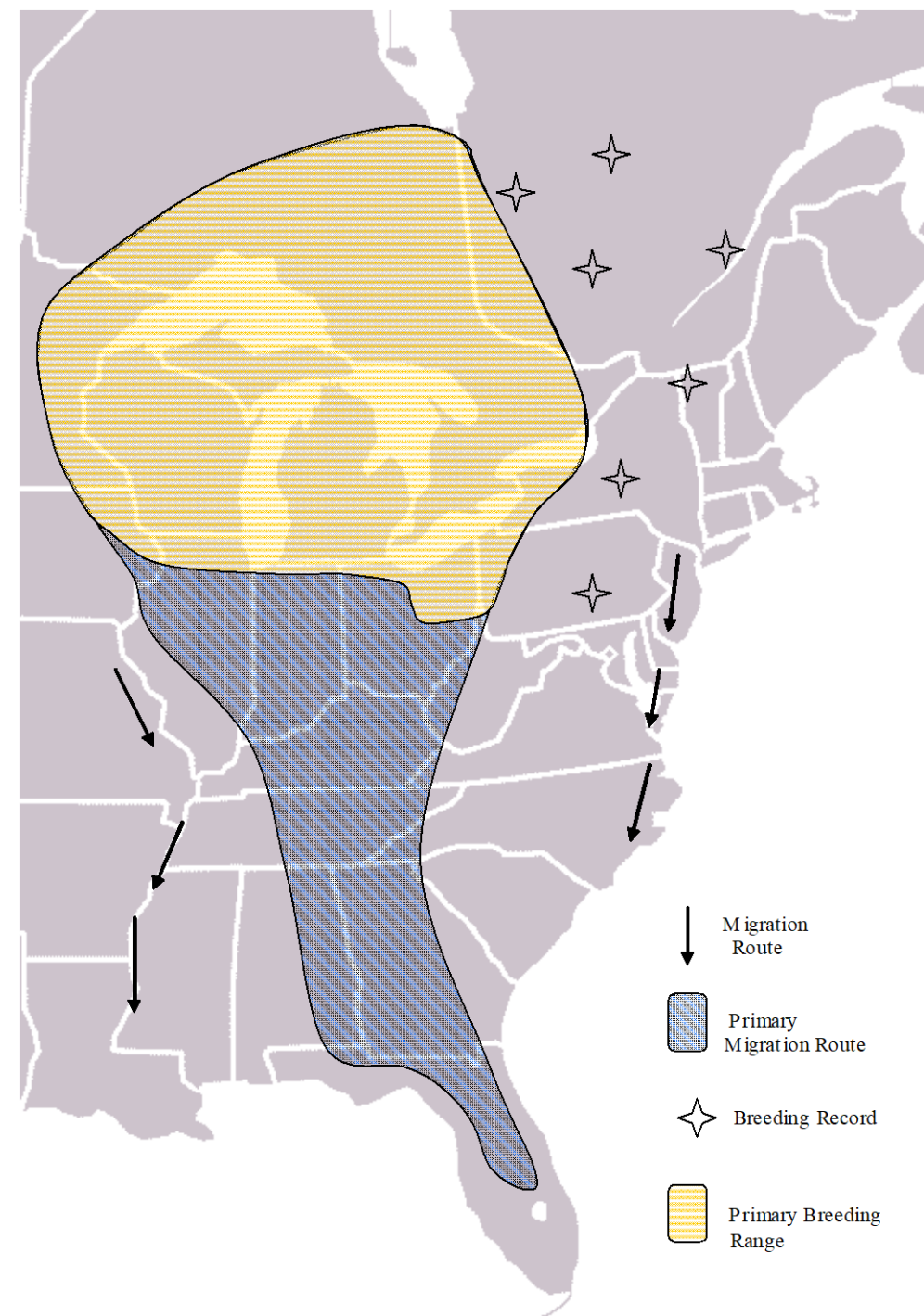


2023 fall survey population index = ~110,000
3-year average = ~102,000

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Mississippi Flyway

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Only 3 states out of 14 in the Mississippi Flyway (Kentucky, Tennessee and Alabama) currently hunt and harvest the Sandhill Crane as do the tribes of MN, WI and MI in the ceded territory.

Ceded Territory have treaty rights to harvest sandhill cranes between 9/1 and 12/31 which allows 10 cranes daily bag limit with no possession limit. Little information is available on tribal participation and harvest levels

Wisconsin Crop Damage

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- Sandhill crane complaints directed to USDA-Wildlife Services for assistance. Approximately 180 complaints are received each year.
- Producers have reported damages to corn, potatoes, and wheat. Corn is the main crop damaged with producers reporting approximately \$900,000 of damages in 2022 (not verified by DNR or Wildlife Services).
- Majority of damage occurs in spring from the time of planting until corn is around 8"-10" tall.
- Crop damages are also reported in MN, MI, and Ontario

