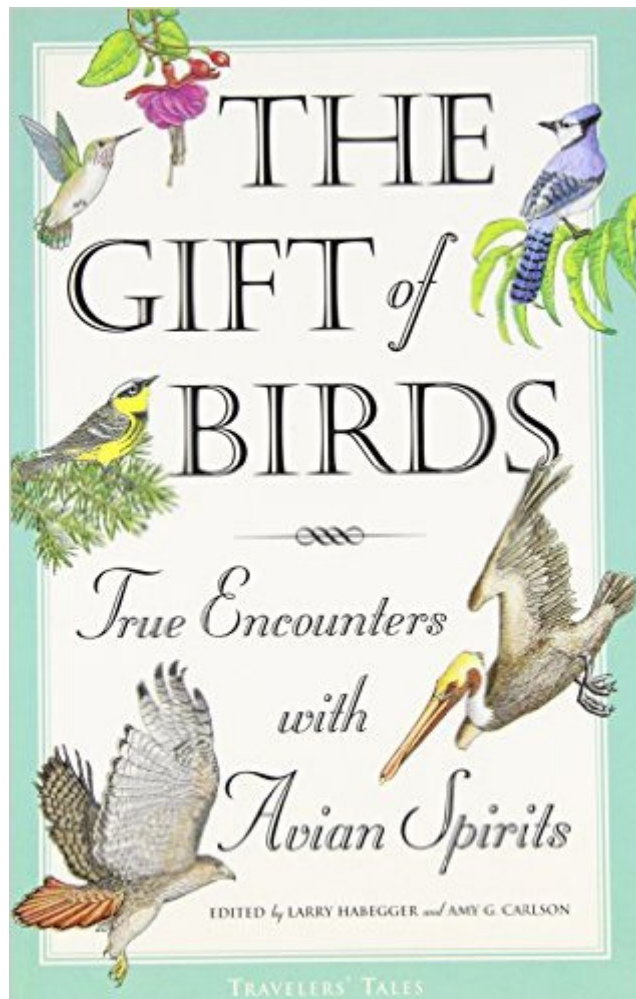


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# The Gift Of Birds: True Encounters With Avian Spirits (Travelers' Tales Guides)



## 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

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, rainforests or tidal plains, record their songs, carry binoculars, 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 getting 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.

A retired old man was bored but poor, so he got into a smuggling avocation of sorts. His favorite book 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 intervening weeks; but, one day, he was no longer there.

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