

# Woodbridge Ecological Reserve

## **SANDHILL CRANE TOUR DOCENT GUIDE**



A Docent's Guide To Facilitating  
Meaningful Experiences Through Interpretive Tours



# Table of Contents

<b>Table of Contents .....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Sandhill Crane Docent Guide .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Docent Duties and Responsibilities .....</b>	<b>5</b>
Collaborating With Your Team .....	7
The Role of the Team Leader .....	8
Reporting Absences .....	8
<b>Guidelines for a Successful Tour .....</b>	<b>9</b>
Materials .....	9
General Tour Outline .....	9
Example Sandhill Crane Talk Outline .....	10
How to Get to WER North and Where to Park .....	12
Visitor Behavior Expectations at the Shelter .....	12
<b>Required Tour Logistics Information .....</b>	<b>13</b>
Before You Arrive .....	13
Setting Up .....	13
Once Visitors Have Arrived .....	13
After Tour Ends .....	14
<b>WER Safety Plan and Protocols .....</b>	<b>15</b>
Interpretive Tours/Hikes.....	16
The South WER Unit – Parking Lot.....	17
Traveling Between North and South WER.....	17
The North WER Unit – Viewing Shelter .....	18
Conclusion.....	19
<b>Building Your 30-Minute Interpretive Talk .....</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>CDFW’s Mission .....</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>Defining Interpretation.....</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>Engaging Your Audience .....</b>	<b>22</b>
Interpretive Program Best Practices.....	22
Sage on Stage vs. Guide on the Side .....	22
<b>Finding Your Program Theme.....</b>	<b>23</b>
Narrowing Down Your Theme and Topics.....	23
Mind Mapping Tool .....	23



From a Direct Message to an Effective Thematic Statement .....	24
Connecting Tangible Facts to Intangible Concepts .....	24
Developing Your Theme Statement .....	26
Selecting Content for Your Talk .....	26
<b>Helpful Links to Learn More .....</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>Templates .....</b>	<b>30</b>
Mind Mapping Tool .....	30
Linking Tangibles to Intangibles .....	30
Combining Tangibles & Intangibles .....	31
Sandhill Crane Talk Outline .....	32

**Special thanks to the Sandhill Crane Association and California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) Interpretive Staff for putting together this guide:**

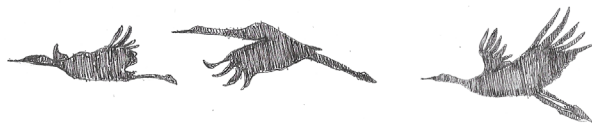
Emily Ortizow	CDFW R3 Special Projects Coordinator
Mayra Guzman	CDFW R3 Scientific Aid
Geniva Hayden	CDFW R3 Scientific Aid
Lacey Carlson	CDFW R2 Interpreter I
Mamie Starr	Lead Docent
Howard Larimer	Lead Docent

This program receives Federal financial assistance from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Under Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, and Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, the U.S. Department of the Interior prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, sex, or disability.

If you believe that you have been discriminated against in any program, activity, or facility, or if you need more information, please write to:

Office of Diversity, Inclusion and Civil Rights  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
1849 C Street, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20240





## Sandhill Crane Docent Guide

Thank you for your interest and commitment in becoming a Docent with the Sandhill Crane Tour Program! A Sandhill Crane Tour Docent holds the most important role in the success of this program.

Many Californians don't realize that these huge birds need California Delta and Central Valley wetland habitat to be able to survive and thrive.

---

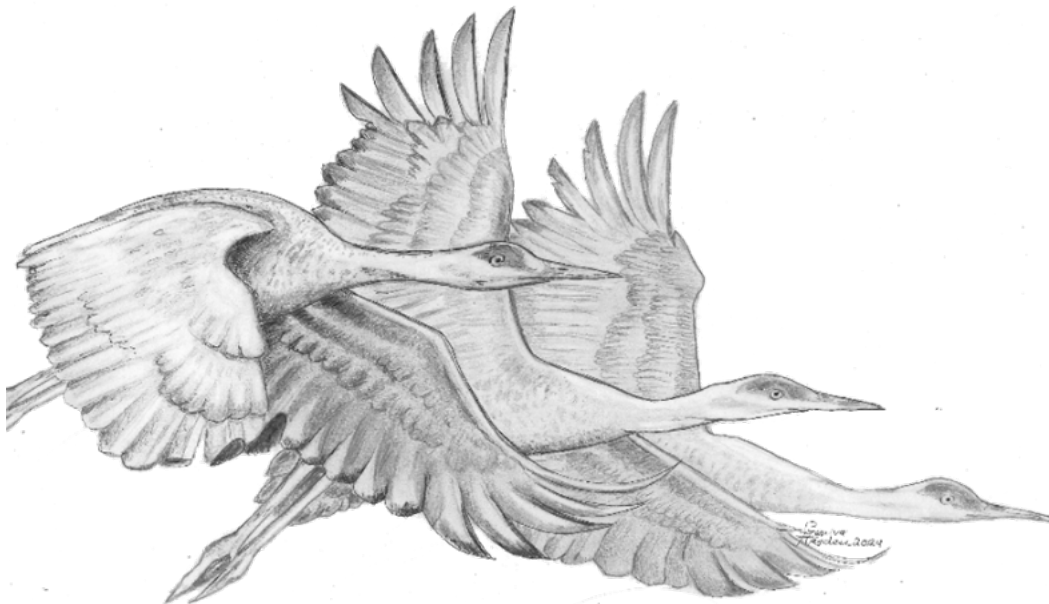
**The Docent's job is to foster a safe and respectful viewing experience between the public and wildlife, and to encourage visitors to take steps in their own lives to protect these birds and the resources they need to survive.**

---

This guide will support you in planning and delivering your very own Sandhill Crane Tour! We will provide an outline and resources to build your tour. Every tour is as unique as its Docent, so get creative with it!

You do not need to know *everything* about Sandhill Cranes or the Woodbridge Ecological Reserve (WER) to lead a tour. All you need is the right resources, and some interest in learning about these magnificent birds!

For any questions related to the Crane Docent program, please refer to your current contact list. An updated contact list will be provided to all Docents at the beginning of each season.







# Docent Duties and Responsibilities

**Under the direction of the Interpretive Services Supervisor, a Sandhill Crane Docent at Woodbridge Ecological Reserve (WER) performs the following duties:**

1. Docents lead scheduled tours at Woodbridge Ecological Reserve (North and South Units) for public, private, and school groups, typically conducting at least one tour per month. During each tour, Docents present a 30-minute talk alongside their tour partners at the South Unit. While viewing the Sandhill Cranes at the North Unit, docents also answer questions and engage visitors in meaningful conversation.
2. Before and after the tour, Docents are responsible for setting up, maintaining, and taking down temporary displays and tabling materials.
  - a. Report any necessary refills of items, like toilet paper, hand sanitizer wipes, first aid, beverages, water, donation envelopes, etc.
  - b. Maintain basic shelter cleanliness, and clean up any offered refreshments.
  - c. Ensure all facilities and gates are secure during and at the end of each program.

See ["Required Tour Logistics Information"](#) section in this document for more details.

3. Outside of the tour days, Docents are also expected to:
  - a. Maintain an active email account (email is our main means of communication) that is regularly checked.
    - i. If email does not work for you, please check with leadership to determine an alternate form of communication.
  - b. Attend Docent meetings and trainings.
    - i. Attendance is required at the first and last meetings of each season.
  - c. Maintain up-to-date volunteer forms and other reports and submit them in a timely manner.
  - d. Complete other requested tasks related to the tours and program, within reason.
  - e. Participate in optional opportunities to present at events.
4. All requests for media contacts must be reported to CDFW Staff; particularly the Woodbridge Ecological Reserve Unit Biologist and Interpretive Services Supervisor.
5. Adhere to CDFW policies, safety procedures, and regulations. Docents should familiarize themselves with [CDFW's Fishing and Hunting Regulations](#).