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Assistance for Producers

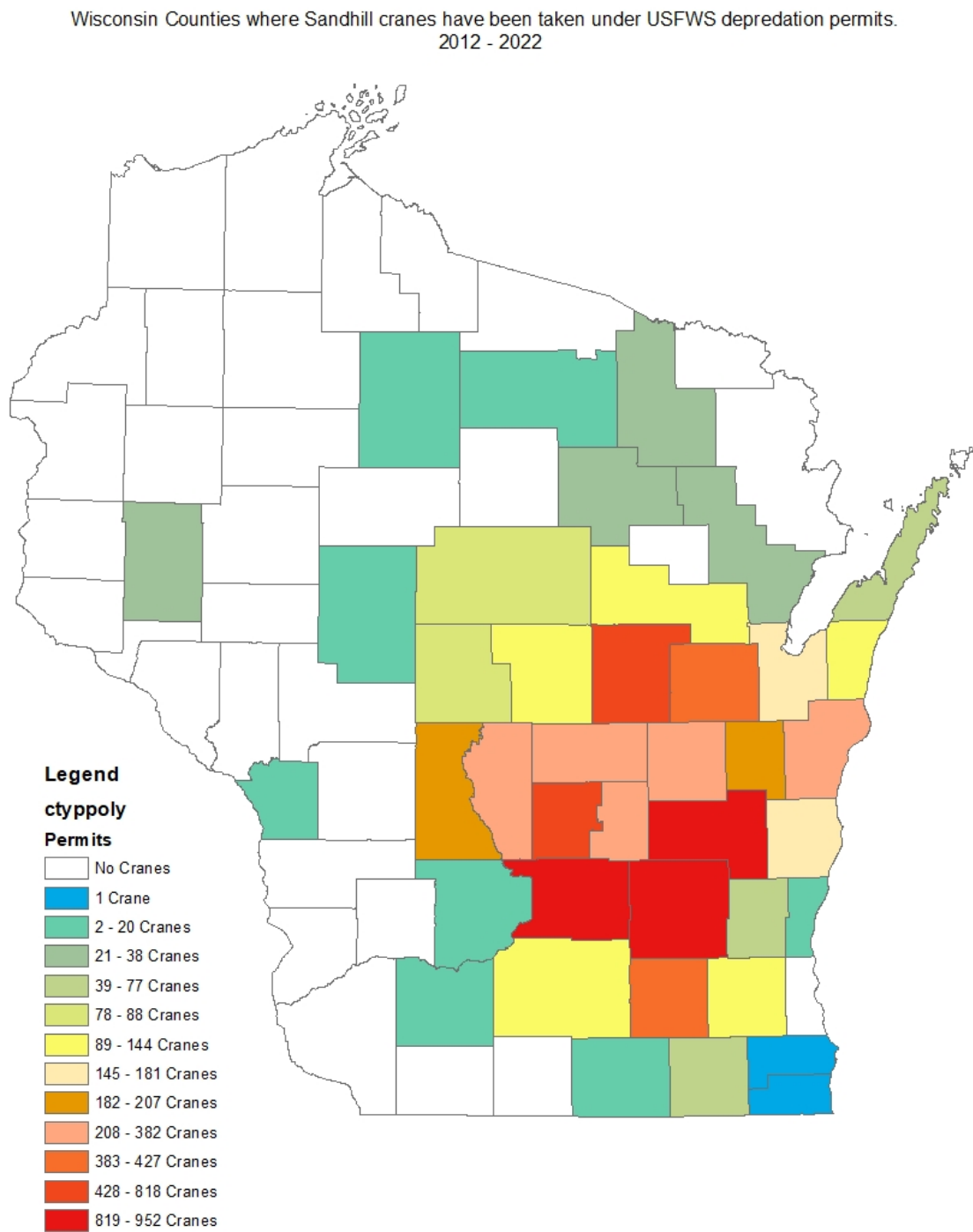
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- State only has authority for non-lethal abatement
 - Harassment methods
 - Avipel corn seed treatment
- Migratory Bird Depredation Permits are available through the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
 - Approximately 200 permits issued annually in WI
 - 1,100 – 1,200 cranes removed annually ⁶
 - Cranes can not be kept for personal consumption and calls or decoys cannot be used (federal rules)
- Under State Statue 29.889(1)(e)., Cranes are not part of the Wildlife Damage Abatement and Claims Program until a hunting season is established.

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Sandhill Crane Depredation Harvest by County

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Federal (USFWS) Management Plan for Eastern Population of Sandhill Cranes

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Goal: Manage eastern population of sandhill cranes in the Mississippi and Atlantic Flyways at a sustainable population level consistent with habitat and diverse societal values.

4 Management Objectives:

- 1) Maintain an interim (5 yr) population index between 30,000 – 60,000 birds.
- 2) Reduce agricultural depredation conflicts.
- 3) Provide for and monitor non-consumptive uses and develop public education opportunities.
- 4) Through federal mandated quotas and permits, provide hunting opportunity consistent with long-term welfare of the resource.

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Federal and State Management

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- The federal management plan identifies a process and sideboards for having a Sandhill Crane season.
- State permit fees require legislation.
- All current limited drawing permit systems are established in statute.
 - This includes bear, elk, bobcat, fisher, sharp-tailed grouse, sturgeon, turkey, wolf, and more.

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QUESTIONS

