

Book Review:

Cranes: Their Biology, Husbandry and Conservation

by Dale R. Thompson,
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Having worked with cranes at the Los Angeles Zoo, visited the Patuxent Wildlife Research Center in its early days (with long time friend Glen Smart), observed the Brolga Crane in the wilds of Queensland, Australia, I have long had an interest in the crane group of birds.

Years ago, in the Australian section of the Los Angeles Zoo, I was directed to catch a Brolga Crane and was warned that it could be quite aggressive. I entered the enclosure, carefully shielding my face, but upon approaching the bird she simply ducked her head down and speared a half-inch section out of my shin. And I've had some wild times catching escaped Wattled Cranes. There were also some more gentle moments such as the time we reared from the egg several Sarus Cranes.

I have met Dr. George Archibald and Dr. George Gee, two of the most learned, experienced scientists ever to study cranes. Their dedicated, indeed, passionate work with cranes bodes well for this small family of birds.

So when *Cranes: Their Biology, Husbandry and Conservation* was published recently, I wanted to read it immediately. *Cranes* is the result of over two decades of propagation research at the International Crane Foundation (ICF) and three decades of research at the Patuxent Wildlife Research Center. The book is the accumulation of the best in crane avicultural sciences.

Cranes was written by many authors, with one or more contributors writing each chapter. Numerous people were involved in the creation of this book including photographers, illustrators, field biologists, aviculturists, conservationists and others throughout the world—all involved in

some aspect of crane preservation. The book was edited by David H. Ellis, George F. Gee and Claire M. Mirande.

There are 15 species of cranes ranging throughout most of the world. Hopefully, U.S. readers are familiar with the Sandhill and Whooping Cranes—both found in the United States. The Whooping Crane is the rarest of all cranes while the Sandhill is the most common.

Cranes is divided into three broad general sections; biology, crane husbandry, and conservation. The biology section covers all known aspects of crane habits in the wild including social behavior, breeding behavior, etc.

The husbandry section (by far the largest) contains everything there is to know about rearing cranes in captivity. This section has chapters on diet, reproduction, medicine, surgery, artificial insemination to mention just a few. The subjects are treated in great detail, giving step by step instructions and detailed charts and record sheets.

The chapter on reintroduction techniques was my favorite. I learned, for instance, that even though cross-fostering is used as a management tool in captivity, fostering Whooping Cranes under Sandhill Cranes was discontinued because none of the cross-fostered Whoopers when paired and bred with their own species were successful.

The section on conservation presents the latest known data regarding the numbers, habitats, ranges, etc. of each species in its native habitat.

Cranes: Their Biology, Husbandry and Conservation costs \$49.95 and can be ordered from Hancock Wildlife Research Center, 1431 Harrison Ave., Blaine, WA 98230-5005. Tel: 800-938-1114 or 604-538-1114. Fax: 800-983-2262 or 604-538-2262. ➔

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