### **Responsibilities...**

1. Collaborate with your partners prior to each tour to build a thematic and relevant 30-minute talk that will communicate the significance of Sandhill Cranes.
2. Submit all required forms:
  - Regularly: Docent Hours Form and Tour Report Form.
  - Annually: Oath of Allegiance, Volunteer Agreement, Emergency Contact Form (provided before the start of each season).

Docents should encourage compliance with CDFW regulations, guidelines, and protocols for visitor behavior, but Docents are not a substitute for law enforcement. If you see something, say something. Docents should report any inappropriate behavior on the reserve to the Interpretive Services Supervisor and if it is an emergency situation 911 emergency services should be called. If you witness a poaching or polluting incident or any fish and wildlife violation, or have information about such a violation, immediately contact CalTIP in one of the following ways:

- Dial the toll free CalTIP number 1-888-334-CALTIP (888-334-2258), 24 hours a day, seven days a week.
- Submit anonymous tips to CDFW via text using tip411. Text CALTIP, followed by a space and the message you want to leave, to 847411.
- Download the CalTIP app from the app store.

Visit the [CALTIP - Californians Turn in Poachers and Polluters](http://www.caltip.org) website to learn more about CDFW's CALTIP program.

### **Docents should be generally knowledgeable about:**

- Basic Sandhill Crane biology and ecology
- The North American Flyways (in particular the Pacific Flyway)
- The importance of wetlands for wildlife and waterfowl
- Identification of other common wintering wildlife species
- Basic understanding of laws protecting cranes and migratory birds
- How the Woodbridge Ecological Reserve, Sandhill Crane Association, and CDFW work together to manage the wetland to benefit cranes
- Other organizations and locations that visitors can check out to learn more about cranes





## Collaborating With Your Team

At the beginning of each season, teams of 2-4 Docents are created by the Leaders from the Sandhill Crane Association and the CDFW Interpretive Services Supervisor. Within these teams, Docents are paired with a partner (inexperienced Docents will be paired with a more experienced Docent for training purposes). Docents will work in these teams throughout the season to lead tours with the support of their Team Leader. Before your team's first tour, you will need to reach out to your partners to coordinate a time to create your 30-minute interpretive talk. The success of this program depends on effective collaboration between team members. This next section will outline how to collaborate with your partners when planning and leading tours, and the role of a Team Leader. You can find tips on how to build your talk together later on in this guide.

Being a Good Creative Partner takes...

Active Listening, Effective Communication, Adaptability, and Shared Wins!

### Consider this when planning your team's talk and tour:

#### 1. Role Distribution

- Each Docent should connect with their partners and Team Lead.
- The team should collaborate and make use of the templates, the mind-mapping questions, and collaborative tools for document sharing (i.e. email, Google Docs, Microsoft Word) to come to a consensus on the theme of your 30-minute talk.
- Once you have decided on a talk theme as a team, Docents should select relevant supporting information to individually build their 5-minute section.

#### 2. Creative Process

- Create a 30-minute talk separated into 5-minute independent sections.
- Work with your partners and share ideas and give constructive feedback.
- Foster a collaborative atmosphere by supporting others' ideas.

#### 3. Time Management

- Provide enough time to plan your team's outline and do light research. When planning your sections, keep in mind the visitors' perspective.
- Practice on your own time. Practicing with a 5-minute timer helps make sure your content is well developed and concise.



- Allocate enough time to prepare your team's Talk and try to practice together if possible. Practicing keeps your program fun, comfortable, and light makes it appear effortless to the visitor, increasing audience comfortability and participation.

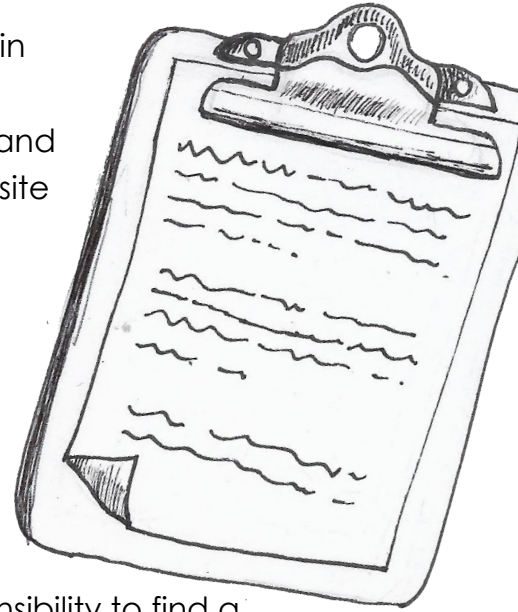
Successful collaboration involves clear understanding of roles, open communication, and commitment to the collective goal. Don't forget to enjoy the process while creating your talk!

## The Role of the Team Leader

Team Leaders are identified at the beginning of the season. Being a Team Leader is not a forever assignment, and the position rotates. Working with a Team Leader helps establish clear communication and goals within the team.

### Team Leader Duties:

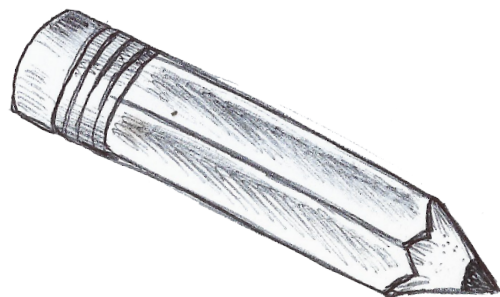
1. Contact the group members and lead collaboration in the group.
2. Confirm that tour program tasks are clearly assigned and completed by fellow team members. This includes onsite tasks like setting up the scope, checking park passes, guiding parking, filing reports, and developing and facilitating talks.
3. Facilitate decisions about what is covered in the talk. Everyone will need to work together to create a cohesive and successful tour.



## Reporting Absences

If you have a conflict on your assigned date, it is your responsibility to find a substitute and communicate the change with that person and your team as soon as possible.

1. It is the responsibility of each Docent to find their own substitute.
2. Report absences to your Team Leader and **the CDFW Sandhill Crane Tour Event Coordinator**. Their contact information is provided each season.







# Guidelines for a Successful Tour

## Materials

Most of these materials are provided and available at the North Unit Shelter. However, some docents choose to bring and use some of their own metaphors/props, visuals, and refreshments. Coordinate with your group to decide who will be bringing what.

Before/After the Tour	Tour & Wildlife Viewing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gate &amp; blind keys</li> <li>• CDFW vest (Name tag)</li> <li>• Pen &amp; pencil</li> <li>• Flashlight</li> <li>• Tour Roster</li> <li>• Tour &amp; Volunteer Hours Forms</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Crane dance pamphlet</li> <li>• Docent guide script/tour outline</li> <li>• Metaphors/props &amp; visual aids: crane decoy, wingspan rope, maps, photos, etc.</li> <li>• 2 scopes (leave at Shelter)</li> <li>• 2 binoculars</li> </ul>
<b>Optional:</b> Hot water and/or treats	<b>Optional:</b> Field guides

## General Tour Outline

This template is a standard program format and allows each Docent to see how they play out in the grand scheme of the talk and its timeline. You may choose to use the below outline if your team is not feeling as inspired to create something new. See ["Templates"](#) section to build your own outline.

