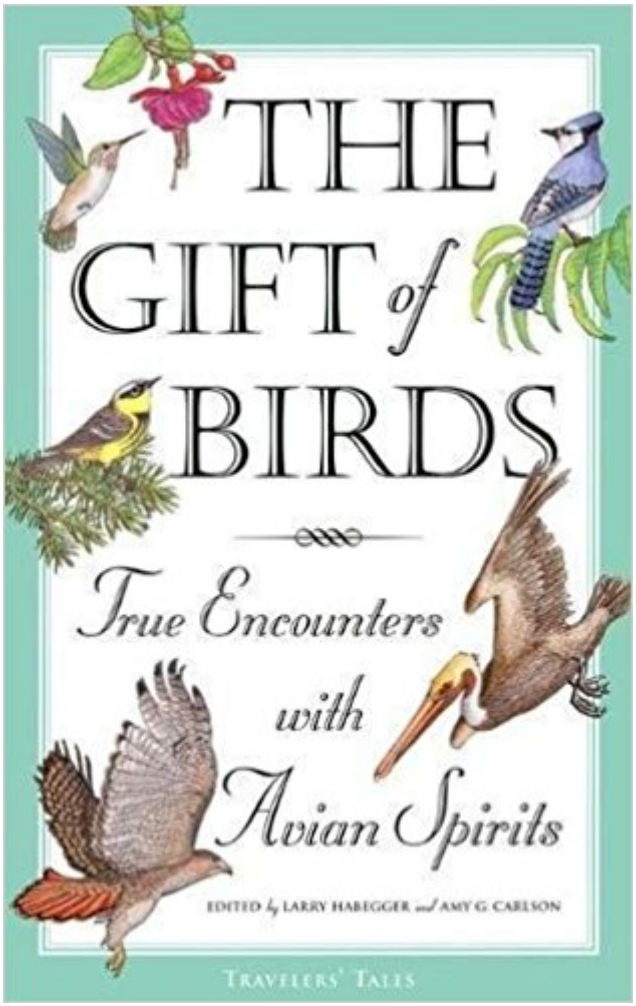
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The Gift Of Birds: True Encounters With Avian Spirits (Travelers' Tales Guides)



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Synopsis

Whether it roots us in our own backyard or takes us across continents, watching birds calls us to stillness and demands our keen attention to the details that flicker around us. This collection of stories will appeal to bird lovers everywhere.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

When a bird stops to glance sideways at us, it is inviting us into its world, if only for a moment. A bird's song can transport us into distant realms of the imagination; the sight of birds in flight can reconnect us to childhood, and to what matters in life. Bird enthusiasts Larry Habegger and Amy Carlson have assembled an extended celebration of the restorative and mysterious powers of our winged fellow travelers, enlisting well-known and emerging writers alike. Among the standouts of their anthology is Sigurd Olson's homage to the loons of the wilderness lake country of northern Minnesota; Diane Ackerman's lyrical memoir of a sojourn among the endangered short-tailed albatrosses of East Asia, whose flight "is the wind's way of thinking about itself

This anthology of 28 essays (five are original but most are excerpted from books) by 26 authors deals with how birds have affected people, primarily in a spiritual manner. The writers are for the most part naturalists but include such well-known disparate personalities as Peter Matthiessen and Alice Walker, as well as top birding gurus Kenn Kaufman and Pete Dunne. These thoughtful,

entertaining essays range from Central Park to Australia, from the Himalayas, Bali, and Africa to Utah. Dunne writes about how watching a birdfeeder brought joy to his ill father, Walker about how she was inspired by the maternal devotions of a hen in Bali. Others tell of encounters with birds of prey, rare cranes, and albatrosses; a person who gathers roadkills to feed vultures; or watching the antics of loons and pelicans. A stimulating collection of nature writing from an unusual perspective; for most collections.AHenry T. Armistead, Free Lib. of Philadelphia Copyright 1999 Reed Business Information, Inc.

A wonderful story about the interation with birds and people. A great read!

