

SANDHILL CRANE KITE



“On the motionless wing, they emerge from the lifting mists, sweep a final arc of sky, and settle in clangorous descending spirals to their feeding grounds. A new day has begun on the crane marsh.”

-Aldo Leopold on the Sandhill Crane, *A Sand County Almanac*

In late October and early November, Sandhill cranes in Wisconsin are preparing to fly south for the winter. In the fall, when the nesting season is through, sandhill cranes stop being territorial and congregate in their pre-migration area. Usually this is the same spot year after year and sometimes they gather by the thousands. They stock up on food like waste grain from nearby farm fields and rest in the safety of communal roosting areas until December when they'll fly to their winter habitat.

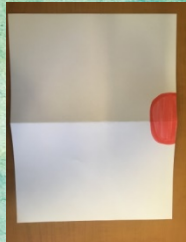
Sandhill cranes are an exciting conservation success story. Beginning in the late 1800's they were hunted for food and killed for being an agricultural pest. Numbers were so low across their entire territory that Aldo Leopold predicted their extinction in *A Sand County Almanac*, estimating that only a few dozen remained in Wisconsin. The protections given to cranes by the Migratory Bird Treaty of 1916 greatly decreased their killing, and the population slowly began to recover. It took time - sandhill cranes don't reproduce until they are at least four years old and breeding pairs at best produce just one or two offspring a year - but the 1970's saw a population surge, and current estimates of Wisconsin's sandhill crane population number 15,000!

MAKE YOUR OWN SANDHILL CRANE KITE

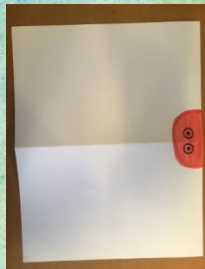
Materials: Black, brown, and white or gray construction paper, red and black markers, stapler, glue, twine or string

Directions:

1. Fold a white or gray piece of paper in half the short (hamburger) way. Open the paper with the inside of the fold face down.
2. Using a red marker, draw and fill in a half circle at the center of the long edge of the page about 2 inches across.



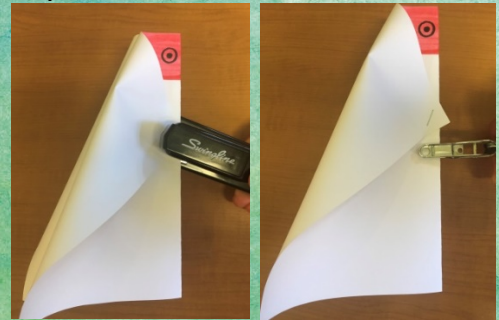
3. Draw an eye on each side of the fold.



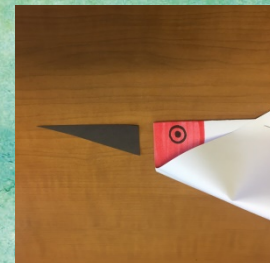
4. Refold the paper and bend the free corner opposite the red half circle to meet the folded edge about a third of the way down. Do this on both sides.



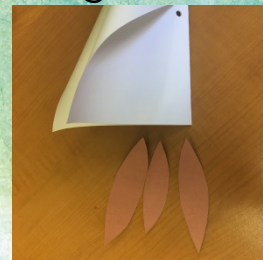
5. Staple the corners to the folded edge. Punch a hole for the string next to the staple.



6. Cut out a beak from black construction paper and glue it to the inside of the kite.



7. Cut out three feathers from brown construction paper and glue them to the inside of the other end of the kite. Put something heavy on top to hold the feathers in place while the glue dries.



8. Tie a string to the hole. Your kite is now ready to fly!