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Review of "Crane Music: A Natural History of American Cranes" by Paul A Johnsgard

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Crane Music: A Natural History of American Cranes. Paul A. Johnsgard. Washington, DC: The Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991. 136 pp. Maps, illustrations, references. \$19.95 cloth (ISBN 1-56098-051-6).

A well-known author among wildlife enthusiasts, Paul Johnsgard has dedicated much of his life to the study of birds. In his lyrically written *Crane Music*, Johnsgard thoroughly compares and contrasts the natural history of the world's cranes with special emphasis on the two North American species, the sandhill crane (*Grus canadensis*) and the whooping crane (*Grus americana*).

This book begins with an interesting historical overview of the importance of cranes to human cultures around the world. Through the years, these exquisite long-legged birds have influenced religion, mythology, derivation of words, and important conservation efforts. Johnsgard understands and ap-

preciates this influence as he points out the inseparable interrelationships among cranes, their natural habitats, and humanity.

Johnsgard devotes approximately half of *Crane Music* to the yearly life cycle of the sandhill crane, the most abundant of the world's 15 crane species, and the whooping crane, one of the most endangered wildlife species in North America. With the aid of maps and his own illustrations, Johnsgard presents in nontechnical terms, a wealth of information concerning American crane demographics, morphology, breeding biology, habitat requirements, and behavioral characteristics including social organization, call patterns, dancing, and nesting. The author also thoroughly describes the locations of sandhill and whooper breeding and wintering sites, migratory routes, staging areas, and current migratory corridors. The final sections of the book provide an overview of the natural history of the world's other crane species. Descriptions of the morphology, spatial distribution, habitat requirements and population status of each species are presented.

Throughout the book, Johnsgard discusses past and present crane conservation efforts. Because of increased human interest in North American cranes, considerable improvements have occurred in whooping crane populations since the 1970s. Unfortunately, this improvement does not exist globally. The number of crane species worldwide that have been classified as "endangered" has more than trebled since 1966. Johnsgard is concerned with this decline, and expresses his ideas for improving the situation. He reminds us that in the case of managing a species that migrates across international borders, conservation efforts require the cooperation of several different nations. He is also concerned with the possible negative impacts of legalized hunting on sandhill cranes and the loss of diverse natural habitats.

On a brighter note, this book is truly inspirational. Johnsgard proves the persistence of cranes as survivors and expresses his continued hope for an increase in crane populations. Also inspirational is the obvious special relationship that exists among the author, the sandhill crane, and Nebraska. Each spring, for nearly three decades, the author has witnessed the annual migration of between 400,000 and 500,000 sandhills as they stop to forage and roost within the endangered habitat along the Platte River. This event represents the largest and possibly most spectacular concentration of cranes

in the world, and it is evident in Johnsgard's writing that he experiences the same emotional excitement that observers typically feel while watching these large masses of mysterious birds for the first time.

Crane Music is not meant to be used as a technical guide to the biology of cranes. Instead, it is an introduction to understanding the natural history of cranes. The text, although packed with information, is a quick read. Most geographers would probably like to see the inclusion of more maps that show better detailed outlines of crane staging areas within North America. Overall, the book is an enjoyable one. It would be a worthwhile addition to the libraries of nature enthusiasts, especially birders. Hopefully the most important contribution of this book will be its influence on readers to visit crane sites and to contribute to crane conservation. Amy L. Richert, *University of Nebraska-Lincoln*.