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Book Review of *Cranes the Noblest Flyers: In Natural History and Cultural Lore* by Alice Lindsey Price

Felipe Chavez-Ramirez

Platte River Whooping Crane Trust, Wood River, Nebraska

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Cranes the Noblest Flyers: In Natural History and Cultural Lore. Alice Lindsey Price. Albuquerque: La Alameda Press, 2001. xvi+240 pp. Illustrations, index. \$20.00 paper.

This book is one of several dealing with cranes in recent years. Most offer general information and are not intended to be technical. As someone deeply interested in the plight of cranes, I applaud these efforts for increasing the general public's awareness of cranes and their conservation problems. It is well known that cranes in general have held important connections with human cultures in various parts of the world. *Cranes the Noblest Flyers* is an effort to explore and present some of those connections, intertwined with information on the family members and the situation of their representatives in current-day North America. The book mixes personal observations and impressions as well as philosophical discourses presented as metaphors with what other cultures may have felt and done in the past. Most sections begin with facts or an intriguing narrative, and proceed into other cultures' perspectives on or relationships with cranes. Though presenting an abundance of fascinating information in one place, the book at times is hard to follow. For example, the author's description of the awesome phenomenon of Sandhill cranes staging in the Platte River suddenly veers into an account of the phoebe she heard and where the name comes from. In a section on whooping cranes much space is spent on peregrine falcons. Granted that we can easily be sidetracked while observing nature because of the wide variety of events unfolding around us, a book whose stated objective is a natural history of sandhills and whooping cranes would have benefitted from the deletion of such distractions. Viewed in terms of its objectives, it also might have been better organized, with all the natural history information presented separate from the philosophical and cultural issues. There are good sections on the natural history of cranes, along with material on the people who work with cranes, though some historical and factual information has been left out.

Except for descriptions of the Platte River and migration spots along the central flyway, most discussion of the Great Plains is limited to references to geographical locations within the region. Here the author includes Lakota Sioux tales of how their people of origin paused to hear the “voice of cranes when they [flew] toward the region of pines.”

Cranes the Noblest Flyers presents much natural history and contemporary conservation history of cranes in North America. Readers interested in a quick survey of crane culture and lore may find the book appealing and will gain introductory knowledge of the natural history of our two North American cranes. Further knowledge is available through the volume’s list of references and addresses of organizations devoted to conserving cranes and their habitats. **Felipe Chavez-Ramirez**, *Platte River Whooping Crane Trust, Wood River, Nebraska*.