It is important that the talk sticks to 30 minutes, and each individual section is 5 minutes or less. Docents may choose to present some sections together, so feel free to play around with section roles and themes. Remember to keep talking points conversational and give your audience opportunities to contribute to the discussion and move their body!





## Example Sandhill Crane Talk Outline

Theme: The Community Comes Together for Sandhill Crane Conservation

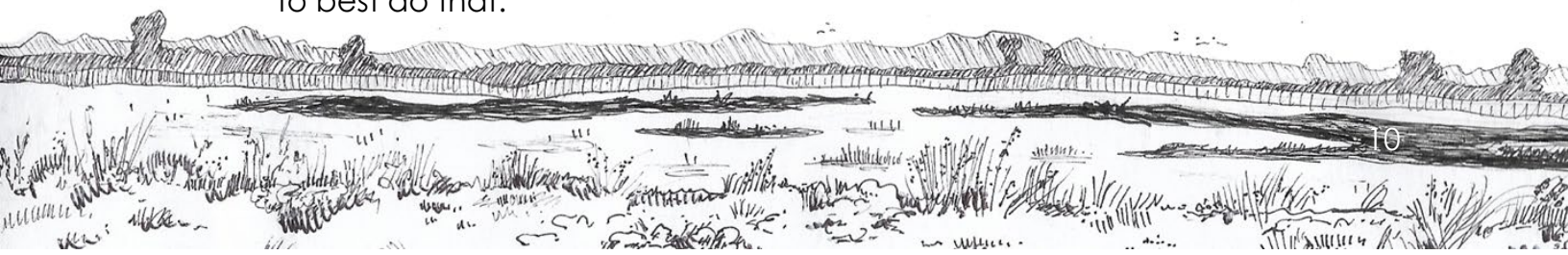
Time	Docent	Topic	Activity Plan
00:00-00:05	Ethan	History and purpose of WER	Duck Club to Ecological Reserve
00:05-00:10	Ryan	Sandhill Crane conservation	Sandhill Cranes - a conservation success story!
00:10-00:15	Emily	Sandhill Crane migratory habitat and identification	Pacific Flyway, available habitat (past and present), flight patterns/style, difference between Lesser and Greater Sandhill Cranes
00:15-00:20	Howard	Wildlife Viewing Etiquette	How to respect wildlife and get birds to land close
00:20-00:25	Mamie	Instructions for getting to WER North & Shelter Behavior	Give directions on how to park, speed limit, establish visitor expectations for the Shelter
00:25-00:30	Ethan	History and purpose of WER	Duck Club to Ecological Reserve

**Visual Aids:** ☐ \_\_\_\_\_ ☐ \_\_\_\_\_ ☐ \_\_\_\_\_ ☐ \_\_\_\_\_

### Introduction (5 minutes)

**Welcome & Introduce Staff:** Good afternoon and welcome to the South Unit of the Woodbridge Ecological Reserve. My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and my partner here is \_\_\_\_\_. We are Docents for the California Department of Fish and Wildlife's Sandhill Crane Tours. Our job is to help people appreciate and understand what they are looking at in terms of migratory bird wetland habitat – so if you have any questions, please feel free to ask! Before we begin the talk, I want to point out that the bathrooms are located in the parking lot, and it will be getting dark on this tour, so make sure you grab your jacket from the car if you haven't already.

**Theme & Plan for the Hour:** First, I want to hear from the audience, what brought you out here today? (field a few answers). No matter why we are here today, I can bet the main reason was to see Sandhill Cranes! This evening, we will be learning all about the success of Sandhill Crane conservation, we will learn how to identify Sandhill Cranes, and we'll drive together over to the North unit to see some cranes – and we'll learn how to best do that.





## **Topics of Discussion** (20 minutes)

### **History and purpose of WER** (5 minutes)

- WER was previously El Dorado Duck [hunting] Club, and CDFW acquired it in 1985.
- Before 1985 this land was grazed by cattle in the summer when it was dry.
- The land is now managed for the conservation of Sandhill Cranes – land managers manage vegetation and water levels in the wetland to provide habitat for cranes.

### **(Greater) Sandhill Crane Conservation** (5 minutes)

- Sandhill Cranes are migratory birds that need specialized grazing and roosting habitat.
- Due to hunting “ribeye of the sky” and loss of habitat to agricultural lands, in 1940 there were only 6 pairs of Sandhill Crane observed in their native range.
- In 1983 they were listed as threatened, and CDFW began to implement conservation.
  - CDFW partners with agricultural landowners to supplement habitat for cranes.
- Now in the Delta and surrounding area, 6000 (more or less) pairs can be observed.

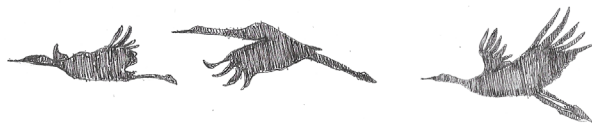
### **Sandhill Crane Migration and Identification** (5 minutes)

- Sandhill Cranes follow three main migratory pathways in North America. The cranes we will observe fly along the Pacific Flyway, which is like a major migratory highway for birds in North America. Sandhill Cranes fly South to escape frigid Alaskan/Canadian winters and to rear young in California’s mild climate.
- There are two species of Sandhill Cranes that can be observed on this tour: Lessers & Greater. Lessers are smaller and rusty colored; Greater are larger and silvery gray.
- Both birds have an impressive wingspan of 6-7ft, their wings are so big that they fold to make the cranes’ “tail.”

### **Wildlife Viewing Etiquette** (5 minutes)

- Birds are “flighty” and will land further away if there is too much action at the shelter.
- Move slowly, quietly, and with intention.
- Please stay within the walls of the shelter.

