A Supremely Bad Idea: Three Mad Birders and Their Quest to See It All

Luke Dempsey

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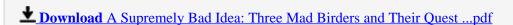
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It began with a weekend house; then weekend trips. Then the occasional meeting rearranged in favor of a morning in Central Park, just while the spring migration was on. Before Luke Dempsey knew it, he had spiraled down into full-on birding mania - finding himself riding along with two like-minded maniacs in a series of disreputable rental cars and even nastier motel rooms, charging madly around the country in search of its rarest and most beautiful birds.

A Supremely Bad Idea is the story of that search, and those birds, and those maniacs, and that country, and (to a much lesser extent) those rental cars. In Texas, the three obsessives go in search of the deeply endangered Golden-cheeked Warbler, which lives on the side of a hill near a waterfall; in Michigan, they see the pretty-much-extinct Kirtland's Warbler, which insists on short pine trees for nesting and lots of "quiet, please"; in Arizona, they see the very private Elegant Trogon after a very public fight with a birding guide. Along the way, Dempsey narrates an amazing sequence of encounters with nature and humanity, including a man building a 40-foot ark in his Seattle backyard; a beautiful woman who shows him how to kill 4,000 Cowbirds a year; a coyote (and his human smuggler) on the Rio Grande; and everywhere, these incandescent birds flitting across the range of his binoculars, and his heart.

With the casual erudition of a Bill Bryson and the comic timing of a British David Sedaris, Dempsey demonstrates why so many millions of birders care so much about birds - and why, perhaps, the rest of us should, too.



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