

NATURE QUEST

Nature Quest challenges kids of all ages to be curious about nature, right here in southeast Indiana. Take this sheet to a nature preserve, park, or wildlife refuge. Complete each part of the grid below. We'll release new Nature Quest challenges throughout the Fall and Winter. After you complete any one challenge, enter to win the Grand Prize. Enter all eight!

Materials you might take along:

- Binoculars, measuring tape, and an atlas
- Pencil and/or colored pencils, and a notebook
- Books or field guides from the "Library Thing" list for this challenge

Tip: This Nature Quest challenge requires a little field trip! Head to Muscatatuck National Wildlife Refuge in Seymour, Indiana. The cranes spend their days in the farm fields west of the Refuge, from Seymour to Medora and Brownstown. Drive the back roads and look for them foraging in the fields. You can usually find dozens or even hundreds out in the farm fields.

<p>Sandhill cranes are BIG birds! Their wingspan is 5'8" (that's from one tip of their wings to the other). What's your wingspan?</p> 	<p>Take a look at those long legs! Cranes live in wet, soggy places called wetlands. Long legs make it easy to walk through tall marsh grasses and wade in shallow water. Some cranes are over 5' tall. How tall are you? Draw yourself next to a sandhill crane to show who's taller.</p>	<p>In Winter, Sandhill cranes come to Indiana to find food and a warm place to spend the winter. In Spring, they fly north to nest in places like northern Indiana, Michigan, Wisconsin, and southern Canada. Can you find these places on an atlas?</p>
<p>Cranes are smart and very social. They communicate with calls while flying. Listen for their long, trumpet-like sound. They also dance and display to communicate. Bowing, tossing sticks, arching their backs, and jumping are ways they communicate. Try some of these actions with a partner.</p>	<h2>SANDHILL CRANES</h2> 	<p>Sandhills have been spotted in Jackson and Jennings county, IN, since the 1990's. There are more sandhills than ever, and so many stay here instead of going further south for winter. They spend their nights in the Refuge wetlands. Imagine you can fly like a Sandhill Crane. Examine the landscape and look for a good spot to snooze among the shallow water and grasses.</p>
<p>Did you know?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cranes live to be 30 yrs old in the wild! • A pair of cranes may stay paired for life. • Sandhill cranes nest on the ground and have 1-2 babies/yr. • The babies are called colts. Imagine their nest and draw a picture with a Crane family. 	<p>If you see cranes out in the farm fields, can you tell what the cranes are looking for? They eat corn and:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Insects • Caterpillars • Snakes • Crawdads • Voles <p>Watch the sandhills. What else are they doing?</p>	<p>Most sandhill cranes are grey, but in spring they paint themselves with mud so they look brown. Why do you think they do that?</p> <p>Tell a story about a crane painting itself grey with mud!</p>

Thanks to Muscatatuck and the International Crane Foundation for these neat prompts and images. Find more Nature Quest challenges at www.oakheritageconservancy.org/nature-quest Brought to you by:

