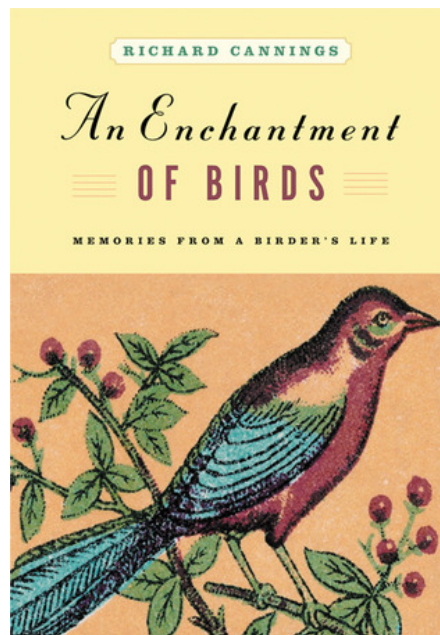




An Enchantment of Birds: Memories from a Birder's Life

Richard J. Cannings

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In these delightful meditations, biologist and bird lover Richard Cannings weaves stories of his personal encounters with birds into fascinating descriptions of their behavior, anatomy, and evolution. He muses over the meadowlarks' ability to hide their nests so completely that he has seen only two in a lifetime spent searching for them; the trumpeter swan, as picky as a two-year old, devouring potatoes and carrots but turning up its beak at Brussels sprouts; the northern gannet, with its snowy plumage, black wingtips, and startling blue eyes; the little saw-whet owl, which dabbles in bigamy and even trigamy; and more than two dozen other birds. Covering the entire continent, from the cacophony of a seabird colony on the shores of the Atlantic to a symphony of snow geese on the autumn plains to songbird courtship in the alpine tundra of the Rockies, *An Enchantment of Birds* informs and entertains, in one fell swoop.

Published in partnership with the David Suzuki Foundation.

An Enchantment of Birds: Memories from a Birder's Life Details

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From Reader Review An Enchantment of Birds: Memories from a Birder's Life for online ebook

Connie says

Very enjoyable book by Dick Cannings, renowned Canadian birder whom I've had the pleasure of briefly meeting. This book is for anyone who loves nature and enjoys anecdotes about the natural world.

John says

A very nice book about birding here in British Columbia.

sage says

4.5 stars

Fun fact, this book has been on my TBR since 2011, which is when I got it as a gift. It wasn't until I moved that I've never read it. So, 7 years later, here we are.

If you're a bird lover, want to hear more about birds from someone in the field of study, or for whatever reason think I give good recommendations, this is a lovely read. It has just the right equal parts of nostalgia, personal experiences and facts to make each bird's story interesting and engaging. Bits of humor and rawness tucked in there, too. Very solid read, makes me want to go bird watching again.

Erika says

This was a wonderful and lovely book, so accessible it felt like listening to a conversation with the author about his experiences with birds and nature.

Each chapter is about a different bird, some of their history and nature and his experiences in seeing them, often going back to when he was a child. Each chapter also only has one image of the bird in question, a simple black and white line drawing of each one and while as usual I would have loved color photos in this case the simple images really suited the book, photos would have been a detraction I feel.

I also appreciated his ecological message which brought the point of the need for better management of natural resources on our part without ever getting preachy.

Physically I also really liked the smaller than average book size, the quality of the paper (at least for this edition) and the simple but elegant cover and overall structure of the book.

George Ilsley says

A collection of sections, rather than a book length narrative. Each chapter is based on a bird. The author is a

biologist and there is much to learn from his stories. Who knew little chickadees could hiss when nesting? Each chapter can be read separately or in any order.

Mila says

I was pleased to see that some of my favourite birds such as the chickadee and crow made the list. Growing up in the Okanagan, the stories brought back memories for me. I was happy that the story about the drunk Bohemian (of course they were) Waxwings that I remember from a previous life (nudge nudge wink wink) was included.

bookyeti says

A flock of praise for An Enchantment of Birds

A flock of praise for An Enchantment of Birds

Biologist, naturalist, and bird enthusiast Richard Cannings' celebrated oeuvre isn't just for the birds. Whether you are a devout birdwatcher with binoculars and field book in hand, or someone who just enjoys learning more about the winged beauties that frequent the feeder outside your window, Cannings' beautifully written compilation of memorable sightings and stories of birds native to North America will delight and divert bird aficionados of any degree.

Harmoniously and skilfully, Cannings complements a delightful menagerie of personal encounters with his fine-feathered friends, with specifications of their niches, habitats spanning the Atlantic to Pacific coasts, identifying characteristics, patterns of behavior, remarkable details of anatomy, and function in the ecosystem.

From the Preface, where he recounts the beginnings of his fascination ("Once the spell has been cast, you forever experience the world differently, eyeing forests as if you were a woodpecker looking for nesting snags..."), to his childhood memories of early morning meadowlark songs drifting through his window, along with family hikes through woodlands and prairies, Cannings speaks candidly and affectionately about his lifetime love of birds and nature in general. "Whatever the origins of this interest, it is indeed an enchantment", Cannings writes.

These charming anecdotes and reminiscences, while comprehensive, are a refreshing contrast to a birder's guidebook detailing every statistic in deliberate textbook fashion. Its pages offer an up-close perspective and glimpse into the lives of these enchanting creatures. In addition, beautifully rendered sketches from illustrator Donald Gunn serve as a striking and almost-poetic complement to Cannings' expressive meditations on these wonders of wildlife.

Whether it is a rare sighting of the remarkably plumed white-headed woodpecker, the majestic bald eagle, and the flammulated owl ("one of those creatures that you do not see unless you go looking for them"), or the frequently sighted crow, bluebird and chickadee, Cannings' lyrical scrutiny brings these marvels of creation from the page in startling familiarity and clarity. Other birds captured between the pages of Enchantment, include the pygmy nuthatch, calliope hummingbird, evening grosbeak, bohemian waxwing, white-tailed ptarmigan, tufted puffin, and northern gannet, to mention just a few.

The author expresses his hope that “their stories will touch you as well and perhaps begin to cast a spell that will last a lifetime.” Without a doubt, Richard Cannings’ informative, yet delicately tender, labour-of-love, *An Enchantment of Birds*, will be sure to do just that — not unlike the subjects of his very own musings.
