

Sandhill Cranes Nest in University Bay

In 2003 Sandhill Cranes produced young in University Bay for the first time in more than 100 years. The previous two years a Crane pair defended a territory in the Bay, but abandoned their territory in early May. These Cranes may have been too young to nest or they may have lost their nest. Frequently young Crane pairs attempt to nest, but are unsuccessful.

This year the Sandhill Cranes regularly visited the Class of 1918 Marsh. While only a few people were lucky enough to see the Cranes dance in the 1918 Marsh, many people saw them feeding with the Canada Geese. The Cranes also frequented the Picnic Point parking lot, surprising some early morning visitors.

The single Sandhill Crane colt followed its parents daily to the soybeans fields near Biocore Prairie to feed (see the Biocore Prairie Update, page 4). Color photographs of the Cranes are available on the Friends of the CNA Web Site, www.uwalumni.com/fcna.

Sandhill Cranes were once common in Wisconsin, but declined dramatically due to hunting and the draining of wetlands. By the 1930s only a few pairs of Cranes remained. In *Marshland Elegy*, Aldo Leopold reflected on the loss of marsh, wilderness, and Sandhill Cranes.

Due to wetland preservation and restoration, the Crane population has recovered. In 1999 over 11,000 Cranes were counted in Wisconsin. For more information on Sandhill Cranes, see the International Crane Foundation Web Site, www.savingcranes.org.



Sandhill Crane with colt feeding near Gardens

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