

Nest Eggs Feather

With their bright colours, detailed plumage and graceful movements, birds can send our imaginations soaring. Deborah Samuel's The Extraordinary Beauty of Birds illustrates the splendour of nature, from the carefully constructed nest of the Golden-Winged Warbler to the delicate spotted eggs of the Eastern Wood-Pewee.

FEATHER

The striped plumage of the Superb Lyrebird is stiff and strong to help with flight. The pattern is flaunted as a courtship display during mate selection.



Deborah Samuel on *How She Sees Birds*

After darkness comes the light. Metaphorically and spiritually, birds have become the agents of that transition. In their flight they break free of the earth, with all its complications and anxiety, and soar above it in a realm closer to heaven. They are symbols of freedom and harbingers of whatever lies above. In 1958, Ferlin Husky sang, "On the wings of a snow white dove . . . A sign from above, on the wings of a dove."

Birds inspire us. Their flight is transfixing. They are compelled by mysterious instincts to feats of migratory endurance far beyond their size and apparent strength. Their beauty is limitless and rare. When we are weighed down with worries and burdens, they lift our spirits. In our dreams, the bird expresses the possibility of escape—the desire for liberty. Birds seem to embody our deepest emotions—their flight can literally carry us away.

Birdwatching is an enormously popular hobby throughout the world. As Joseph Wood Krutch puts it, "it is the joy that cannot be analysed." Birdwatchers will travel long distances to sit in motionless silence, hoping to see a bird. And failure does not deter them.

These photographs of feathers and nests, eggs and birds are the soaring conclusion to a meditation on what it means to be alive. In the diptych of an American Robin Egg and Nest there is the architecture of all life in one powerful image. The feathered eye of an Osprey looks back at you as if to remind you that you are not alone.

The Extraordinary Beauty of Birds is a magnificent document, full of unexpected portraits and of abstract ideas personified through art. This is one photographer's journey to the light, a celebration of the beauty in life.

[From *The Extraordinary Beauty of Birds*; Prestel; June 2016; photographed at the Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto]



NEST (left)
The nest of the Golden-Winged Warbler is built by the female in just three days, usually of dead leaves and coarse plant material.

FEATHER (right)
The spotted feathers of the Satyr Tragopan are highly valued for use in fly-fishing.

Where the Birds Are

by Adam H. Graham

Four Seasons destinations for enjoying avifauna

Middle East

Four Seasons Resort Dubai at Jumeirah Beach

Dubai may not seem like a birders' paradise, but the lush, fountain-filled spaces cropping up across the city have become drinking and resting sanctuaries. Hoopoes, Red-Vented Bulbuls and Purple Sunbirds are frequently seen at the Resort.

Central America

Four Seasons Resort Costa Rica at Peninsula Papagayo

Costa Rica is rich in bird biodiversity, with more than 850 species, including Blue-Crowned Motmots, Resplendent Quetzals, Scarlet Macaws, Volcano Hummingbirds and Yellow-Throated Toucans. The Resort's bird walks regularly witness several species.

Asia

Four Seasons Tented Camp Golden Triangle

The moist bamboo forests and grasslands promise bird sightings aplenty. Look for Large-Tailed and Grey Nightjars, Brown Hawk Owls, Pied Kingfishers, Drongo Cuckoos, Greater Coucals, Blue-Winged Pittas and Scarlet-Backed Flowerpeckers.

Australia

Four Seasons Hotel Sydney

Australia is home to around 342 endemics, while urban Sydney hosts several, including Sulphur-Crested Cockatoos, Rainbow Lorikeets, Crested Pigeons, Laughing Kookaburras and Superb Fairy-Wrens.

North America

Four Seasons Resort Hualalai

Of 44 endemics in Hawaii, 10 are extinct and 33 endangered. The Big Island offers the state's best birdwatching; endemics include the Akiapolaau, the Yellow Nukupu'u and the Crimson I'iwi.



FEATHER (left)
The size of the white tail spots helps distinguish the Yellow-Billed Cuckoo from the Black-Billed Cuckoo.

EGG (right)
Pale white with brown blotches at the larger end, the eggs of the Eastern Wood-Pewee are perfectly camouflaged in their nests covered with green and grey lichens.