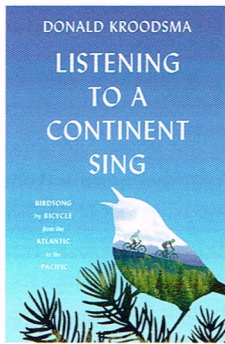


LISTENING TO A CONTINENT SING: BIRDSONG BY BICYCLE FROM THE ATLANTIC TO THE PACIFIC

By Donald Kroodsma
Princeton University Press,
2016



Ever dream of shedding your routines and heading for the open road towards adventures unseen and unheard? Through *Listening to a Continent Sing*, author Donald Kroodsma shares the joys and discoveries of such a journey as he and his 24-year-old son bike from the Atlantic to the Pacific. Choosing to travel from east to west, with the morning sun at their backs, from May through July, Kroodsma immerses himself in a symphony of birdsong following the TransAmerica Trail bicycle route.

Kroodsma, professor emeritus of ornithology at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, is to birdsong what a sommelier is to fine wine. With ears as finely tuned as a musician able to recognize a symphony by the first few notes, he identifies a variety of bird species and their many song variations. He also provides QR codes, which allow the reader to listen to recordings and samples on a camera-equipped cell phone. (Additional background information and photos can be found on the book website, <http://listeningtoacontinentsing.com>). Mnemonic transcriptions are provided, but nothing compares to losing oneself in the accompanying soundscape.

In addition to serving as a thorough auditory field guide, Kroodsma's book treats readers to a heartwarming tale of a father-son journey, complete with close encounters with kind strangers whose colloquial dialects and cultures mirror the land on which they live (as do the songs of the birds!). Illustrations peppered throughout the book call to mind a simpler time when an honest journey and good companions were all that mattered. Sharing his own reflections on self-discovery, Kroodsma offers the reader the question that weighs heavily upon him as he crosses the continent: what comes next?

Listening to a Continent Sing is a feast for the senses and will no doubt inspire many to listen more deeply and more intently on the next walk or bike ride. —HO

Mark Your Calendar: Donald Kroodsma will be lecturing at the Central Park Arsenal on Monday, June 13, at 6:30pm. See page 14 for more information.

Planning a Journey? Here's a Birdsong-Inspired Playlist!

In addition to keeping your ears tuned when you are outdoors, below is a list of music inspired by birdsong for your daily commute or summer travels. It is by no means comprehensive, but as Kroodsma highlighted the many dialects of birds influenced by regions and cultures, so this list includes multiple genres to explore:

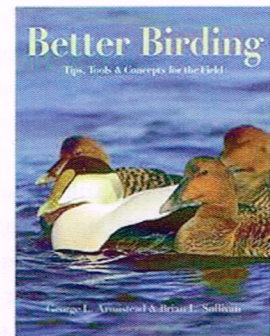
1. 20th Century Classical: *Le Merle Noir* by Olivier Messiaen captures the song of the blackbird.
2. Bluegrass: "Birdsong" by The Wailin' Jennys captures the essence of summer birdsong and freedom in the lyrics.
3. Brazilian Jazz: "O Pato" by João Gilberto. Swans, geese, and ducks are "quoted" in this light-hearted samba.
4. Jazz: "Strange Meadowlark" by Dave Brubeck. This piece was likely inspired by the meadowlarks Brubeck would have heard during his youth on the West Coast.
5. Folk: "The Littlest Birds" by The Be Good

Tanyas. It is said the smallest birds sing the prettiest songs! (This is subjective, but songbirds do sing the more complicated tunes, as we learn in Kroodsma's book.)

Do you have additional suggestions? Please share them at www.facebook.com/nycaudubon. —HO

BETTER BIRDING: TIPS, TOOLS, AND CONCEPTS FOR THE FIELD

By George L. Armistead and
Brian L. Sullivan
Princeton University Press,
2015



This beautiful book, *Better Birding: Tips, Tools, and Concepts for the Field*, is not aimed at beginners. But that doesn't mean enthusiasts of all levels won't learn from it. The stunning photos make it irresistible to page through while picking up knowledge along the way. Ornithologists George Armistead of the American Birding Association and Drexel University and Brian Sullivan of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology cover everything from plumage patterns to foraging through illustrative photos and explanatory text that reveal the techniques of expert birders.

The authors advocate "wide-angle birding": seeing the big picture and a particular bird in context. Ask yourself what the environment is like. Pay attention to what the bird is doing. And use the handy acronym GISS, which stands for general impression, size, and shape—all essential