## **Talk Conclusion** (5 minutes)

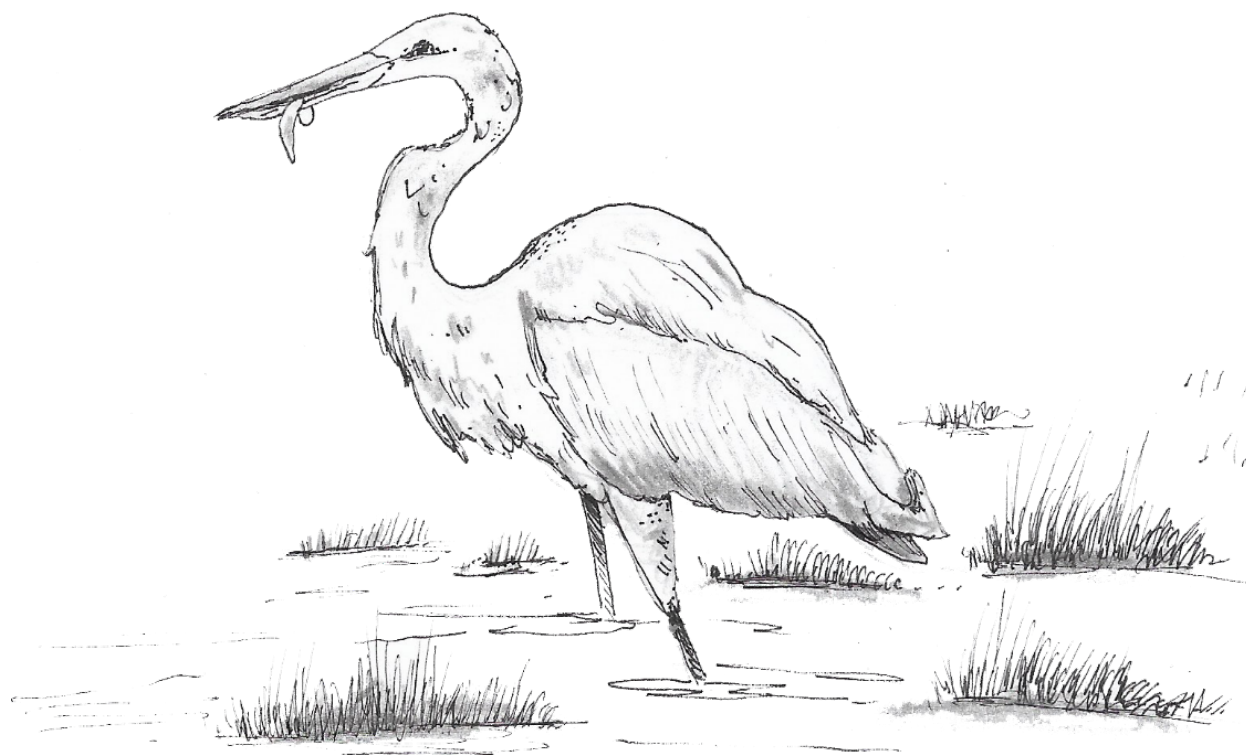


## How to Get to WER North and Where to Park

- Docents will lead visitors to the shelter on WER North Unit via Woodbridge Rd.
- Max vehicle speed is 10 mph on the gravel road.
  - Drivers with a Disabled Parking Placard drive at the front of the convoy.
- Docents will guide participants into the parking area. All vehicles must park with their lights facing the road, away from where the cranes land.

## Visitor Behavior Expectations at the Shelter

- Silence is rewarding: Ask visitors to please keep their voices low and turn off all cell phones.
- Tune up your senses.
  - Cup your hands behind your ears to capture more sounds.
  - Scan the horizon or trees for movement or odd shapes.
  - Notice smells and wind direction.
- Leave no trace.
  - Check to see that nothing has been left behind.
  - Stay in the building or on the patio. Don't walk in the natural areas.







# Required Tour Logistics Information

## Before You Arrive

- Be prepared to arrive **an hour and a half** before the program begins to prepare facilities and materials. Check with your Team Leader to confirm your start time.
- Make sure you are wearing your CDFW vest and hat, so you are identifiable by CDFW Staff while operating on the property.

## Setting Up

- **Arrive at the North Unit** at your scheduled start time and meet with the other Docents to assign set-up tasks.
- **Prepare Facilities (1 hour)**
  - Check for Safety Hazards (identified in the Safety Plan)
  - Prepare the shelter for hosting the tour
  - Arrange refreshments
    - Set up materials
- **Drive south to the Mound** (WER South Unit). Make sure you are at the Mound 30 minutes before the tour.
  - As you drive, casually observe what you see. Make note of bird activity and other things to point out to visitors.

## Once Visitors Have Arrived

- Take roll and check Lands Passes.
  - Help visitors purchase a lands pass if they haven't already done so.
  - Record extra visitors (with a cap of 15 visitors) per tour to fill no-show slots.
- Perform a 30-minute interpretive talk
- Make an announcement about parking.
- After the 30-minute interpretive talk, direct visitors to the Shelter (WER North Unit) via Woodbridge Rd. at a safe speed on the gravel road.
  - Drivers with a Disabled Parking Placard should drive at the front of the group. Maintain a safe distance between vehicles.
- Guide participants into the North Unit parking area.
  - All vehicles must park with their lights facing the road, away from where the cranes land. One Docent leads cars into North and acts



as parking attendant. While another Docent waits back at the gate and manages cars entering North, and dummy locks the gate (loop the chain over, half lock the lock) so that the gate is secured, and the lock is not lost. Do not lock the gate completely for safety (evacuation) reasons.

- Calmly guide visitors into the shelter.
  - Make quiet announcements about wildlife viewing etiquette, like no flash photography, quiet voices, and slow/deliberate movements. Remind visitors that, for high-quality wildlife viewing opportunities, they should not leave the enclosure, with exception of using the restroom.
- While at the shelter: encourage visitors to go inside for refreshments/check out posters, answer visitor questions, etc.
- At the end of the tour, say goodbye to all visitors and invite them to return on another tour.

## After Tour Ends

- Work with your team to complete the cleanup checklist
  - Clean up all food and supplies.
  - Empty trash
  - Resupply toilet paper/wet wipes
  - Lock up Shelter doors
  - Lock WER North Unit gate upon exit.
  - **Sunday Crew:**
    - Empty trash cans and replace trash bags in the shelter and restrooms at North. Take trash to the **outdoor** trash can.
- Alert Team Leads about program inventory and supplies needs. Plan ahead. Some materials may need to be purchased.
- Complete the Bird Survey tour report or send your observations to the CDFW Sandhill Crane Tour Coordinator.





## WER Safety Plan and Protocols

For the Safety of all Sandhill Crane Tour Docents and Visitors, CDFW has created a new and improved Field Safety Protocol. This protocol provides a comprehensive guide on how to assess and prevent risks that may be present at the Woodbridge Ecological Reserve (WER). This guide also provides ways to mitigate risks that present themselves, and outlines what appropriate measures must be taken if these accidents DO happen.

**The Field Safety Protocol is organized by risks associated with:**

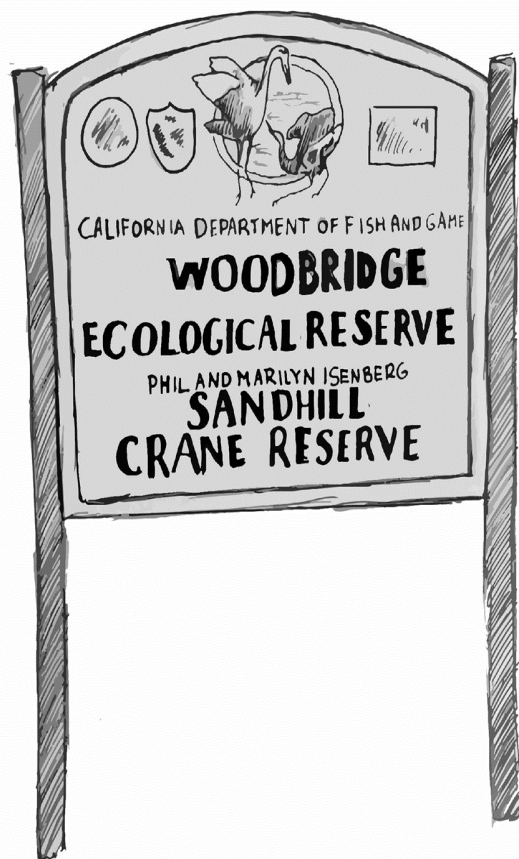
- 1) Interpretive Tours/Hikes
- 2) The South WER Unit/Parking Lot
- 3) Traveling Between South and North Unit
- 4) The North WER Unit/Viewing Shelter

**The Field Safety Protocol Outlines:**

**Risk(s):** The risks associated with Sandhill Crane Tours and WER (North and South).

**Mitigation:** How to mitigate and avoid injuries and dangerous situations.

**What to do:** What you can do in case of emergency.





## Interpretive Tours/Hikes

**Risk: Evening and nighttime outdoor setting, limited visibility.** This program often starts in the evening when it's still light out and then concludes once it is dark. Additional hazards can be associated with the "twilight" part of the day. Tripping hazards or other risks that may be obvious during the day may be obscured in the dark. It is important that tripping hazards and other risks (i.e. poisonous plants, branches at eye level, insect hives/nests, etc.) are recognized, and special attention is paid to hazards that may be less visible at night.

**Mitigation:** Ensure pathways and main areas are kept clear of tripping hazards. Make sure all tripping hazards are clearly labeled with a cone or brightly colored marker/tape to avoid tripping risks. Advise participants to wear appropriate footwear.

