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Cranes: A Natural History of a Bird in Crisis

Janice M. Hughes

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The history, habits, life and lore of a resourceful and iconic bird.

Long in neck, leg and wing, cranes are imposing wading birds that are among the largest and tallest of the world's bird families. Cranes are found on all continents except South America and Antarctica. They are typically associated with open wetland and grassland habitats, where their bright plumage, graceful proportions and convivial nature are displayed in elaborate dancing and duet calling. Those species that breed in the northern regions of North America and Eurasia undertake long migrations each spring and fall. Cranes choose life-long mates and are devoted parents that raise their young with both tenderness and determination.

Cranes traces the history of these fascinating birds from their early origins in the Mesozoic Era to the present day. The book covers anatomy, feeding habits, mating rituals, habitats, caring for the chicks, migration and seasonal movements. A special section is devoted to cranes in myth and folklore. Species profiles are included, along with range maps and conservation status of:

- Black-crowned crane
- Red-crowned crane
- Black-necked crane
- Sandhill crane
- Blue crane
- Sarus crane
- Brolga
- Siberian crane
- Demoiselle crane
- Wattled crane
- Eurasian crane
- White-naped crane
- Grey crowned crane
- Whooping crane
- Hooded crane.

Emphasis is given to the whooping crane as a case study of the environmental and human pressures that threaten the existence of all family members. Through the tireless efforts of many dedicated researchers and volunteers, this species is slowly being brought back from the edge of extinction. Operation Migration, the project to establish a migratory population of whooping cranes in the eastern United States, is profiled in a special chapter of **Cranes**.

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