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Unwary Behavior of Captured and Released Sandhill Cranes

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GENERAL NOTES

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Unwary behavior of captured and released Sandhill Cranes.—While capturing and handling Florida and Greater Sandhill Cranes (*Grus canadensis pratensis* and *G. c. tabida*) our laboratory personnel have regularly observed a striking example of unwary behavior of these birds.

When being liberated several hours after their capture, cranes frequently decline to fly from the release site. They usually walk slowly away, registering vocal sounds of displeasure until finally taking wing or walking out of sight. Those behaving that way were not injured or confused by their surroundings as far as we could tell. In many instances, a released crane would turn and attack us and could be engaged in mock combat (Fig. 1) for several minutes. This is in striking contrast to the usually wary behavior of Sandhill Cranes.



Fig. 1. After being released from a burlap bag, this Sandhill Crane maintained an aggressive posture and attacked the biologist when approached within about 8 feet.

Our experience indicates that this behavior is normal. After many years of handling several other species of wild birds, I find it puzzling that Sandhill Cranes do not depart as rapidly after being released as other birds do. This may be of interest to scientists who are involved in studies of wariness in birds.—LOVETT E. WILLIAMS, JR., *Wildlife Research Laboratory, Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission, 4005 S. Main Street, Gainesville, Florida 32601.*