**What to Do:** In case of a trip or fall, a first aid kit should be available with the Docents. If injury is severe, seek immediate medical attention and inform the event organizers.

**Risk: Adverse weather conditions (rain, strong wind).** This location does not often experience severe weather, and tours are delivered "rain or shine". However, if there is severe weather in the forecast, special attention should be paid to heavy rains (which may lead to flooding), high speed wind, thunderstorms, and poor air quality from wildfires.

**Mitigation:** Docents and program leads should monitor weather forecasts closely and consider canceling if conditions will be dangerous. If the tour proceeds, provide suggestions for participants about dressing appropriately. Encourage participants to wear warm, waterproof attire, and request that they bring umbrellas. If rain or wind is tolerable but heavy, Docents may consider spending more time at the viewing shelter and less time at the South Unit parking lot.

**What to Do:** If the program experiences extreme weather, find shelter or consider ending the tour early for the safety of all participants.

**Risk: Medical emergencies, e.g., allergic reactions, asthma attacks.** Recreation outdoors is associated with its own inherent risks. Special attention must be paid by Docents and participants, to avoid dangerous plants, insects, arachnids, or other allergens associated with common allergic reactions and personal medical conditions. If any beginning signs of serious allergic reaction present themselves, call 911 for emergency services.





**Mitigation:** Make an announcement to participants about potential risks and hazards to exposure to common allergens, while on the tour, and provide participants with options to avoid the risks. Keep a first aid kit equipped with basic first aid and over the counter medications (i.e. antihistamine, ibuprofen).

**What to Do:** Administer basic first aid as required and call for emergency medical assistance. Ensure the affected individual is in a safe and comfortable position.

## **The South WER Unit – Parking Lot**


**Risk: Lost/Roaming participants, especially children.** Participants and Docents should stay with the group; there are not many places for people to get lost or separated from this group location. However, it is important to welcome each member into the group, and have a plan in place, in case any child or participant cannot be located.

**Mitigation:** Advise attendees to always remain close to the group. Encourage parents to supervise and stay close to their children. Assign a Docent to lead and another to follow the group. Recall park rules: all visitors must stay on clearly marked paths. Docents may choose to offer name badges to help identify group members. Docents should do a count of participants a few times throughout the experience.

**What to Do:** Use flashlights or other lighting to search nearby areas. Do your best not to disturb wildlife unless absolutely necessary. Alert all group members and have them assist in the search. If the participant is not found within a reasonable time, notify local authorities

## **Traveling Between North and South WER**

**Risk: Vehicle collisions or accidents during the drive to "the shelter".** This tour requires Docents and Participants to drive their personal vehicle from the South Unit of WER (where participants receive an interpretive talk), to the North Unit of WER where participants are allowed onto a part of the reserve that is off limits to the public. There are risks associated with caravanning and driving on a gravel road in the evening. Additionally, on each side of the road there are deep drainage ditches filled with water, so pulling off of the road is not an option. Exercise caution where participants are required to drive while on the tour.





**Mitigation:** Provide clear driving directions and remind participants to drive cautiously, especially in low-light conditions. Recommend the use of hazard lights during the drive. Recommend that participants allow enough space in between vehicles to allow for rapid stops in the case of wildlife crossing the road. Make participants aware that there are drainage ditches lining the road, so they should not pull off onto the sides of the roads.

**What to Do:** Ensure the safety of all participants first and foremost if there is a crash, so the crash does not involve more cars/participants. Provide first aid if necessary, and contact 911 for emergency services. Do not try to move any cars out of drainage ditches, please wait for the appropriate tow services and contact the CDFW Land Manager.

## The North WER Unit – Viewing Shelter

**Risk: Wildlife encounters.** Docents and participants will be responsible for partaking in respectful wildlife viewing etiquette. Participants come to view Sandhill Cranes and other wetland birds, however participants may potentially see predatory animals like bats, coyotes, raccoons, opossums, and even snakes like garter snakes, gopher snakes, and rattlesnakes (very unlikely). Animals are elusive and do not like to be disturbed. Part of wildlife viewing etiquette is allowing wild animals to partake in their natural behaviors. None of the animals mentioned are known to attack humans as a result of natural behavior. If animals are observed quietly and not forced into a human-wildlife interaction, all risks associated can be avoided.

**Mitigation:** Provide safety guidelines regarding wildlife encounters at the beginning of the tour. Ensure attendees maintain a safe distance from all animals. Establish clear definitions for what respectful wildlife viewing etiquette means (do not yell at wildlife, do not corner them, do not grab or catch them, do not obstruct any natural animal behavior). Do not approach any cornered wildlife, including small mammals like ground squirrels, gophers, or rats. Do not handle any small wildlife. It's been noted by the Land Manager that there are no rattlesnakes in this area. Still, it's important to recognize that they are most active in the evening, when they soak up warmth from roads and use small human dwellings (like shelters or bathrooms) to find their prey at night. If snakes are noticed, give them space. The animals you may encounter at Woodbridge Ecological Reserve are not naturally aggressive.



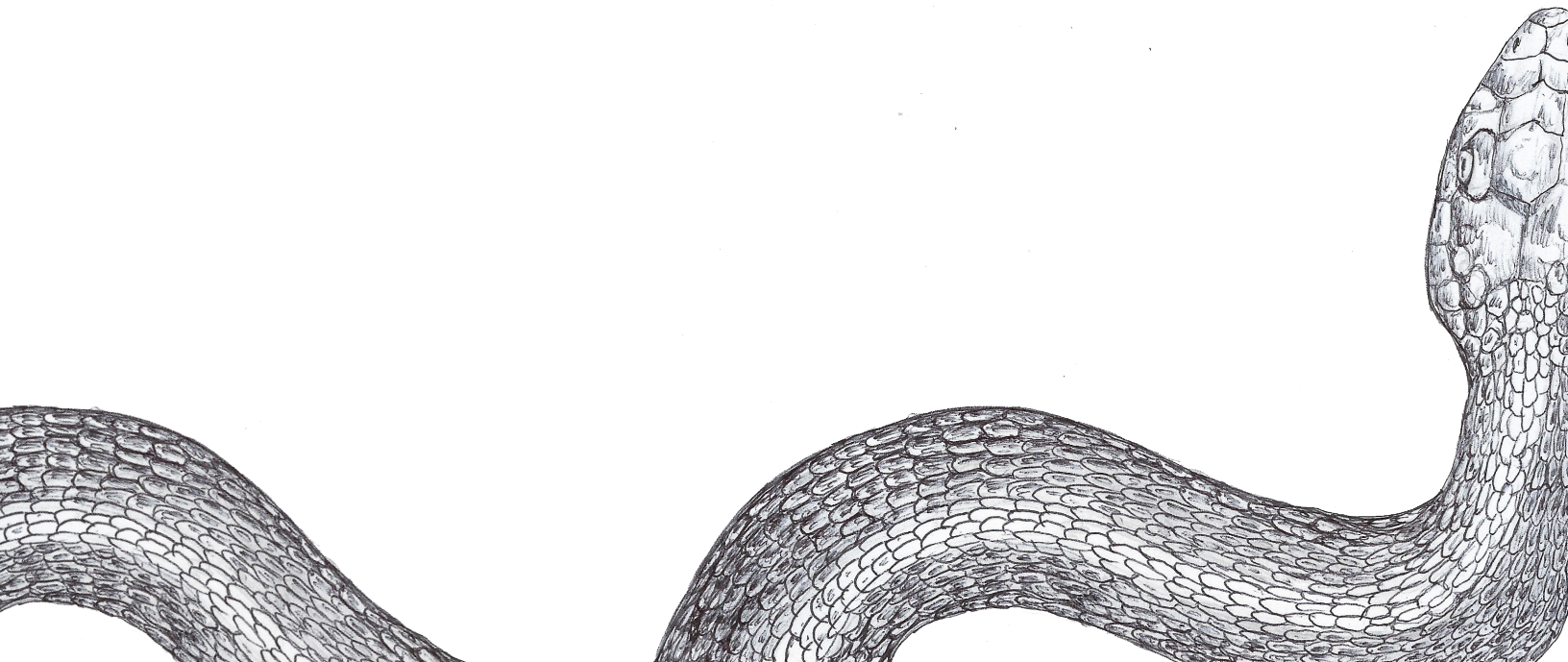
**What to Do:** If an animal is unintentionally cornered, remain calm and avoid eye contact and sudden movements. Notify a Docent immediately for guidance. Docents will move participants far away from the distressed animal to allow the animal time and freedom to run off. Docents will not handle the animal to remove it. Removals should only be made by the Land Manager. If someone is bitten by a wild animal, call 911 for emergency services, and either capture the animal (if small) or scare the animal off (in the case of coyotes/racoons). Take pictures of the animal and injury, so appropriate action can be taken. This incident has never come close to happening at this location, but it is important to have a plan in the off chance that it does!

