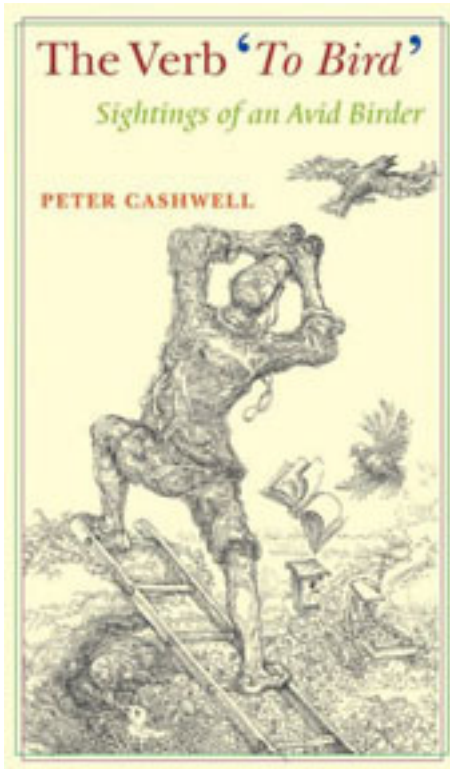


Mecklenburg Audubon Society

Book Nook: *The Verb 'to Bird'*



The Verb "To Bird", by Peter Cashwell
. Reviewed by Lucy Quintilliano

Peter Cashwell, an English teacher in Virginia who grew up living and birding in the Carolinas, has written a clever and funny exploration of his many obsessions, including birds, birders, language, literature, and pop culture. If you love birding like I do, you'll laugh out loud as he pokes fun at us, at how others see us, how we are and what we do that defies the imagination of non-birders. I especially like his speculation that birding is a disease (BCD, or Birding Compulsive Disorder), which, if true, explains and justifies our bizarre behavior, and has the added benefit of evoking sympathy instead of the more typical reaction of frustration, impatience and irritation.

Those who love birding along the Carolina shores will especially enjoy the *Stoneless Land*, a chapter which explores not only birding at the coast, but many aspects of living with the ebbs and flows of that region. Who can argue with his description of Carolina's Low Country as home to some of America's most beautiful birds and most ravenous biting insects? And he describes quite accurately and in great detail the extreme bird identification challenges offered by the shorebirds in that area.

Although I found this book very enjoyable and recommend it to my fellow birders, on more than one occasion Cashwell came close to losing me with his highly detailed analysis of certain topics. For example, *The Cardinal Sin*, a 22-page chapter exploring the origin of the Northern Cardinal's name, was a bit much. Although I dislike European Starlings as much as anyone, in my opinion, his 15-page chapter railing about the introduction of this species to our continent was an overkill.

Another plus: even though this is a recent publication, it is available in paperback for close to \$10 on the web. All in all, this book is very entertaining and a great gift for one of your birding friends, or for yourself.

