

This is an interesting scholarship that really spoke to me because I appreciated that I do not have to write about myself but instead about my experiences with a unique and wonderful bird. I live in the rocky mountains of colorado in a ski town called Steamboat Springs. Some neighborhoods have an abundance of moose and others have lots of bear visits but in my neighborhood, particularly where I live, attracts an abundance of beautiful cranes annually. I live west of town where the Sandhill Crane population is abundant. At times, I would be lucky enough for them to land close to my property. I have always been fascinated by the way they would walk because it appears they have no impact on the surface of the earth compared to other living animals like dogs or horses that always leave a large imprint. I can hear their unique call from inside my home. Living west of town there is a family of cranes that seem to nest in a tiny pond off county Rd 42. It is a gift of experiencing these unique creatures up close and personal. If you are lucky enough, if you drive up county road 42 in the morning you will be able to see a huge flock all huddled in one area. It's kind of like our own private crane festival In the spring. I always feel like I am spying on a private club. I have always wanted to capture the uniqueness of the sandhill crane through the lense of a camera but I would get too close and they would fly away. I am so glad it's March because it means I will soon be awoken by the sandhill cranes'

unique call. They love the marsh behind my back yard so I am afforded the first sights of these magnificent birds.

I have another connection with Sandhill Cranes in West Palm Beach Florida where my grandparents live in a gated community. The land that their community was built on is next to wetlands that were home to many species of wildlife that live in Florida. Their particular community has several golf courses. It is not unusual to spot these bold cranes out walking on the golf courses. For my grandparents they even live in a subdivision called Cranes Point Way. You can find multiple signs that say "cranes crossing". I remember that my grandfather and I would joke about trying to send a letter to one another through tagging a crane with a letter and seeing if it would end up in West Palm Beach. In Steamboat the cranes would be frightened off by just trying to take a photo from afar. In Florida cranes move around freely not really minding that they might be in the way of a golf cart or on the golf courses. Additionally from my research I found out that cranes in the Chinese culture are said to grant longevity and good fortune which is another wonderful quality these birds possess.

It is always such a blessing to see these amazing creatures in their native habitat. I recently had a great encounter with the faint calls of a crane at Highland Park in Fruita, Colorado. I have always wondered how hard it must be both physically and mentally to travel for migration and how much effort and energy they must have to save up to undergo such a

long journey. I appreciate my encounters with these birds even more so having them when they are endangered. Our Sandhill Cranes are part of us as coloradans and for that we should help them increase in their populations and help them thrive rather than letting them become extinct. I am always so grateful to undergo another season of seeing these distinguished birds. And for all people who love Colorado Cranes, I hope we can change the way we see them to insure life for cranes who migrate here to help them for years to come.