

Kent Van Horn
Retired
History and
Perspective on
Sandhill Cranes



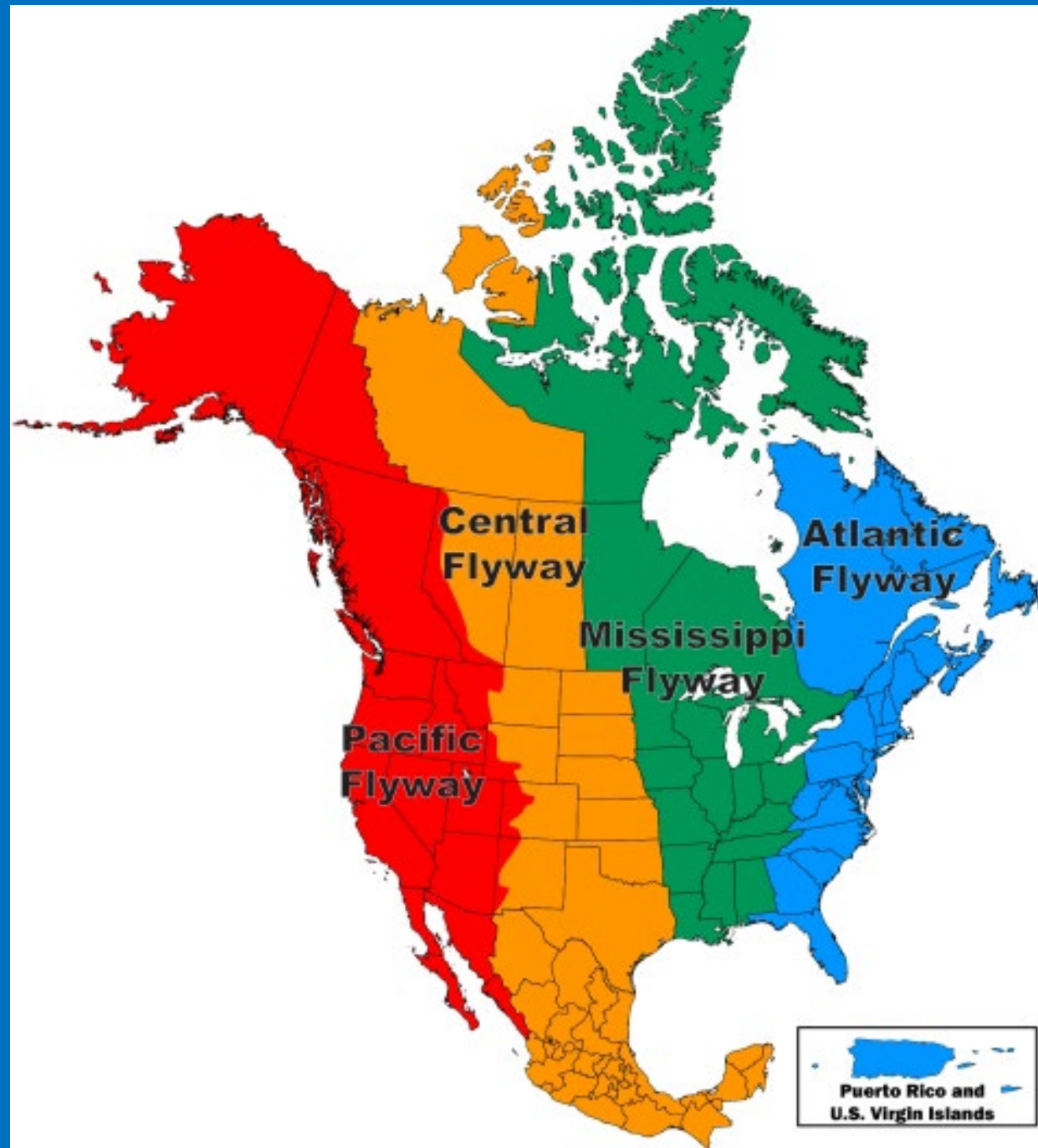
MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR THE EASTERN POPULATION OF SANDHILL CRANES

Van Horn, K., T. White, W. Akins, T. Cooper, K. Kelly, R. Urbanek, D. Holm, D. Sherman, D. Aborn, J. Suckow, K. Cleveland, and R. Brook. 2010 – Management Plan for the Eastern Population of Sandhill Cranes. Mississippi and Atlantic Flyway Council. 36 pp.