I confess to being a bit ignorant when it comes to birds. It’s not that I don’t like them, you understand. It’s just that I have never felt compelled to follow them into marshes, rainfrests or tidal plains, record their songs, carry bincoulars, notebooks and field guides to identify them or attend the meetings of our local birdwatchers’ club. On the other hand, I am great friends with the cardinal couple that visits the tree outside my window each morning and the java sparrows that nest in the eaves of the house next door. I have also made the acquaintance of several parrots in the neighborhood, and we get along just fine. So when I was given this collection of true stories to read, I thought, what the heck. Why not?Not only was I pleasantly surprised by the depth and range of the writing contained in this book, but I was touched by the effect birds have had on people’s lives. The book is divided into 5 sections, each with its own unique set of stories. Some of my favorites include the following:In Part I - Vivid Encounters, Diane Ackerman tells of how she broke her ribs climbing down vertical volcanic cliffs on a Japanese island to see the last of the short-tailed Albatrosses.In Part II - Kindred Spirits, David Duncan confesses to having robbed a great horned owl’s nest as a child.In Part III - Odd Ducks, Marie Winn tells of a magical day spent gettting lost and discovering birds in Central Park.In Part IV - Brushes with Divinity can be found the offerings of authors such as Peter Matthiessen’s compelling description of his visit to the breeding grounds of the great cranes in Siberia.Part V - Ascending Song consists of a single offering by Kenn Kauffman (author of Kingbird Highway) who tells of finding and listening to the song of a skylark out in the San Juan Islands.There are many more of course, from writers as diverse as Alice Walker, Louise Erdrich and Bernd Heinrich. All in all this is a wonderful read that shouldn’t be missed.

The Gift of Birds is a large collection of true story excerpts from various authors. The stories are separated into different parts as described by previous reviewers. Many of the authors are

’professional’ birders, scientists and ornithologists. They’re not what you’d call common bird watchers. When I bought this book I was expecting short complete stories from backyard bird watchers.Sorry to say, some of the stories I found tedious to finish. To be fair, I’ve never been an excerpt fan and this book is chalk full of story excerpts. Many of the stories I’m sure, lose much of their charm by not reading them in their complete state. Again- that’s why I don’t like excerpts.One story in this book disturbed me a bit. ’The Scarlet Pimpernel’ was a story where an older man captures unsuspecting city pigeons & relocates them in a country area. While, I’m sure the man intended the pigeons no harm, I couldn’t held but wonder if he waited until after mating & clutch-rearing season to capture these birds. During this story I kept imagining an abandoned nest full of baby pigeons with no parents around to feed them! Not a pretty thought if you love birds.On a brighter note, if you are a serious birder and you don’t mind excerpts, you will probably enjoy this book. If you prefer common jargon from common folk who love birds- you might want to check this one out of the library instead of purchasing it.

A retired old man was bored but poor, so he got into a smugggling avocation of sorts. His favorite booke he told an interested person was THE SCARLET PIMPERNEL about a renegade who saved prisoners from the guillotine during the French Revolution.When he had lots of spare time, he’d go to the railway station to dream of the places he wished he could visit if he had the money. There, he saw starving pigeons doomed to a lingering death. So he started off small on his smuggling a few very ill pigeons in a cardboard box to release them in the country. "Plenty of people object to pigeons flying in their faces and skimming over their heads." People like Whitt think their excrement is poison to humans.One day he almost missed the train and was helped on by a young woman who became his confidante. "First, you pick out your pigeon -- the most starved and persecuted." Handle it gently and pop it in the box. Get a few and start pretending you are the Pimpernel. "There’s an advantage to being small," he explained, "who would take me for the Scarlet Pimpernel." Indeed, most people look the other way when they see an old poor person, man or woman.He spent the spring months enjoying his adventures smuggling the birds on the rails to freedom in the beechwoods of the villages. "I sprinkle some grain and lift out my bird. I open my hands and up he soars into the clear air, a country bird instead of a city bird." The air is healthier and there is natural food for the birds.A cheerful comradeship developed between the two unlike conspirators for the intrevening weeks; but, one day, he was no longer there. "Now, when I stroll around our village and a silvery-gray cloud of pigeons rises up feasting on beechnuts, I think: "The Scarlet Pimpernel of the Central rescued them. I was not likely to forget him." Reminds me of Robert

Wrisley, wh'd do something similar and tell his big tales about imaginary travels around the world. Now, he is off to the big happy land in the sky where he can dream to his fullest extent and watch the pigeons flying around free and healthy, thanks to him.

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