

# It all begins with birds.

INVESTMENT IN CONSERVATION  
IS AN INVESTMENT IN NEBRASKA'S ECONOMY.

## WHEN THE SANDHILL CRANES LAND, SO DO THOUSANDS OF TOURISTS.

CENTRAL NEBRASKA WELCOMES  
VISITORS FROM NEAR AND FAR

**34,900**

UNIQUE VISITORS

**19.5%**  
FROM  
NEBRASKA

**80.5%**  
FROM OTHER  
US STATES



The Sandhill Crane migration in central Nebraska is internationally recognized as one of the world's great wildlife migrations. Each year, more than a million cranes stop along the Platte River on their journey north.

This annual gathering attracts visitors from around the world, inspiring awe through both the sheer scale of the migration and the majesty of these charismatic birds.

Located in the heart of the migration corridor, Audubon's Rowe Sanctuary protects critical stopover habitat for cranes and other wildlife.

Each year, Rowe Sanctuary welcomes visitors from across the country and around the globe, regularly hosting guests from all 50 states and more than 20 countries.

## THE CRANE MIGRATION HELPS THE LOCAL ECONOMY SOAR.

**\$28 Million**

ANNUAL ECONOMIC IMPACT



**\$789,000\***

ESTIMATED ANNUAL LOCAL  
TAX REVENUE IMPACT

At Audubon, we say "what's good for birds is good for people," and the Sandhill Crane migration is a great example. As tourists flock to Nebraska to see cranes, they spend money at local businesses, boosting the economy and supporting jobs. A 2025 study measured the annual economic impact of migration across 14 Nebraska counties, including both economic activity and jobs supported by conservation efforts and visitor spending.

### ECONOMIC IMPACT

**\$28 Million:** The estimated total economic impact roughly doubled from \$14M when the study was last conducted in 2017.

49 jobs in conservation organizations and 171 jobs in the community were supported through visitor spending.

This conservation-powered economic force doesn't stop at one purchase; it ripples through the local economy, benefiting suppliers, service providers, businesses, and municipal governments.

\*Including property taxes Rowe pays annually.



THE PLATTE RIVER SUSTAINS WILDLIFE, STRENGTHENS LOCAL ECONOMIES, AND ENSURES FUTURE GENERATIONS CAN EXPERIENCE THE AWE OF CRANE MIGRATION FOR YEARS TO COME.

## PROTECTING THE PLATTE IS PROTECTING THE ECONOMY.

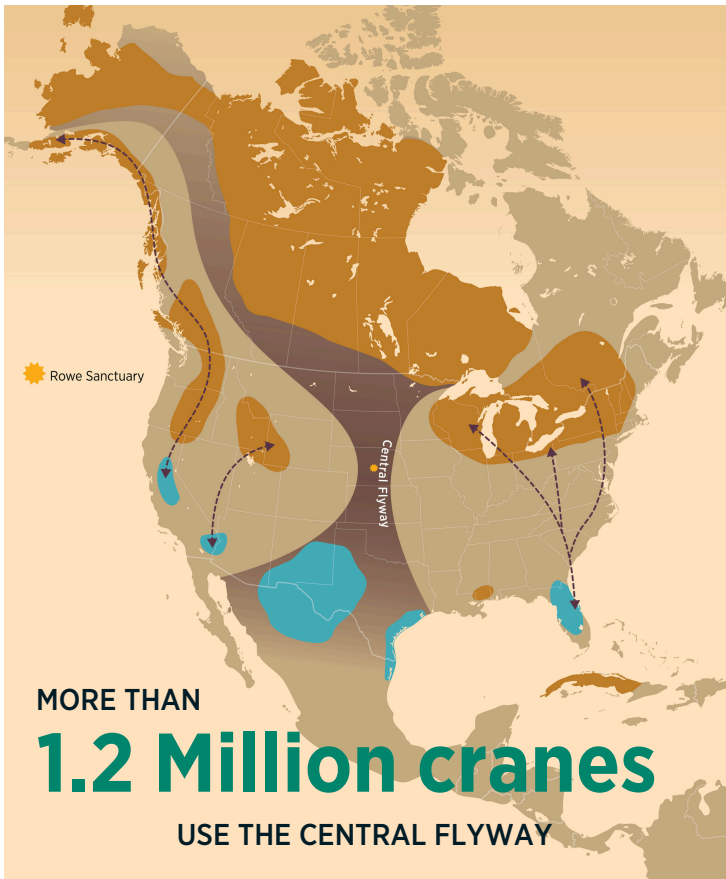
The Platte River is essential to the Sandhill Crane migration, providing the habitat cranes need to rest and refuel on their journey north.

For more than 50 years, Audubon has worked to protect and restore crane habitat along the Platte River through conservation, stewardship, and community partnerships. Protecting the Platte River helps sustain the habitat cranes depend on and the economic benefits the migration brings to local communities.

Unfortunately, 70% of the water in the Platte is diverted before it reaches Rowe Sanctuary, endangering the habitat and exacerbating land management challenges.

Through the Platte River Initiative, Audubon is a conservation leader across the watershed, advocating for water and habitats and bringing conservation partners together in unified efforts. We engage policymakers and stakeholders to communicate conservation needs and demonstrate the larger impact of our work.

## SANDHILL CRANE MIGRATION TAKES A HEMISPHERE. SO DOES PROTECTING IT.



Nebraska is important for Sandhill Cranes, but their journey doesn't stop there. Audubon takes a hemispheric approach to bird conservation and directs work to the places where birds need it the most.

It recognizes that the majority of bird species in the Americas migrate annually between Canada, the United States, Latin America, and the Caribbean. Audubon's conservation approach is like the birds—unencumbered by political boundaries and seamlessly integrated across the Western Hemisphere.

In overwintering grounds along the Texas Gulf Coast, Audubon recently released a tool that models environmental and social factors to predict which parcels of land are the highest priorities to conserve for endangered Whooping Cranes.

In the Great Plains, in addition to Rowe Sanctuary, we've provided leadership in securing protection for thousands of acres of crane habitat in the Prairie Pothole Region.

Audubon is an active partner in protecting the Seal River Watershed in the Boreal Forests of Canada, where many cranes nest and raise their young every year.



Scan the QR code to view the full report and study methodology.

**The message is simple: If we want this extraordinary migration to continue, we must protect the habitats that make it possible.**