- **Goal:** Manage EP SACR in the Mississippi and Atlantic Flyways at a sustainable population level consistent with habitat and diverse societal values.

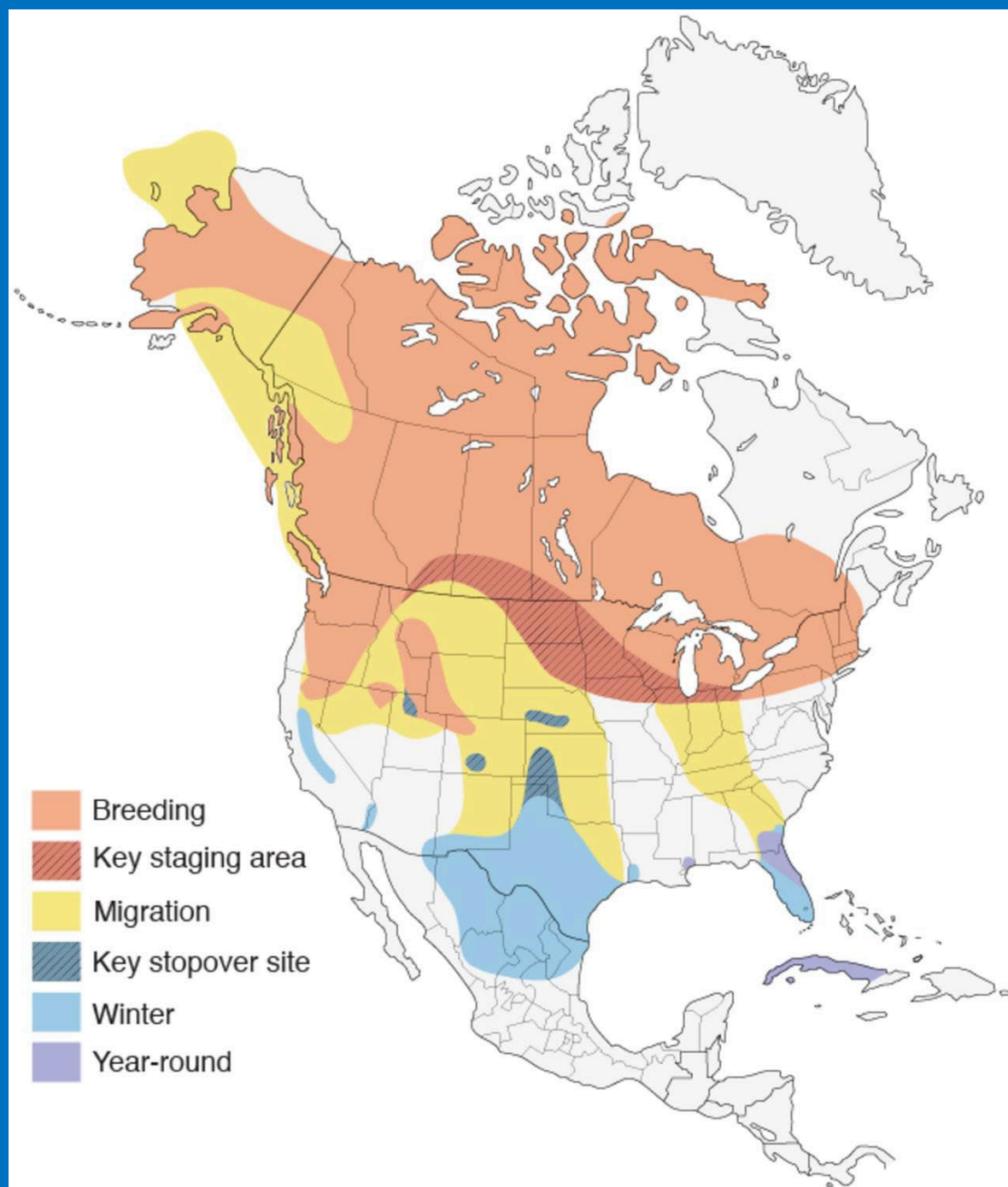
4 Management Objectives:

