



The Life of Birds

David Attenborough

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Based on the spectacular ten-part program on PBS, *The Life of Birds* is David Attenborough at his characteristic best: presenting the drama, beauty, and eccentricities of the natural world with unusual flair and intelligence. The renowned writer and filmmaker treks through rain forests and deserts, through city streets and isolated wilderness, to bring us an illuminating panorama of every aspect of birds' lives--from their songs to their search for food, from their eggs and nests to their mastery of the air. Beautifully illustrated with more than a hundred color photographs, the book will delight and inform both bird lovers and any general reader with an interest in nature.

Attenborough begins at the beginning: reviewing ideas about how and when creatures first took to the air--and why ostriches, kiwis, and other flightless birds later returned to the ground. He introduces us to the marvels of flight. We encounter the albatross, which can soar for hours without flapping its wings; hummingbirds that beat their wings two hundred times a minute; and the swift, which eats, sleeps, and mates in mid-air. We read about birds' extraordinary methods of hunting and gathering--about crows that use twigs and leaves to hook and harpoon insects, and eagles that can stamp venomous snakes to death. Attenborough explains why and how birds sing and why many have such dazzling plumage. He reviews courtship and mating strategies, including the extravagant dances of cranes and the bizarre and ornate pavilions that male bowerbirds build to attract females. We learn how birds defend their young against predators. Attenborough explains how birds have colonized the globe more effectively than any other vertebrates, adapting to Antarctic winters and African summers, to vast oceans and the densest, most polluted cities. He also outlines the threat that humans pose to many species, showing how we have already driven many to extinction.

The book presents birds in all their complexity and glory, revealing in clear and elegant prose Attenborough's infectious sense of wonder about the rich variety of life on Earth.

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