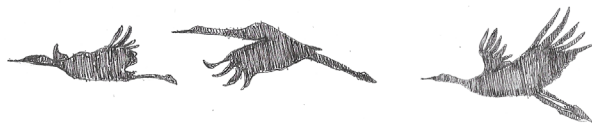
## Conclusion

The safety of all Participants and Docents is paramount. Adhering to these protocols will ensure that the Sandhill Crane Tour Program provides an enjoyable and safe experience for all. Participants are advised to cooperate with Docents and staff and always prioritize personal safety. It is the responsibility of Docents to properly prepare participants about the potential hazards at these two locations while viewing the Sandhill Cranes.

Docents are encouraged to visit [Woodbridge Ecological Reserve](#) and check the bottom of the page for current information about regulations and what the public can do at WER.

For more information on property specific regulations, please visit [CDFW's Fishing and Hunting Regulations](#) to find the most recent copy of the "Waterfowl, Upland Game Hunting and Land Use Regulations Booklet" and review the section titled Public Uses on State and Federal Lands.





## Building Your 30-Minute Interpretive Talk

Leading tours is a great way to share about something we are all impressed by – the conservation success of Sandhill Cranes. The goal is to *inspire* the audience, so they want to know more about cranes. During a presentation, you don't need to provide every detail about cranes - instead, give enough information to engage with the visitors and spark their interest. Some visitors may ask you more questions later on during the viewing portion of the tour, and that is a great time to go into more detail. Everything can be a teachable moment, but not every moment needs to be teaching.

Keeping this in mind, giving an interpretive talk can be considered an artform, and when done well, inspires your audience to learn more and take action in their community.

Tours and talks are most effective when they have a beginning, middle, and end, follow a clear theme, and offer opportunities for audience engagement. The following information will introduce you to the basics of Interpretation and offer some tips.

### Dive Deeper

The next section will cover the basics of interpretation. To learn more about best practices, review this slideshow from the [Sandhill Crane Tour Docent Training](#).

## CDFW's Mission

---

**The mission of the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) is to manage California's diverse fish, wildlife, and plant resources, and the habitats upon which they depend, for their ecological values and their use and enjoyment by the public.**

---

### How does interpretation fit into this mission?

Docents help to fulfill this mission by giving the public opportunities to connect with and have positive experiences around wildlife. Docents also inspire the public to assist in protecting wildlife and natural resources for the enjoyment of future generations. Thank you!



## Defining Interpretation

“Interpretation is a purposeful approach to communication that facilitates meaningful, relevant, and inclusive experiences that deepen understanding, broaden perspectives, and inspire engagement with the world around us.”

[National Association for Interpretation - What is Interpretation?](#)

Focusing on interpretation, rather than education, allows us to move beyond just fact sharing, and instead helping our audience create emotional connections to the resources around us.

**A master of interpretation, Freeman Tilden's 6 principles are as follows...**

1. Any interpretation that does not somehow relate what is being displayed or described to something within the personality or experience of the visitor will be sterile.
2. Information, as such, is not interpretation. Interpretation is revelation based upon information. But they are entirely different things. However, all interpretation includes information.
3. Interpretation is an art, which combines many arts, whether the materials presented are scientific, historical or architectural. Any art is to some degree teachable.
4. The chief aim of Interpretation is not instruction, but provocation.
5. Interpretation should aim to present a whole rather than a part and must address itself to the whole man rather than any phase.
6. Interpretation addressed to children (say up to the age of twelve) should not be a dilution of the presentation to adults but should follow a fundamentally different approach. To be at its best it will require a separate program.

These 6 principles guide how most professional Heritage and Natural Resource Interpreters build their programming. Any information we hope to convey to the public should be run back through this filter of principles.

**Interpretive Programs Are...** Relevant, Organized, Thematic, and Enjoyable!

**Interpretation as an art...**

- Highlights emotional stories that foster a sense of responsibility to the resource.
- Connects a place or item to a human emotion or universal value.





- Fosters a sense of curiosity in the visitor. Curious visitors will go on to educate themselves further about conservation efforts and seek out ways to get involved. This furthers our (both CDFW and this Docent program) stewardship initiatives and helps the public feel a sense of ownership over the resource and their public lands.

## **Engaging Your Audience**

There are many ways to make an interpretive talk engaging, but one of the best ways is to make it thematic. You can weave emotion into the information you share through storytelling, and by connecting a tangible thing like a natural resource to something intangible like values of love or freedom. This allows the audience to connect in a personal way.

### **Interpretive Program Best Practices**

- Engage The 5 senses: Play sound clips, acknowledge scents and smells, or use metaphors (props) to pass around to the audience. Show Don't Tell – perform demonstrations vs giving detailed explanations.
- Everything is a teachable moment! If no cranes are present, point out bird behavior, discuss how they all affect each other. Always be on the lookout for opportunities to interpret the natural world. Get excited about the little things.
- Allow opportunities for the audience to engage and ask questions.
- Encourage them to name what they may already know.

### **Sage on Stage vs. Guide on the Side**

A “Sage on the Stage” - sees the speaker as the primary giver of knowledge, providing information lecture-style to a passive audience. This is an interpreter who stands at the front of the group to give a long talk without much audience engagement. A “Guide on the Side” encourages active, audience-centered learning and helps facilitate participants' personal discoveries. This interpreter teaches by asking lots of questions, engaging their audience, and learning alongside their group. The focus is on finding teachable moments, rather than handing over all of the information at once.

When we are excited to share our knowledge with our audience, it is easy to fall exclusively into the role of “Sage on the Stage.” Challenge yourself to try being a “Guide on the Side” as you lead tours!



## Finding Your Program Theme

*Interpretation is most successful when it's thematic!*

A theme is a statement that communicates the overarching, big idea of your program, and guides what supporting information you choose to talk about.

### **A theme...**

- Functions as a program anchor: return to the theme to reinforce concepts
- Enforces a “take home message” or the end result/goal of the program
- Answers the “so what?” – why should the visitor care about this resource?
- Draws in a relevant audience
- Gives a short preview of what visitors can expect
- Keeps content relevant, concise, and effective

## Narrowing Down Your Theme and Topics

Interpreters often “map out” (scribble down and ruminate about) their idea before putting together their interpretive talk outline. Interpreters can use mind mapping as a way to look at their idea from a broad perspective and apply finer lenses, to discover a more direct and influential message to convey to the audience. These finer lenses can be applied by running the talk idea through three mind map questions.

