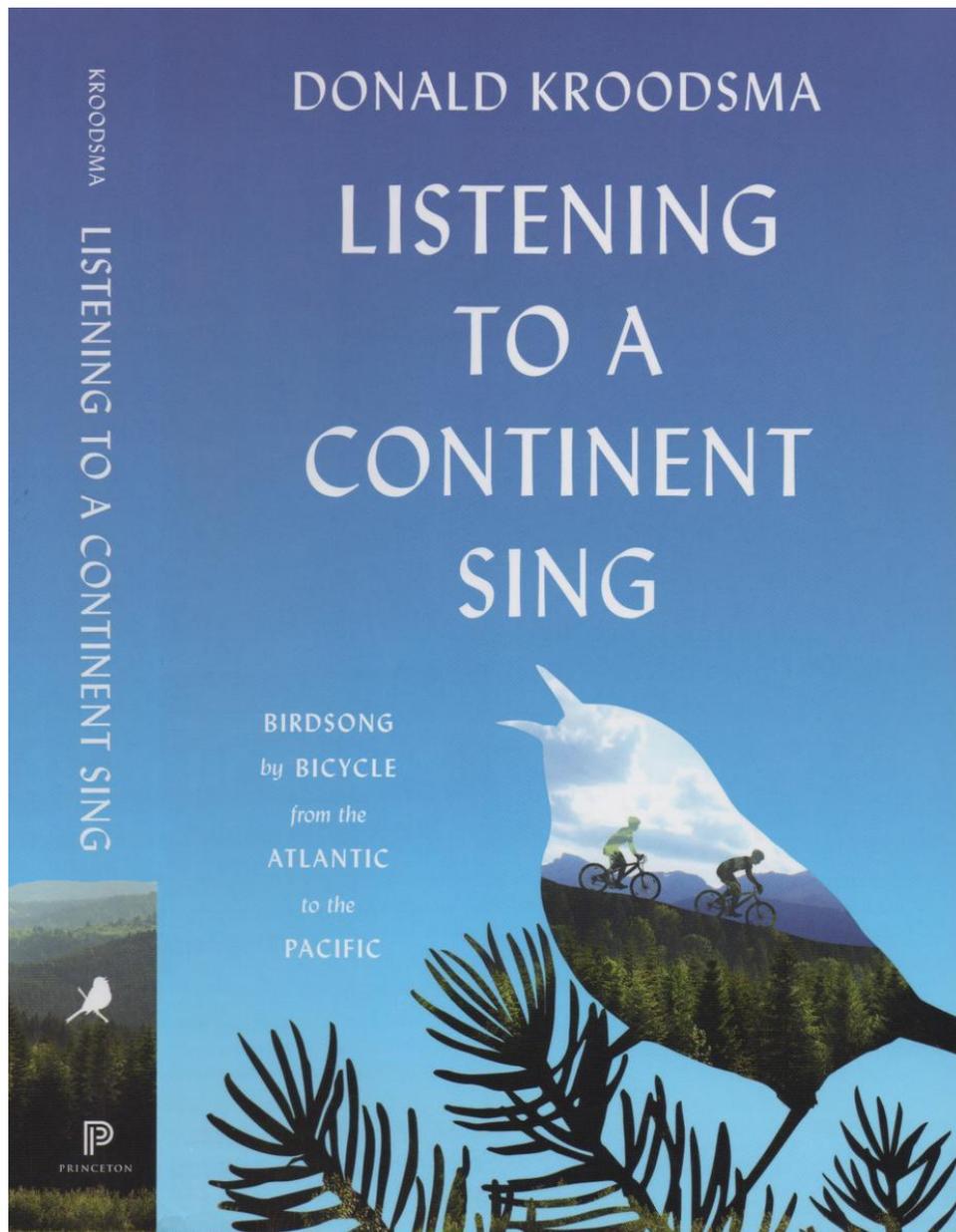


<http://www.ocregister.com/articles/listen-718562-bird-book.html>

The Orange County Register

New book chronicles an adventure in birdsong



“Listening to a Continent Sing: Birdsong by Bicycle From the Atlantic to the Pacific” by birdsong expert Donald Kroodsma (Princeton University Press) was released this week just in time for Father’s Day.

The book chronicles the adventures of the author and his son, David, as they traveled along the TransAmerica Bicycle Trail from Yorktown, Virginia, to the Oregon Coast in 2003, listening to and recording the calls and songs of birds along the way.

While most cyclists start this trek at the Pacific to take advantage of the prevailing winds, they had several reasons for going the opposite direction. First of all, they reasoned that the sun would be at their backs. And as the sun sweeps from east to west, so does the birdsong. Starting in May, they could take advantage of the springtime birding through Virginia and Kentucky. If they chose to travel from west to east, they would arrive in those states during the heat of the summer and miss out on the springtime serenades.

Thirty-five years of scientific experience in ornithology enabled Kroodsma to not only identify the bird species, but to listen and understand what might be happening in their world. In the book he told his son, “I hear each bird not as a species to be identified and listed, which is a rather limited endgame, but as an individual with something to say, much as I listen to any human individual with something to say, not just someone to be identified. And when a bird sings or calls, it tells what is on its mind, which varies from moment to moment, so that every listen is new and different and interesting.”

Readers can listen to the birds heard along their nearly 5,000-mile journey by using a QR code reader on a smartphone to link to the audio recordings. A simple click on the code in the book will play the sounds of a particular bird. These 381 recordings include the sounds of caterwauling barred owls from the men’s first night in Virginia, to the duet of wrentits on their final day at Land’s End, Oregon.

While the book may be categorized as a birding adventure, it is also the story of a father and son deepening their bond as they cycled by day and camped by night together for 10 weeks. At the time, David had just graduated from college, while his father was struggling with the decision whether to leave his professorship at the University of Massachusetts. Through it all, they manage to appreciate each other’s philosophies and habits. David believed it “best not to get up before the sun,” while his father enjoyed the birds’ finest hour before dawn.

For more information, and to listen to bird recordings, go to listeningtoacontinentsing.com.

Jennifer J. Meyer is a freelance writer from Mission Viejo. Write to her at jjthebackyardbirder@gmail.com or visit her blog at jjthebackyardbirder.com.