



Beaks, Bones and Bird Songs: How the Struggle for Survival Has Shaped Birds and Their Behavior

Roger Lederer

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“Reveals the strange and wondrous adaptations birds rely on to get by.” —National Audubon Society

When we see a bird flying from branch to branch happily chirping, it is easy to imagine they lead a simple life of freedom, flight, and feathers. What we don't see is the arduous, life-threatening challenges they face at every moment. *Beaks, Bones, and Bird Songs* guides the reader through the myriad, and often almost miraculous, things that birds do every day to merely stay alive. Like the goldfinch, which manages extreme weather changes by doubling the density of its plumage in winter. Or urban birds, which navigate traffic through a keen understanding of posted speed limits. In engaging and accessible prose, Roger Lederer shares how and why birds use their sensory abilities to see ultraviolet, find food without seeing it, fly thousands of miles without stopping, change their songs in noisy cities, navigate by smell, and much more.

Beaks, Bones and Bird Songs: How the Struggle for Survival Has Shaped Birds and Their Behavior Details

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From Reader Review Beaks, Bones and Bird Songs: How the Struggle for Survival Has Shaped Birds and Their Behavior for online ebook

Siebert Tenseven says

One of the best books about bird characteristics and behavior I've ever read. There are enough interesting and obscure facts in this book to thoroughly impress every single person on your next Audubon hike. The mentions of environmental peril are practical and not relentlessly cloying. It's obvious this author knows his stuff and is not afraid to share it.

Max Ritter says

(Note: I listened to this on audiobook and found the narrator to be subpar, this might have effected my experience)

"Beaks Bones and Bird Songs" is a book about avian survival that zooms in on what many people overlook: the extreme situations birds go through regularly just to live. We view birds as living carefree lives of freedom and grace, when in reality they are constantly on alert against the thousand things that could kill them.

This book was interesting for sure, and there are certain parts that will stick with me. But the further along I got, the harder it got to pay attention and keep myself invested. I'm somebody who's pretty obsessed with birds, and even I reached a point of "ok, we get it, they're really strong!"

The tone of writing is a bit dry, and the fresh perspective on this topic only lasts for a couple chapters. For me, the beginning of the book was the most interesting (there's one great passage in which the author describes the kind of athleticism required by birds that fly over a mountain range every year as they migrate, and spoiler alert, it's pretty darn athletic).

For somebody with an academic interest, this book helps add on to a foundation of knowledge on behavioral ornithology. For anybody else, it's not the kind of non-fiction book that can keep a casual reader entertained.

Matt says

Birds are amazing, and not just because of Roger Lederer's (or my) bias. His new "Beaks, Bones, and Bird Songs" is a comprehensive book about birds, not limited to the elements mentioned in its title. In particular, he explains the evolved physical and behavioral characteristics of these animals and why they're important in the face of threats ranging from the immediate to long-term. There is always a trade-off, a disadvantage for every advantage. However, it's not a totally bleak picture: how adaptable birds can be comes up many times in many ways. Plus, there are many unknowns, meaning more areas for future research, which can help inform conservation.

Lederer tells you why there is not one perfect, universal bird, but thousands of species. His examples come from all across the ornithological spectrum, with the extreme ends often helping illustrate their incredible diversity. The Kiwi is often at one of these ends, as are hummingbirds, and penguins. The species are from all over the world, not just the familiar ones in North America, and he chooses to mention them in context of certain adaptations. Photos are included in case you have never seen (or maybe never even heard of!) a certain species, and some figures complement the writing, such as the physical forces involved in flight, though these are better seen on paper rather than in an ebook.

While it took me a while to finish, this is the kind of book you can pick up at any point and continue from where you left off. Very well organized throughout, the author's academic background guides the scientific layout. It is crammed full of information, but in concise, digestible sentences, never excessive or boring. It builds on what was previously discussed, and the author provides a summary at the end of each chapter. There's always more to learn about birds. After you read this book, you can observe them and have a better idea of why they are doing what they are doing.

Note: this e-book was provided through Net Galley. For more reviews, follow my blog at <http://matt-stats.blogspot.com/>

Hapzydeco says

Due to the efforts of some enlightened politicians and activist citizen groups, Roger Lederer is optimistic about the survival of birds. However, according to Roger, humans need to partner up with these always on task creatures to make survival certain.

Janis says

Ornithologist Lederer shares the hows and whys of bird physiology and behavior, with chapters on flight, migration, survival strategies, and more. The author conveys scientific information on a great range of topics in friendly and fascinating detail.

Mike says

Fantastic!

The best books make you want to learn more, and *Beaks, Bones, and Bird Songs* is a great example. I highly recommend if you are a fan of birds specifically or the natural world and natural solutions more generally. I for one will never look at even the most humble birds in the same way.

Carol Dix says

This is a lot like *The Genius of Birds* - but I liked it even more. Maybe the way it was organized, maybe the writer - but I'm more in awe and in love with birds than ever with this book.

Jen says

My brain. Is full.

I requested this book because it looked interesting. I didn't know much about birds at the time, other than. "Gosh, that bird sure is purdy and it's singin' is purdy too!"

Now, I will never look at a bird the same way again.

The author CLEARLY knows and LOVES his subject. This wasn't a labor of love, it's just love, pure and simple in word form. The reader can clearly feel and experience the author's love and enthusiasm for the feathered ones around us.

He is obviously incredibly well versed in the subject of birds, but despite me not knowing a thing, I never ONCE felt like I was being talked down to, like I should have known all of this already. It was told in an engaging way that doesn't turn off the reader. No holier than thou. The information is accessible and draws the reader in.

And unfortunately, spit me out. It took me about three weeks to read this book, because I kept stopping every five paragraphs or so to take notes. And not just on Goodreads. I took notes in a NOTEBOOK. I haven't done that since school, when I HAD to, and sometimes, not even then. This book was THAT good, THAT informative. I wanted to write it down so I would remember the information and share it with others. It was infectious!

Also, the notes/bibliography/etc, started at page 241 out of about 280 or so. The bibliography is 17 pages long and it is broken down into the chapters. The books he used for each chapter, divided neatly for reference. I LOVED it. Order, especially with books, is my thing and that rang all of my bells. Not to mention, FUTURE READING LIST!!!

Ok, to counter my rather chipper and over the top happiness, now for the bad.

Not with the book, no, never with the book, but with the failings of humanity that the book has to point out. Birds don't live in a vacuum, they have to deal with humans, and as the last few non-fiction books I have read have also driven home, is the fact that humanity sucks and the only thing we are really good at is killing other living things.

But the book is ended on a note of hope, that we will learn and that birdwatchers will save birds through their love for and active involvement in protecting the birds we have left.

I'm still rather negative about humanity in general, but I think that means I need a light, fluffy book next.

I highly recommend this book to anybody. You don't need to be an expert to enjoy this book and if you are an expert, I'm sure there are quite a few facts that you will learn from this book.

Five, flying, chirping stars!

My thanks to NetGalley and Timber Press for an eARC copy of this book to read and review.

Edie Kestenbaum says

a bit technical, but really really good!

Rianne says

#BirdsAreDope

Daniel Daniel says

An annoying and disappointing read, although you are sure to learn something.

Constructed as series of thematically linked bundles of information, it gives the impression that little distinction is made between facts, hypotheses and opinions. Snippets of information are often given without naming the associated researchers (you will have to deduce who did what through the bibliography) and this thoroughly annoyed me. There's a lack of flow in the text, as blocks of information are forcibly connected. Irrelevant personal commentaries and anecdotes are sometimes jammed in and achieve little. Figures are generally poorly chosen and/or barely informative.

A note : the author wrote that collecting the down of the Down Eider is done only in Iceland, but this isn't true. as this is also happening in Quebec. The Duvetnor society has been doing it since 1982 (I've worked with them for two years); the family responsible for managing the Biquette Island sanctuary also collects the down.

If interested, I would suggest renting the book and skimming it.

Wendelle So says

encyclopedic, exhaustive list of the diversity of ways birds adapt in their foraging habits, migratory habits, flying skills, etc... this is the book for you only if that is exactly what you're looking for

Rebekah Gamble says

I rented the audiobook of this for a month off hoopla and enjoyed it so much I replayed portions of it for different people in the family. It's entertaining, interesting, and easy to read. We had a lot of fun applying bird behavior to 'what if we acted like that,' and I found the adaptations on the beaks and wings particularly interesting.

Dewayne Stark says

So nice he added pictures. When reading a book like this I am constantly bouncing between my Kindle and Google Chrome trying to see what the different birds look like.

Thomas Stevenson says

I am fascinated by birds. I enjoy watching them, identifying them, seeing them migrate, and nesting. But there is lot about bird life I didn't know. Roger Lederer fills in the many gaps in my understanding in this wonderful examination of how birds have evolved and will have to keep changing as the climate changes.
