

NEW(ISH) AND NOTEWORTHY

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The Gull Guide: North America

Ayyash, A. (2024). Princeton University Press. Princeton, United States. 528 pp. Paper, ISBN: 978-0-691-19589-6. US\$40.

Several wonderful photographic guides to gulls have come out in recent years—Pete Dunne and Kevin Karlson's *Gulls Simplified*, Fred Schaffer's *Gulls of North America*, to name a couple—and so it was with the slightest eyeroll that I noticed Princeton University Press was planning to add yet another to the pile. More fool me. Amar Ayyash's *The Gull Guide* is thorough and lovely, and a fantastic addition to any shelf of gull identification books. The book has detailed discussions on taxonomy, aging, and molt, and species accounts for almost every single gull that has ever looked at the North American continent, including seven of the most common hybrids. Throughout are nearly two thousand photographs of all the different species in life stages from every conceivable angle and light level. When it comes to gull guides, you should clearly be hesitant to call any particular one *definitive*—for surely another will be published in a couple of years or so—but *The Gull Guide* just might be.

Flight of the Godwit: Tracking Epic Shorebird Migrations

Beehler, B. M. (2025). Smithsonian Books. Washington, D.C., United States. 272 pp. Cloth, ISBN: 978-1-588-34787-9. US\$28.

Shorebirds admittedly are not seabirds in the classical sense, but their worlds occasionally overlap, most especially during the former's famous transoceanic migrations. In *Flight of the Godwit*, ornithologist and author Bruce Beehler recounts his travels in search of what he calls the "Magnificent Seven"—those most august and longest-migrating of the sandpipers. (Plovers apparently need not apply.) Beehler is doing a lot with this book: sharing his adventures from four years of road and plane trips through 37 U.S. states and nine Canadian provinces as he follows Hudsonian godwits and their kin on their own journeys; covering the natural history of the Scolopacidae; and discussing advances in shorebird migration studies. Throughout are species-specific boxes of other (lesser?) species Beehler encountered here and there on his journeys. Alan Messer's black-and-white illustrations complement the work.

Blue-Footed Boobies: Sibling Conflict and Sexual Infidelity on a Tropical Island

Drummond, H. (2023). Oxford University Press. Oxford, United Kingdom. 288 pp. Cloth, ISBN: 978-0-197-62984-0. US\$88.

For four decades, Hugh Drummond has immersed himself and his students in a life of "blood, gore, and cuckoldry," which is to say he has immersed himself in the domestic life of the blue-footed boobies on Isla Isabel off the Mexican coast. His eponymous book is a rich account all he has learned from there, full of amusing anecdotes and detailed ventures into evolutionary theory. Siblings kill siblings while their parents turn a blind eye to the suffering of the weak, perhaps because they themselves are too busy cheating on each other. As scientific writing goes, the book is vivid and often enthralling. But more than as mere amusements, Drummond argues that in the hijinks of the blue-footed booby, people can find perhaps a better model for their own endless social soap operas. "Animal behavior," he writes at one point, "might explain human misbehavior."

We Loved It All: A Memory of Life

Millet, L. (2024). W. W. Norton. New York, United States. 254 pp. Cloth, Paper, ISBN: 978-1-324-10525-1. US\$19.

As a writer, Millet, who also works for the Center for Biological Diversity in the U.S., is known primarily for her fiction; she has written fifteen novels, including the National Book Award nominee, *A Children's Bible*. *We Loved It All* is her first foray into non-fiction, in the form of a memoir; or, as Millet calls it, an anti-memoir. Embracing a contrarian genre is fitting for her project, drawing as she does from her professional roles as writer and environmentalist. "My presence in both these subcultures is liminal," she writes. "I float around on the margins. Neither fish nor fowl. Not really an activist, due to my aversion to slogans and crowds and open conflict. But also not a constant participant in the establishments of publishing or writing." As a result, she has freed herself here to meditate on whatever catches her fancy: being a parent, being a child, growing up in Toronto, a steady parade of animals and plants and philosophers, all informed by the extinction crisis and climate change and what it means for us going forward. At times the book can be an acquired taste, but these are trying times. "The saving of our descendants from a dreary solitariness of being is the single task, among so many stretching before us, that can only be performed now," Millet writes. "In the rushing time of our too short lives."

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