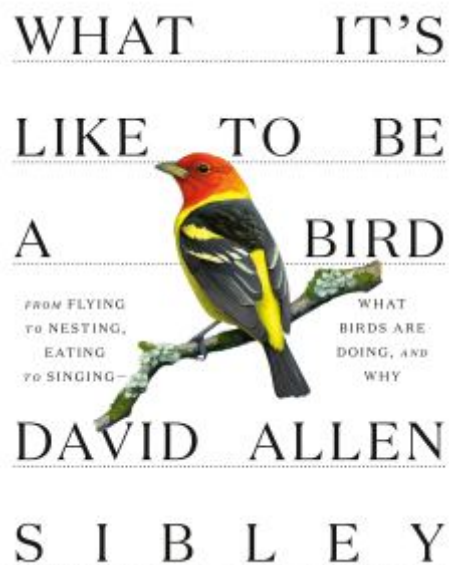


Book Review: What It's Like to be a Bird: From Flying to Nesting, Eating to Singing—What Birds are doing and Why

JoAnn Hackos. January 2, 2021 :

Most of us are already very familiar with the outstanding work of David Allen Sibley. I think I have at least six copies of his various field guides in my collection. He's a talented artist and has led us well in identifying some of the more troubling species we see around Evergreen. Now he has published a different kind of book, one that gives us a plethora of interesting snippets about the birds that we know and love.



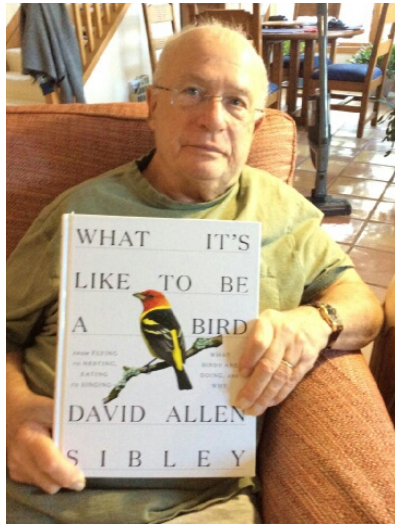
Sibley's *What It's Like to be a Bird* is not a book you read from beginning to end. It's a book you peruse at leisure. Turn to any page in any order and you'll find something you have never known about familiar birds. Each left-hand page contains beautiful full-color, sometimes larger than life paintings of select birds. Each right-hand page contains interesting information about the bird that may be completely new for many readers.

Take for example the Hummingbird on pages 78-79. Sibley gives us full size paintings of a Blue-throated Hummingbird and a Calliope Hummingbird on the left-hand page. On the right-hand page, we find a new scientific discovery about the anatomy of the hummingbird's tongue and how they use it to lap up nectar, along with detailed drawings of the super magnified tongue. Sibley illustrates the twisting motion of the hummingbird's wings as it hovers and flies. He also provides information about the behavior of hummingbirds at our feeders.

He tells us to estimate the number of hummingbirds that visit our feeders by counting the number of birds we see at one time and multiplying by ten!

Flip to any page and you'll be greeted by beautiful paintings and interesting tidbits of information. There are illustrations of White-breasted and Red-breasted Nuthatches on pages 118-119. It was news to me that you can tell male and female White-breasted apart by the color of the crown, shiny black in the males and gray in the females. Wow! There is a detailed series of drawings that explains how nuthatches climb. And, there's a drawing of a nuthatch spreading its wings to make an intruder think it's a much larger bird.

Did you know that a Roadrunner runs faster than most humans, except for Usain Bolt? Sibley notes, however, that the coyote is faster still.



It's really fun to browse through *What It's Like to be a Bird*. I'm sure it will even spark the interest of a recalcitrant birder-to-be. It certainly has attracted the interest of an inveterate, long-time birder—Bill Hackos! Hope it will give you much pleasure as well.