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# SELECTION CRITERIA FOR IMPORTANT SITES FOR WINTERING SANDHILL CRANES IN THE MEXICAN ALTIPLANO

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## SELECTION CRITERIA FOR IMPORTANT SITES FOR WINTERING SANDHILL CRANES IN THE MEXICAN ALTIPLANO

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**Abstract:** Conservation of natural resources has increased worldwide, and Mexico shows the same tendency. Unfortunately, selection criteria for conservation areas and objectives do not always follow a methodology that will allow for optimum selection. In Mexico and other countries we have a series of priority sites proposed by experts in various biodiversity areas, based on knowledge of the existing biological resources of the site. This results in two situations: more attention and resources are given to certain areas, but no resources are invested in sites that could be of equal or greater importance than those currently proposed. This leads to knowledge gaps. Ducks Unlimited de Mexico, A.C., and other organizations have taken the task of identifying important sites for conservation of wetlands, proposing the application of selection criteria that allow for an impartial selection and the identification of sites that require greater attention for management and conservation. This will permit some sites to be selected for financial support. Twelve basic selection criteria have been identified, some independent of others, that allow for a quantitative value to be applied to the area for waterfowl. These criteria are likely also applicable to sandhill cranes (*Grus canadensis*). Number of wintering birds, duration of wetland, size, isolation, availability in terms of quantity, quality and distance to food, are the criteria for which most points are given, while area isolation and associated species and quality of water in wetlands are secondary factors considered.

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