



FIREFLY BOOKS LTD.

66 Leek Crescent, Richmond Hill, Ontario L4B 1H1

(416) 499-8412 FAX (416) 499-8313

www.fireflybooks.com

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

www.fireflybooks.com

Contact: Valerie Hatton, 416 499-8412

email: valerie@fireflybooks.com

"Whooping cranes have been gracing our skies since time immemorial, with a fossil record that dates back to the Upper Pliocene of southern Idaho, some 3.5 million years ago...This book will unravel the tale of their near extinction and their slow climb back from the brink as it reveals those humans that played a hand in the journey, for this, too, is their story."

– Janice M. Hughes

CRANES

A Natural History of a Bird in Crisis

"Cranes are among the most severely threatened of all bird families," writes biologist and ornithologist Janice M. Hughes in her latest book, **CRANES: A Natural History of a Bird in Crisis** (Firefly Books, September 2008, \$45.00 hardcover). "Virtually all 15 species have suffered significant reductions in their geographic distribution and population numbers." Among those currently listed as endangered are the whooping crane, red-crowned, and Siberian cranes, with six other species considered vulnerable to extinction.

These statuesque wading birds, among the largest in the world, can be found on all continents except South America and Antarctica, where they live in open wetland and grassland habitats. Admired for their long necks and bright plumage, they are migratory, mate for life, and are tender parents to their offspring.

"The plight of the whooping crane is an epic tale, not bedecked in pomp and circumstance, but laced heavily with the injuries of cruelty and indifference," declares the author. Whether they were displaced because of human encroachment on their natural habitats, or hunted to provide beautiful feathers for ladies' hats, or used as target practice, the result was the same: a disastrous decline in the crane population.

Hughes traces the history of these fascinating birds, describing:

- profiles of 15 individual species
- anatomy
- mating rituals
- reproduction

continued.../2

- care of chicks
- feeding habits
- habitats
- behavior and social interactions
- migration
- seasonal movements
- cranes in myth and folklore

She exalts the tireless efforts of organizations such as the American Ornithologists Union, the Audubon Society, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Whooping Crane Conservation Association, The International Crane Foundation, as well as the many researchers and volunteers who have dedicated their lives to bringing these magnificent creatures back from the brink of annihilation.

Of particular interest is the section devoted to Operation Migration Inc.*, a non-profit organization founded in 1994 by pilots Joe Duff and Bill Lishman who have used their ultralight aircraft to establish a migratory population of whooping cranes in the eastern United States. Range maps and conservation status round out the volume.

CRANES chronicles their near extinction and survival, and presents a riveting case study of the environmental and human pressures that threaten their existence.

-0-

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: JANICE HUGHES is an Associate Professor and Curator of the Department of Biology Vertebrate Collection at Lakehead University. A member of the Society of Conservation Biologists and the American Ornithologists' Union, she is also the author of *The Royal Ontario Museum Field Guide to the Birds of Ontario*. She lives in Thunder Bay, Ontario

CRANES: A Natural History of a Bird in Crisis

By Janice M. Hughes

Published by: Firefly Books

Publication date: September 2008

Format: 8 ½ X 11; 256 pages; 90 photos; range maps, bibliography index

Price: \$45.00 plastic-laminated hardcover

ISBN: 1-55407-343-X; ISBN-13 :978-1-55407-343-6

*Bill Lishman and Joe Duff had successfully worked with three other species – their first efforts with Canada geese were the basis of the Columbia Pictures hit movie ***Fly Away Home*** starring Jeff Daniels and Anna Paquin. Both Duff and Lishman were stunt pilots in the movie. Please see www.operationmigration.org for more information.