For Nic and Bruce, who made it possible for me to write this book surrounded by the birds of New Zealand.

Séraphine Menu

For the kingfisher, the robin and for all those that go 'cheep-cheep'.

Fleur Oury

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The Call of the Birds

How We Can Help Birds Everywhere

post wave

FASCINATING BIRDS

Birds have always captivated men and women alike. Their **plumage**, their song and their flight patterns have intrigued scientists as well as artists, farmers and romantics. Mysterious and free, birds were also the inspiration for humankind's craziest project: learning to fly ourselves.

Ever fascinating, birds feature in fairy tales, legends and folklore. Humans even invented a mythological bird – the phoenix – which is the colour of fire, can burst in to flames and then rise again from its own ashes. We also tell children that storks deliver babies!

To this day, bird references form a part of our everyday lives. The owl is a symbol of wisdom, a swallow signifies the arrival of summer and a raven is a bearer of bad news. Someone who is cheerful is said to be 'as happy as a lark', while a person who can't stop talking is 'as talkative as a magpie'.



But birds are more than just the symbolic traits attributed to them. Magpies, for example, are not only ‘talkative’, they are also incredibly sensitive. When one of them dies, they hold a kind of funeral ceremony.



Albatrosses are also sentimental: they remain faithful to the same partner all their lives. Carried by their immense wings, these seabirds fly tens of thousands of kilometres across the oceans, but always return to spend the mating season with their partner.

And what about starlings, who ‘dance’ in the sky? Every evening, as they search for a place to roost, thousands of individuals come together to perform a synchronised dance, possibly to deter any **predators** in the area. These huge swarms of starlings – known as ‘murmurations’ – offer a breath-taking spectacle to those lucky enough to come across them.



Albatrosses and starlings are not the only birds who regularly leave one part of the world for another. Half of the world's feathered population do this. Birds often fly to warmer climes for the winter and return to their original habitats in the spring to breed. This is called migration.

There are many different types of migration: a nightingale travels in stages, with many breaks, while a swallow can travel almost 1,000 kilometres without stopping.





Young wild geese rely on their parents to show them the way, while a cuckoo makes its way alone once it has left the nest.

For **migratory birds**, life in the sky is made up of cycles, of departures and returns, and journeys that end and then begin again. But in recent years, fewer and fewer birds have been returning to the Northern Hemisphere in the spring. The countryside is growing quiet, the forests are deserted and the cities seem populated by just a few different species. So, where have all the birds gone?

HUMAN MEETS BIRD