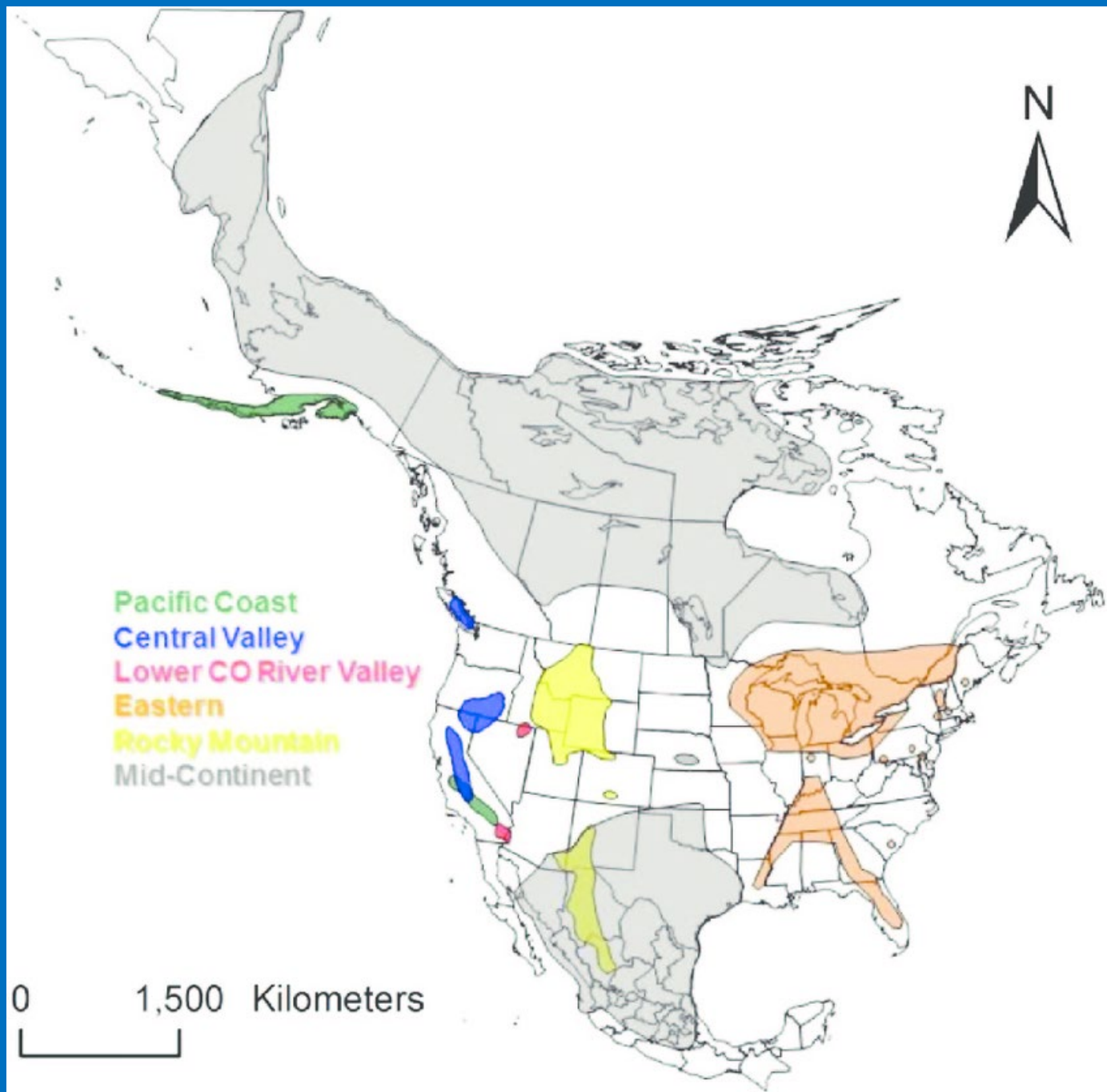
- 1) Maintain an interim (5 yr) population index between 30,000 – 60,000 birds.
- 2) Reduce agricultural depredation conflicts.
- 3) Provide for and monitor non-consumptive uses and develop public education opportunities.
- 4) Through federal mandated quotas and permits, provide hunting opportunity consistent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





