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Review of *Sandhill and Whooping Cranes: Ancient Voices over America's Wetlands* by Paul Johnsgard

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Sandhill and Whooping Cranes: Ancient Voices over America's Wetlands. Paul A. Johnsgard. 2010. University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln, Nebraska, USA. 155 pages. \$12.95 (paper). ISBN: 978-0-8032-3496-3.

Paul Johnsgard has long been captivated by wild cranes and their unique vocalizations, courtship dances, and wide-ranging migrations. As a scientist and an admirer, Johnsgard has watched their migrations and behaviors for decades as hundreds of thousands of cranes staged each spring by the central Platte River, not far from his home in Lincoln, Nebraska. As an artist, he has skilfully captured their courtship dances and other behaviours in his exceptional line drawings. And, as an author, he has written extensively on their ecology in three earlier books: *Cranes of the World* (1983), *Those of the Gray Wind: the Sandhill Crane* (1986), and *Crane Music: a Natural History of Cranes* (1991). Much has happened relative to North American cranes in the 20 years since Johnsgard published *Crane Music*, including increased crane abundance in many areas and the completion of multiple studies on crane ecology and conservation. This new crane book serves as an update to *Crane Music* and provides the reader with many useful resources for observing and learning about cranes.

Johnsgard opens the book with a description of taking his granddaughter to the Platte River to view sandhill cranes departing from their roosts at sunrise and returning at sunset. He writes in lyrical language of the "unadulterated

magic" of the scene and describes the important role that the Platte River plays in the migration of North American cranes. The text then shifts to more standard prose as he describes the distribution and migration of North American cranes and summarizes new information about North American crane populations, recent conservation efforts, and recent and future conservation challenges. Line drawings of cranes and maps are found throughout the text.

The book consists of four chapters of text, followed by extensive reference information. The first three chapters describe the distributions, migration paths, and status of North American cranes, including lesser and greater sandhill cranes (both migratory and non-migratory populations) and whooping cranes (both wild Aransas-Wood Buffalo population and experimental flocks). Within each of these chapters, Johnsgard draws on recent surveys and research to bring readers up to date on the birds' status and other new findings. Citations of scientific articles are as recent as summer 2010 and cover a wide range of topics, ranging from surveys to genetics to reintroduction techniques. Some of the more notable activities since the 1991 book are the efforts to establish a non-migratory flock of whooping cranes in Florida and to establish a migratory flock that breeds in central Wisconsin and winters in Florida. This book provides one of the few published resources for the general public that describes those supplemental introduction efforts, including the many challenges faced by biologists and what was learned in the process. In his final chapter, Johnsgard reviews the current and future challenges facing sandhill and whooping cranes. For sandhill cranes, issues include changing food availability for migrating cranes that stage at the Platte River, river channel maintenance, administration of the Platte River Recovery Implementation Program, hunting, and a changing climate. His discussion of harvest clearly shows his disagreement with hunting cranes, and he "...wonder[s] about the humanity of people who think that killing cranes can possibly be sporting." For the whooping crane, he describes the growth of the Aransas-Wood Buffalo population and the devastating losses that coincided with drought conditions in the winter of 2008–2009. His ending paragraphs are a heartfelt call for conservation of cranes and their wetland habitats.

Covering nearly half of the book are appendices that provide extensive resources for the reader. The first appendix provides a thorough listing of crane viewing sites in the United States and Canada, with brief descriptions and contact information. Johnsgard also includes references, a suggested reading list, and online resources to guide interested readers to more information.

Johnsgard wrote this book to "...feed an unrelenting need to inform others of the special values and aesthetic appeal of wild cranes." His passion for these birds is clear throughout the book. *Sandhill Cranes and Whooping Cranes* provides a useful and largely nontechnical update on the current status of North America's two crane species and

a summary of research and conservation efforts over the last 20 years. It cannot serve as a complete compendium of crane ecology, but it complements the existing general literature. The book would be a good addition to the libraries of birders and others interested in the lives and conservation of cranes. Perhaps its most valuable contribution are the appendices, which provide readers with information on where they can observe cranes for themselves and resources to learn more about cranes. In that, Johnsgard has indeed been successful in his goal of informing others of these special birds.—*Jane E. Austin, 8711 37th Street SE, U.S. Geological Survey, Northern Prairie Wildlife Research Center, Jamestown, North Dakota 58401, USA.*
