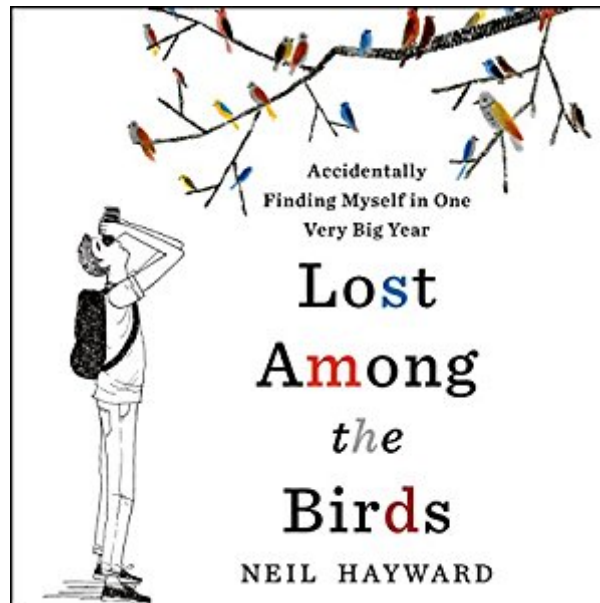




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# Lost Among The Birds: Accidentally Finding Myself In One Very Big Year



## Synopsis

Early in 2013 Neil Hayward was at a crossroads. He didn't want to open a bakery or whatever else executives do when they quit a lucrative but unfulfilling job. He didn't want to think about his failed relationship with 'the one' or his potential for ruining a new relationship with 'the next one'. And he almost certainly didn't want to think about turning 40. And so instead he went birding. Birding was a lifelong passion. It was only among the birds that Neil found a calm that had eluded him in the confusing world of humans. But this time he also found competition. His growing list of species reluctantly catapulted him into a Big Year - a race to find the most birds in one year. His peregrinations across 28 states and six provinces in search of exotic species took him to a hoarfrost-covered forest in Massachusetts to find a fieldfare; to Lake Havasu, Arizona, to see a rare Nutting's flycatcher; and to Vancouver for the red-flanked bluetail. Neil's Big Year was as unplanned as it was accidental: It was the perfect distraction from life. Neil shocked the birding world by finding 749 species of bird and breaking the long-standing Big Year record. He also surprised himself: during his time among the hummingbirds, tanagers, and boobies, he found a renewed sense of confidence and hope about the world and his place in it.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

This is a great book on many levels. The stories are engaging and interesting - I felt like I was there sharing in the thrill of new discoveries or the disappointment of those missed. It also is a very personal story and allows the reader to get to know the author on a deeper level and, perhaps, to

relate to the author more. Overall, an interesting and entertaining book. My only complaint is that I would have liked more - more anecdotes about places visited and birds seen and more follow up - how did the author answer the many life questions that arose during this year...I highly recommend this book!

One of the most daunting challenges a person who enjoys watching and traveling to see birds can undertake is an American Birding Association Area Big Year. It involves identifying as many bird species as one can in North America north of the Mexican border in a single calendar year. Based solely on the honor system, it tests a person's identification skills, planning skills, stamina, and resources. It also involves being on the road the majority of the year as one travels to all parts of North America. It is not something that is done casually. This book, on one level, is the story of Neil Hayward's record setting 2013 big year. That year he identified 749 species of birds in the ABA area breaking a long standing mark. Neil's record still stands. But there is a second level to this book that takes it beyond a "went there, saw that" book. It is the story of Neil's personal journey during those 12 months. He started the year as one person and ended the year as a changed person. Neil confronted who he was and what he wanted out of life. He shares with us this very personal journey of discovery that occurred while he traveled the continent. While he was "Lost Among the Birds" he found himself. This book is strongly recommended for both members of the birding community and the general population. Read it and you will be fascinated.

Though there were times when I felt like I was let in a bit too much on his personal life, I enjoyed this book a great deal. It sounds like he had a great, though physically taxing, year. As a significantly less skilled birder, though, I would've liked to know more about how difficult it was to ID birds that you'd expect to find in the ABA, but are simply very difficult to identify (e.g. large gulls that are likely to hybridize or the Empidonax flycatchers). But all in all, this was a very enjoyable book. I would be happy to read more from this author.

I loved this book. Reading the details of Neil's big year was fun, but I couldn't help wondering how much money he spent. Obviously, someone has to be pretty flush financially to pull this off. I was happy for him, such an amazing accomplishment.

Neil's work, as the title implies, is not just about the birds, but also about himself, which brings a

very human element to an adventure story of chasing birds. The man struggles with the meaning of his life and his new relationship, as we all have. He just as slowly but surely enters a new stage of his life and relationship as he does tackling a Big Year. The book has lost some of the spontaneity and outright hilarity of the blog (which I recommend anyone who reads this book to do), but the added layer of his relationship with Gerri and his struggles with depression more than a story of a man finding more birds in a single year in the ABA, but of a human connecting with others and finding himself. I hope we all get to hear from Neil in this medium again!

I love birdwatching and often wondered just exactly how a Big Year unfolds. This account was amusing and entertaining. It also made me realize what it takes to pursue the goal. I'm not cut out for the discomfort but I'm grateful Hayward documented his experience to allow me to live vicariously. Bird on!!

As a new birder, I found this book very good. I recently had an opportunity to meet the author when he presented at a local library. Entertaining and informative.

British humor: I laughed out loud many times. The fact that my mother's birth name was Hayward also added to my interest. Ornithology: informative and stimulating. I got out my bird guide, which had too much dust on it. Dual story: poignant. If anyone is feeling lost for any reason, read this book! I recommended this in person to four people. I recommend this in writing to many more!

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