**Sandhill cranes:
abundant, wide
ranging and
adaptable**





**Ranges of 6
migratory
sandhill crane
populations.
Total survey
estimates Over
1.1 million
sandhills –
USFWS 2023**

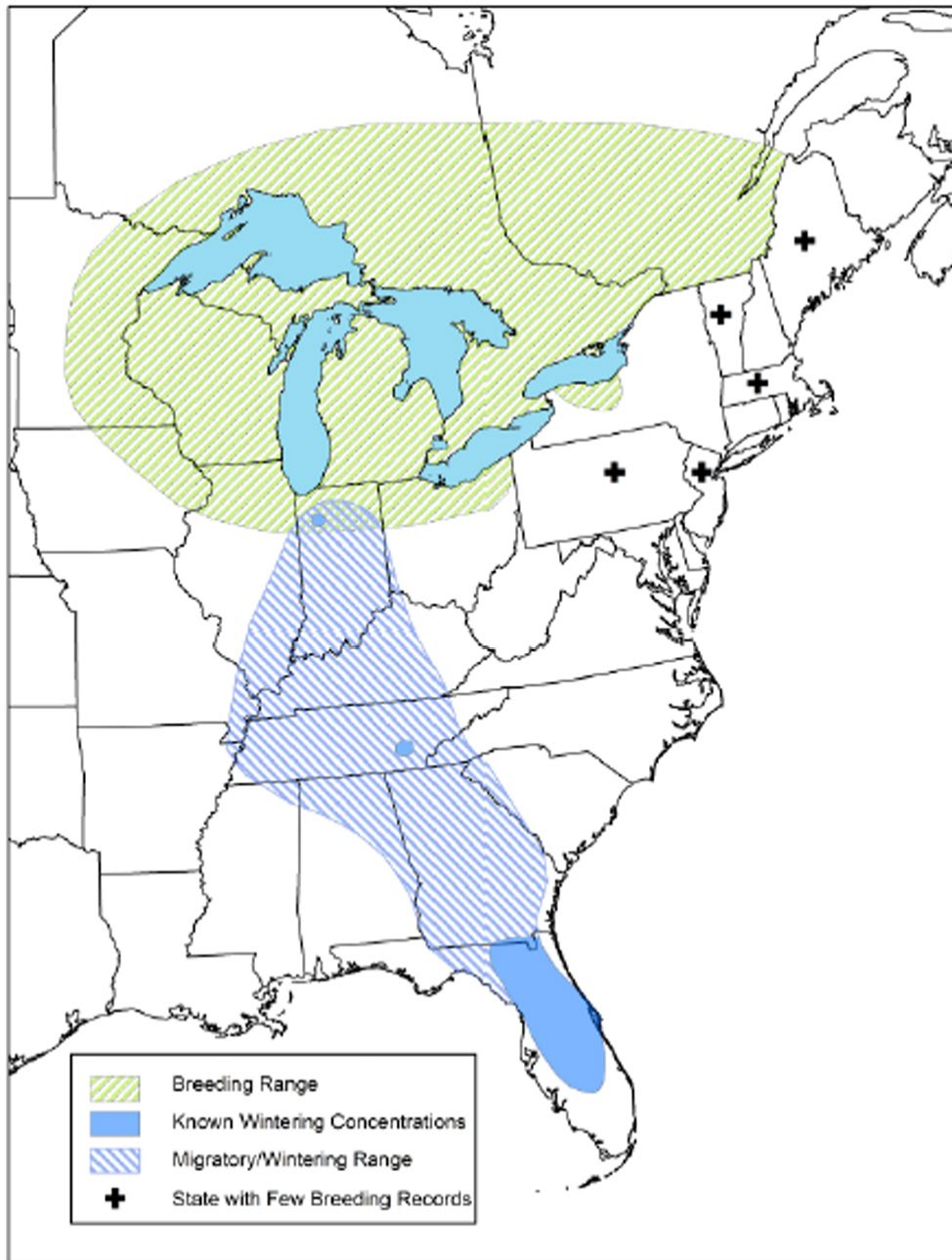


Figure 4. Approximate range of Eastern Population sandhill cranes based on various data sources including satellite telemetry data, breeding bird atlas records, and unpublished location

Eastern Population of Sandhill Cranes

2023 Count was over 110,000.

Range expansion in all directions and into different habitats

Social considerations: Viewing appreciation



Social considerations: Hunting

- Sandhills hunted in 18 states, 3 Canadian provinces and Mexico
- 5 of the 6 identified migratory populations have hunting seasons.
- The migratory bird management community has 62 years of experience managing hunting of sandhill cranes.
- Sandhill crane hunting began in the Central Flyway and has been managed along side the only wild migratory population of Whooping Cranes which has slowly increased during this period.
- Hunting of EP cranes began in 2011 in KY and EP sandhill cranes are now hunted in 3 states (KY, TN, AL) under more controlled system than western states. In the 2022-23 season 1,085 cranes were harvested.
- Tribal hunting of sandhill cranes allowed in ceded territory of WI, MI, MN
- Wisconsin hunters travel to the central flyway to hunt sandhill cranes and have often asked why not in Wisconsin?

Social considerations: Ag Damage and other conflicts

- Conflicts are increasing as Sandhill population increases and expands
- Across the EP range, agricultural damage from Sandhills to spring corn being the primary impact. Also Wheat & fall potatoes
- USDA – Wildlife Services is the primary responding agency
