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Big Twitch: One Man, One Continent, A Race Against Time—A True Story About Birdwatching



Synopsis

As a self-proclaimed twitcher—a birdwatching extremist who travels around the country trying to catch a glimpse of as many species of birds as possible—the author took a year off in 2002 with the goal of seeing 700 birds and thereby breaking the national record for most birds seen in one year. In this amusing memoir, he recounts his quest, including how he spent all of his inheritance from the untimely death of his parents to make his dream a reality. Populated by unusual characters and interesting species of birds, this part confessional—part travelogue for both bird nerds and the general population follows the author as he works out what it means to be normal despite his unusually avid compulsion toward twitching.

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Customer Reviews

Dooley makes his living in Australia writing television comedy scripts, but his real passion is bird-watching—in fact, he'll frequently "twitch," dropping whatever he's doing to travel hundreds of miles for a brief glimpse of a recently sighted rare species. In 2002, he set out to break the record for the most birds spotted throughout the Australian territories in a single year. The effort to track down more than 700 species takes him from a sooty owl sitting on a tree branch in the early hours of New Year's Day to a blue-faced parrot finch climbing a blade of grass on Christmas Eve. Stories about frustrated efforts to spot various birds show a winning humor, but without any pictures of birds or their habitats, all the locations start to blur together. The amiable, conversational tone keeps the story from getting dull, and the Aussie cultural references are easily deciphered, but

Dooley's accomplishment in the end feels anticlimactic. (Aug.) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

Birding is known as twitching in Britain and the Commonwealth. Serious twitchers chase rare birds to rack up serious life lists, and really serious twitchers try to see more species in one year than any of their peers. Dooley, a comedy writer, tried to break the Australian record of 700 bird species seen in 365 days, and he records the events in this marvelously funny memoir. He loves birds and twitching, but also sees his hobby with the clear, sarcastic eye of a man who is aware that most others find serious birders seriously weird. As the author takes a year off work, blows through his inheritance, and travels thousands of miles crisscrossing the Australian continent, his hilarious commentary on his own sanity will keep even the nonbirding reader in stitches. Prepare to laugh out loud. Nancy Bent Copyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved

... and wished it were longer!! Sean has taken what could have been a very dry, monotonous litany of sightings and turned it into a very readable, very enjoyable ramble through Australia looking at birds. As very much an amateur bird photographer and watcher, I appreciate the efforts made by the author to get to see the birds on his list; what an undertaking it must have been even if he treated the efforts involved with glib prose and humour! Well done, sir - you are an inspiration to me! I know I shall never have the opportunity to see an awful lot of these birds, but reading this, I at least have gained an insight into what it takes to do so....

I had just finished birding in Australia for a month on an organized tour. So even as an outsider an American), I felt like I had some understanding of the birds the Mr. Dooley was hunting for, the land he was traveling through and the fun of trying to see an elusive. Dooley's description of his year-long birdwatching project was well-written and entertaining and well as informative. It made me realize how many more places there are to seek birds in this huge country than I managed to see in a month.

As a birder, I find Sean's story fascinating, humorous, and entertaining!

Who would have thought that a book about twitching would be such a good read for a non-twitcher. The book is given dramatic impetus by the author's mission to see as many species as possible in one calendar year. Ok, you'll read about more birds than you ever knew existed (or wanted to

know), but the style is engaging, self-deprecating and picks the highlights (and lowlights?) of the big twitch. Ok, it does help if you have some interest in birds or birdwatching, if you know a twitcher, it might help you understand them...

hilarious! If your into bird watching give it a go, you will not be disappointed.

My second reading of this book but it is because of this book that I became a "twitcher". Humorous from the start to the finish and would have an appeal to even the non-birding people in our communities. Makes me want to go birding more & more! It is about obsession, travel, conservation & the wonderful characters of our country. Loved it!!

As a passionate birder myself I found this book both educational and entertaining with many 'laugh out loud' moments. There are many situations that I can relate to and my 12 year old daughter (also a passionate birder) loves me to read out sections to her (I take out any 'adult' bits). A great read for anyone interested in birds.

If you are a birder, this is a wonderful account of one man's quest to be the "best birder" in Australia. Similar to The Big Year.

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