For these tours, you will work with your team to come up with a cohesive theme statement to build your talk content from. Once the team has decided on a theme statement for the talk, individual team members may choose to independently develop their section, keeping in mind the overarching message and relating their section back to that agreed upon theme statement. This is a way to fine-tune the topics you discuss, collaborate with your group, and trim information and facts that don't apply to the theme statement.

## Mind Mapping Tool

Use the following Mind Mapping Tool to help your group decide how to present your information. Questions 1 and 2 in the exercise help determine what supporting information to showcase in the talk. Question 3 is your direct message and should be a concise summary of Questions 1 and 2. Your answer to Question 3 should be developed into the talk's theme.



## MIND MAPPING TOOL

Question	Answer
(1) Generally, my presentation is about...	Sandhill Cranes and their Conservation History
(2) Specifically, I want my audience to know about...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sandhill Crane Evolution and Morphology (Appearance/Identification)</li> <li>• Sandhill Crane Recent History</li> <li>• Modern Sandhill Crane Conservation and Habitat Preservation</li> </ul>
(3) After hearing my presentation, I want my audience to understand that...	Sandhill Crane conservation is an ongoing success, and visitors can be a part of this effort

## From a Direct Message to an Effective Thematic Statement

Below, you'll learn how to make sentence 3, "Sandhill Crane conservation is an ongoing success," into a proper theme statement that incorporates both tangible and intangible elements. Interpreters often weave intangible values with tangible topics to increase program relevancy. Weaving in language that evokes emotion makes your talk more memorable and helps your audience remember the direct message of the tour.

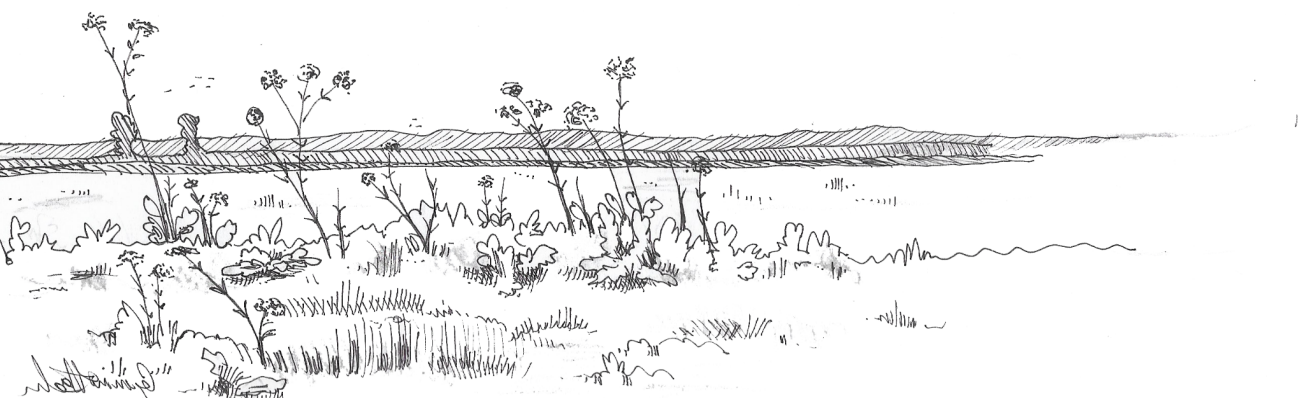
What are tangible and intangible elements? How can we bring them together?

**Tangible** – a noun, a word or phrase that is literal, factual, and definite.

**Intangible** – an emotion or value, representational, significant, something to relate to.

## Connecting Tangible Facts to Intangible Concepts

Intangible connections should be relevant to your audience. You can use the following chart to help guide the connections you make and to build your theme statement. The intangible emotions or values that you identify in the right columns should reflect what intangible concepts you include in your theme.





## LINKING TANGIBLES AND INTANGIBLES

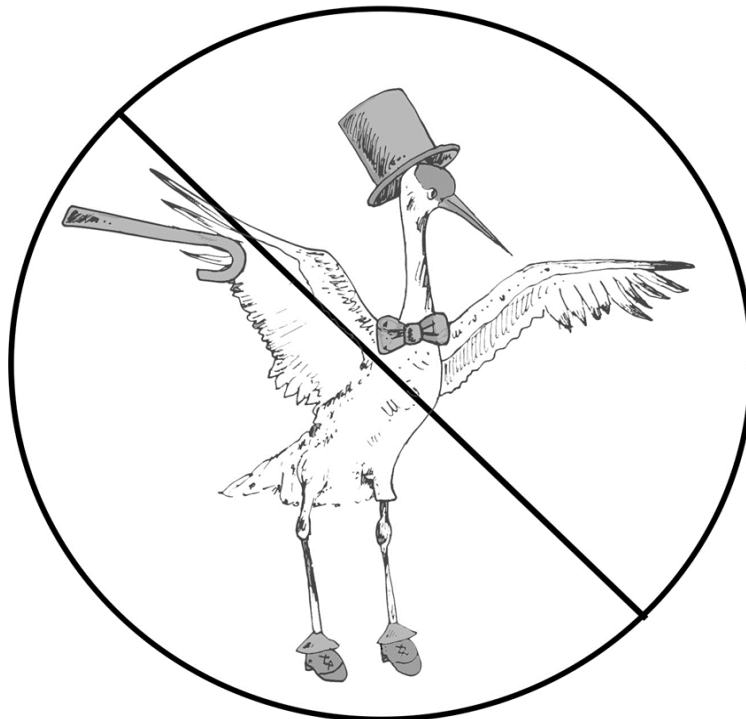
**What's the tangible?** "Sandhill Crane conservation is a success"

Question	Answer
Why is your audience interested in learning this fact?	The audience is attending the tour because they are interested in Sandhill Cranes. They should understand that the cranes are only able to exist because of habitat conservation, direct partnerships with farmers, and a lot of community support to protect them.
What emotions are evoked in your audience by learning this fact?	After hearing about community effort being an effective method of conservation, visitors can empathize that it takes teamwork to make big, positive changes in the world.

- "Sandhill Crane conservation is a success" is the tangible
- Value of Inspired Teamwork is the intangible, emotion or universal value

You can make connections through storytelling and sharing related personal and/or shared societal experiences.

Making human connections can be a very compelling tool for inspiring audiences, but we recommend against anthropomorphizing wildlife and resources. It is a fine line to be aware of!





Here are some more examples to help you connect tangible factual topics to intangible concepts that evoke emotion. You can make many more connections beyond these!

### **SANDHILL CRANE INTANGIBLE CONNECTIONS**

<b>Tangible Topics</b>	<b>Intangible Connections</b>
Sandhill crane reproductive cycle	Love for partners and babies
Crane vocalizations and behaviors	Communication in a community
Roosting in shallow wetlands	Concept of safety in numbers

## **Developing Your Theme Statement**

From these pairs, you can develop your theme statement. Look at the examples in the next chart to see how this is done. These are all complete theme statements that include tangible, factual information paired with intangible concepts. That first chart item is our topic that we began with!

