



The Names of Birds: Poems

Tom Crawford

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A nuthatch walking perpendicular down a tree, "dressed to kill," the hydraulic lift of the sand hill cranes' legs at take-off, the song of the vireo. Perhaps birders are a special species but they also include many of us, who if not trained to binoculars, are still stopped in our tracks at a flickering wing in our peripheral vision.

In this latest collection of poems, Tom Crawford lends his keen sense of observation and resonant language to the wonder and evocative nature of birds in all their multiplicity. Here are a hundred pages of remarkable poetry, poems, which, in their accessibility and lyrical celebration, establish man's essential connection with birds and the natural world. As he says in his prologue, "We are spiritual animals. When we forget this essential truth, we invite calamity." These poems are offered like prayers-as if by naming the thing- like Shackleton planting a flag at the north pole -the poet stakes a claim for birds, and by extension the planet. His poems sing an ancient truth: to lose our sense of wonder is to lose ourselves.

What makes THE NAMES OF BIRDS unique is the balance the poet strikes between fear and hope, mystery and wonder. This he achieves by telling us a story in poetry of his own beginnings as a boy discovering birds and their magical place in his young life, a story readers of all ages can relate to. Through his evolution to maturity-- his journey from Michigan, to southern California, the Pacific northwest, Manhattan, New Mexico and Asia- China, Korea - his writing becomes infused with Eastern thought and a sense of mysticism. A book for birders and serious readers of poetry alike.

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