

---

January 1982

## Sandhill Cranes Prey on Amphiumas

Florida Field Naturalist

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.usf.edu/ffn>

---

### Recommended Citation

Florida Field Naturalist (1982) "Sandhill Cranes Prey on Amphiumas," *Florida Field Naturalist*. Vol. 10 : Iss. 4 , Article 4.

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.usf.edu/ffn/vol10/iss4/4>

This General Notes is brought to you for free and open access by the Searchable Ornithological Research Archive at Digital Commons @ University of South Florida. It has been accepted for inclusion in Florida Field Naturalist by an authorized editor of Digital Commons @ University of South Florida. For more information, please contact [digitalcommons@usf.edu](mailto:digitalcommons@usf.edu).

If the resident crane population in Florida is about 3000 breeding birds (Williams 1978), the population in extreme southern Florida is relatively miniscule, less than 1%. Additional birds occur in southern Florida in the northern Big Cypress Swamp and northern Everglades (Thompson 1970, Auk 87: 492-502), but by far most cranes reside farther north in the state (Walkinshaw 1976, Proc. Int. Crane Workshop 1:1-18). The cranes of southern Florida may show ecological affinities to the Sandhill Cranes of Cuba and so may merit comparative study. The Sandhill Crane can be considered a rare resident of extreme southern Florida, where a minimum of about 2 dozen occur in Everglades National Park and the southern Big Cypress National Preserve, hopefully protected there by continued habitat preservation.

I thank Oron L. Bass, Jr., who flew the Cape Sable Sparrow census, and Paula C. Frohring, who participated in subsequent censuses. I appreciate the advice of Stephen A. Nesbitt, William B. Robertson, Jr. and Lawrence Walkinshaw who reviewed and commented on the manuscript. I also thank Dottie Anderson and Dee Childs for typing.—JAMES A. KUSHLAN, *National Park Service, South Florida Research Center, P.O. 279, Homestead, Florida 33030.*

Fla. Field Nat. 10(4): 74-76, 1982.

**Sandhill Cranes prey on amphiumas.**—On Sunday morning 6 December 1981, I stopped along the park drive in Myakka River State Park to obtain photographic slides of a Sandhill Crane (*Grus canadensis*) family group feeding. Two adults and a young sandhill of the previous Spring were actively foraging in a marsh.

The cranes flipped vegetation aside and rapidly probed the mud. After watching this behavior for approximately ten minutes I observed one crane catch a two-toed amphiuma (*Amphiuma means*) about 0.5 m long. It appeared to stab the amphibian with its bill several times and shook it vigorously prior to swallowing it. Intrigued, I continued to watch the cranes feed and in the next one-half hour observed them catch four more amphiumas and what appeared to be a striped crayfish snake (*Regina alleni*).

A cursory search of the literature on Sandhill Cranes did not provide descriptions of similar feeding behavior. Much smaller vertebrates, invertebrates, and plant materials are generally described as the primary fare of these birds. ROBERT L. DYE, *Division of Recreation and Parks, Department of Natural Resources, Myakka River State Park, Rt. 1, Box 72, Sarasota, Florida 33583.*

Fla. Field Nat. 10(4): 76, 1982.

**Spin walking by a Wilson's Phalarope.**—On 11 July 1981 at approximately 1000 EDT Helen and William Dowling and I were observing shorebirds at Duda Farms near Belle Glade, Palm Beach County, Florida. We were in a draining field that had no vegetation and very little water. The behavior of a Wilson's Phalarope (*Steganopus tricolor*) in winter plumage attracted our attention. For three minutes this phalarope simulated the whirling motion that phalaropes make in water during feeding, but with no water nearby. It whirled around and around in the same direction and in one spot on damp muck. Propelling itself by using its feet in a stamping motion, this spinning bird held its body well off the surface of the ground. We noticed no feeding during or after this whirling action. As no other Wilson's Phalarope was in the immediate area, this whirling bird was not interacting with another phalarope.