### **COMBINING TANGIBLE TOPICS AND INTANGIBLE CONCEPTS INTO A THEME**

<b>Tangible Topic</b>	<b>Intangible Concept</b>	<b>Theme Statement</b>
Sandhill crane conservation is a success	Value of Inspired Teamwork	The community comes together for sandhill crane conservation
Sandhill crane reproductive cycle	Love for partners and babies	Sandhill cranes roost with family in flooded fields
Crane vocalizations and behaviors	Communication in a community	Crane conversations – learning to speak “sandhill crane”
Roosting in shallow wetlands (habitat conservation)	Concept of safety in numbers	Habitat conservation is the key to the successful survival of wildlife

## **Selecting Content for Your Talk**

Each tour is as unique as its Docent, and you have the freedom to choose which points you share. However, it is important to work with your tour partners and not lose sight of the point of the tour. There is a wealth of knowledge available about cranes, and it is easy to drown in information when developing tours. Omitting a few facts allows time for visitors to interact and ask questions. This interaction fosters a visitors' curiosity and investment in the resource. Be prepared to keep speaking sections short and sweet and maximize ways to physically and mentally engage visitors.

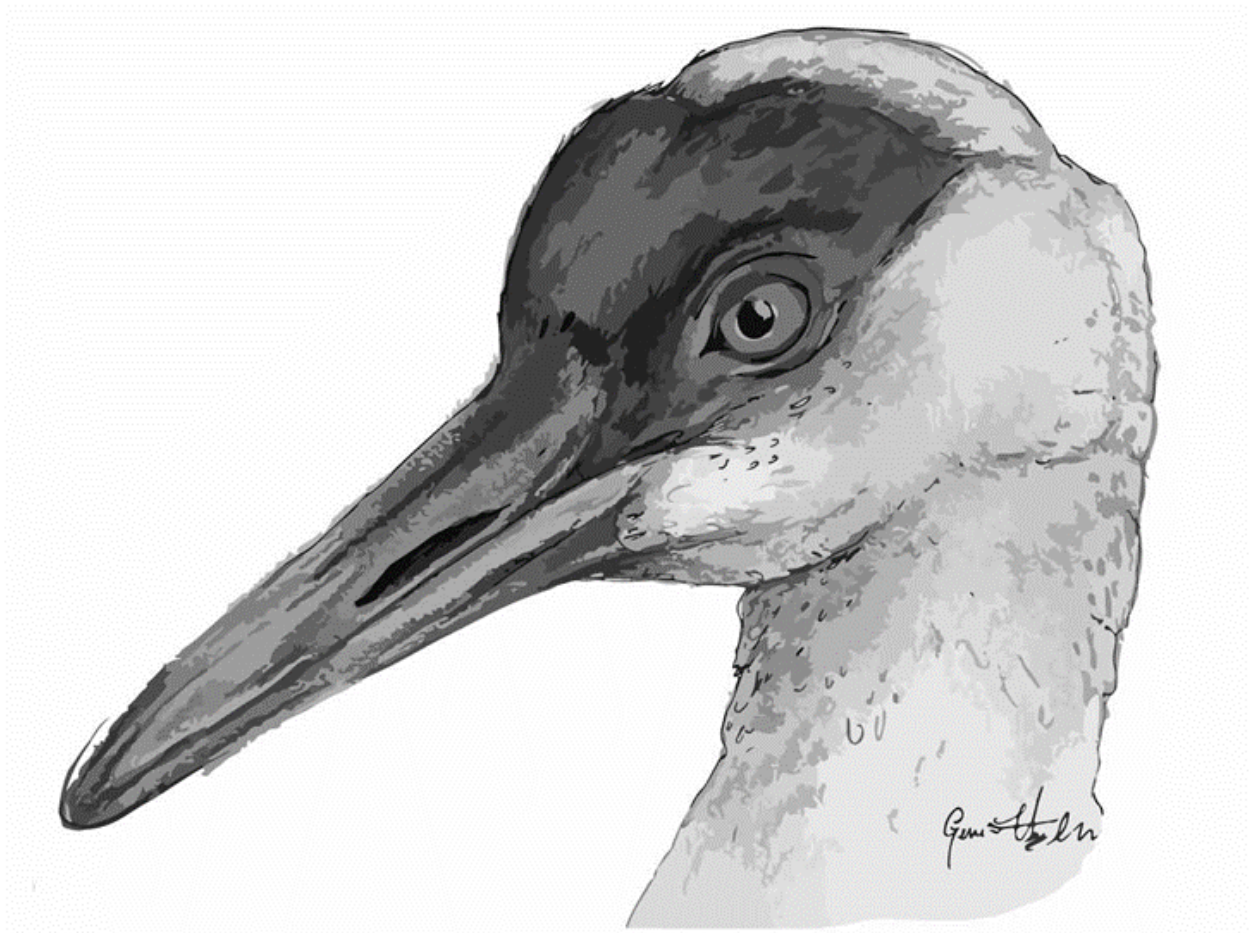




**Remember:** The point of this tour is to give visitors the opportunity to view Sandhill Cranes and learn about the success of their conservation history.








**Talking points that visitors find exciting:**

- Ways to identify Sandhill Cranes versus herons and egrets.
- Sandhill Crane evolution history, behavior, and vocalizations.
- Sandhill Crane migratory patterns and available habitat, past and present.
- History of Sandhill Crane conservation, CDFW's role in their protection.
- History and purpose of the Woodbridge Ecological Reserve properties.
- Wildlife viewing etiquette: how to respect wildlife and get birds to land close.
- Providing ways that visitors can support protection of cranes in their personal life.








## Helpful Links to Learn More

Link	QR Code
<a href="#">CDFW - Woodbridge Ecological Reserve</a>	
<a href="#">CDFW - Sandhill Crane Tours at WER</a>	
<a href="#">CDFW - The Majestic Sandhill Crane</a>	
<a href="#">Sandhill Crane Association - About the Cranes</a>	
<a href="#">National Audubon Society - About Sandhill Cranes</a>	
<a href="#">CDFW - Fishing and Hunting Regulations</a>	
<a href="#">CDFW - WER Sandhill Crane Docent Training</a>	



Link	QR Code
<a href="#">NAI - What is Interpretation?</a>	
<a href="#">SF Standard - The big birds are back! Here's where to see migrating cranes, geese and swans</a>	
<a href="#">SFGATE - Flocking to See Them / Tours to observe lordly cranes at Woodbridge Ecological Reserve</a>	





# Templates

## Mind Mapping Tool

Question	Answer
(1) Generally, my presentation is about...	
(2) Specifically, I want my audience to know about...	
(3) After hearing my presentation, I want my audience to understand that...	

See [“Mind Map Activity”](#) for more information.

## Linking Tangibles to Intangibles

### What's the tangible?

Question	Answer
Why is your audience interested in learning this fact?	
What emotions are evoked in your audience by learning this fact?	

See [“Connecting Tangible Facts to Intangible Concepts”](#) for more information.



is the tangible  
is the intangible, emotion or universal value



## Combining Tangibles & Intangibles

Tangible Topic	Intangible Concept	Theme Statement





## Sandhill Crane Talk Outline

**Theme:**

Time	Docent	Topic	Activity Plan
00:00-00:05			
00:05-00:10			
00:10-00:15			
00:15-00:20			
00:20-00:25		Wildlife Viewing Etiquette	How to respectfully view wildlife
00:25-00:30		Instructions for getting to WER North Shelter Behavior	Give directions on how to park, speed limit, establish visitor expectations for the Shelter

**Visual Aids:** ☐ \_\_\_\_\_ ☐ \_\_\_\_\_ ☐ \_\_\_\_\_ ☐ \_\_\_\_\_

**Introduction** (5 minutes)

**Welcome & introduce staff:**

**Theme & plan for the hour:**

**Topics of Discussion** (20 minutes)

**Topic #1:** (5 minutes)



**Topic #2:**(5 minutes)

**Topic #3:** (5 minutes)

**Topic #4:** (5 minutes)

**Talk Conclusion** (5 minutes)

**Wildlife Viewing Etiquette**

**Instructions for getting to and parking at WER North**

**Visitor Behavior Expectations at the Shelter**

**Notes:**