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FIRST BREEDING RECORDS AND HISTORICAL STATUS OF SANDHILL CRANES IN NEW ENGLAND

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Abstract: Sandhill cranes (*Grus canadensis*) nested at 4 sites in south-central Maine between 2000 and 2008 and at single sites in western Massachusetts and west-central Vermont in 2007 and 2008, continuing their eastward range expansion. Of 13 nests observed, 5 were in a lacustrine marsh, 2 were in a riverine marsh, and 2 were in beaver-impounded palustrine marshes, all dominated by cattail (*Typha* spp.); 2 were in lacustrine fen habitat dominated by sedges (*Carex* spp.), sphagnum, and leatherleaf (*Chamaedaphne calyculata*); 1 was in a lacustrine fen dominated by slender sedge (*Carex lasiocarpa*), sphagnum, and cattail; and 1 was in a lacustrine bog dominated by sphagnum, leatherleaf, sweetgale (*Myrica gale*), and slender sedge. Fourteen of 16 documented nest attempts hatched 1 or 2 eggs. Dimensions of 10 eggs averaged 90.5 mm (83.2-98.0) × 61.2 mm (55.2-62.1). In at least 11 instances, chicks survived to at least 8 weeks of age, including at least 3 2-chick broods. Reports of sandhill cranes in the 6 New England states have increased in frequency over the past 2 decades. A review of historical literature suggests that sandhill cranes were common migrants in the northeastern United States at least north to New England during the 17th and 18th centuries, and may have nested there as well, so recent range extensions may represent re-colonization of former range.

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Key words: breeding distribution, *Grus canadensis*, history, New England, sandhill crane.
