

Impact Statement

Aiden Schneider, Grade 12

Sandhill Crane, 2024.

Ceramic, 7 x 6.5 x 2 inches.

Germantown High School, Madison, MS

Unsung Hero: Jacob Valentine II

I found him when looking for something animal related or related to Mississippi and I chose him because I felt a sort of pride for being a Mississippian and seeing someone else from Mississippi do such great things for an entire species of birds. I find it admirable being so dedicated to a cause, especially in achieving something as great as saving an endangered species. I find his commitment and close proximity to where I'm from and what I've experienced when it comes to the wildlife of Mississippi inspiring. I wish for my artwork to tell his tale and show exactly what he saw in the species. I hope my creation honors his dedication to Mississippi wildlife.

In my piece, there are cranes inside of a fenced enclosure in their natural habitat. Although it's a little counterproductive to put a fence around birds that can fly, it's intended to convey that Jacob Valentine was the crane safe and secure and keeping a close watch to preserve the species. It is there to show Jacob Valentine's 2,000-acre refuge made for the Sandhill Crane called the Mississippi Sandhill Crane National Wildlife Refuge. The habitat is also to capture the beauty of the species. I admire Valentine's commitment to the Endangered Species Act and the preservation of the Sandhill Crane as well as having such a huge impact on the species alone. I admire his ability to see the beauty in Mississippi that most others don't often see.

My project is supposed to show the species that Valentine spent his life on and what he was so adamant about protecting. It takes a snapshot of the beauty and simplicity of the creature. I wanted to be able to capture a scene of the Sandhill Crane so that whenever someone sees it they can see the majestic nature of the bird and hopefully see what Jacob Valentine saw when he saved the Sandhill Crane from endangerment.

I learned about an unsung hero that is from my own state of Mississippi and was inspired by that to create an artwork about his biggest accomplishment and his purpose in the Endangered Species Act. This artwork has opened my eyes to the severity of Endangered Species and how committed someone has to be to save them from extinction. I will incorporate it into my major in college as well as my portfolio for artworks that will hopefully be questioned and observed by others. I hope it can open the eyes of others and allow them to see the importance of people like Jacob Valentine as I have. Being from Mississippi and seeing the wildlife and all the other species that are taken for granted is what made me want to make this piece. Despite being the

rarest bird in North American and only having 35 remaining cranes in the Gulf Coast of Mississippi, Jacob Valentine saw an opportunity to save and fight for the Sandhill Cranes.