



Arnulf Conradi **Zen an the Art of** **Birdwatching**

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Seeing a bird – really seeing it – is a unique and meditative moment, captured in Arnulf Conradi's *Zen and the Art of Birdwatching*. The book begins in Antarctica and then wends its way to landscapes closer to home: to the mud flats of the North Sea coast, to Helgoland, to surging streams in the Alps, and to our towns and cities, where more and more birds find refuge.

Birds are magical creatures: most are beautiful, or at least look interesting; their birdsong delights; their amazing sense of orientation continues to mystify; and they can fly – the stuff of dreams for humanity. Observing birds is fascinating, and binoculars bring the birds so close, you feel you can reach out and touch them. But at the very moment when you see a bird, really see it, something else happens – something unique and exciting and meditative. The observer is wholly concentrated on the moment of perception, everything else recedes and the chatter of our thoughts is silenced. Conradi's focus is our experience of this moment, no matter how commonplace the sighting. A grey heron, its wingbeat measured, gliding through the light and shade of woodland is as unforgettable as any rarer bird.



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Arnulf Conradi

Arnulf Conradi was just seven years old when he was given his first binoculars and he has been a birdwatcher ever since. He studied in Kiel and Berlin and worked in publishing (editor and director at Claassen and Fischer) before setting up his own Berlin Verlag. He then worked as cultural attaché to the Federal Chancellery and at the American Academy.

In 2009 Conradi edited a new edition of the ornithological classic, Johann Friedrich Naumann's *Die Vögel Mitteleuropas*. Arnulf Conradi lives in Berlin and among the lakes and hills of the Uckermark.