- Conflict with aircraft is the next highest complaint to USDA
- Non-lethal control includes seed treated with Anthraquinone (corn) and harassment
- Shooting permits can be recommended by USDA and issued by USFWS
- Across the EP (MN, WI, MI, ON) several 1000 sandhills have been killed annually under damage permits for decades and discarded
- Urban conflicts – homes, gardens etc

Committee Considerations:

- Established methods and processes to aid crop damage exist. Can legislation improve this? Would other actions such as education and funding help?
- Can a sandhill crane hunting season in WI be biological sound, provide recreation and not threaten whooping cranes? Yes
- Will the people of Wisconsin socially accept a sandhill crane hunting season? Spring hearing results from 2012, 2015, 2016 were in support. Most will not understand and react negatively. Some hunters and farmers will welcome.
- Can a fall hunting season on sandhill cranes help our primary crop damage problem that occurs in the spring? Questionable
- If legislation is drafted for a hunt and this impacts the wildlife damage program payments, should we edit those statutes as well? For example, require the use of Anthraquinone first and if unsuccessful then allow a damage payment?
- As the population continues to grow and expand into urban areas, what additional conflicts and management considerations are needed?

A man with a beard and a camouflage cap is kneeling in a field of tall green grass and small pink flowers. He is holding a young, fluffy swan with brown and grey feathers. The swan has a long, straight, reddish-brown beak. The man is wearing a light blue t-shirt and blue jeans. The word "Questions?" is written in large, bold, red letters across the center of the image.

Questions?