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Bird, Bird, Bird! A Chirping Chant

April Pulley Sayre
Gary Locke, illustrator
Northword (Oct 25, 2007)
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“Wandering Tattler, Timberdoodle, Teal. Nutcracker, Gnatcatcher, are these real?” the author asks. Only a bird lover would be able to answer this question confidently, but even those whose avian inventories are limited to blue jays and swallows will enjoy this peppy poetic catalog of North American birds. Veteran nature writer Sayre shares her sense of humor and bird smarts in this cheerfully silly follow-up to *Ant, Ant, Ant! (An Insect Chant)* and *Trout, Trout, Trout! (A Fish Chant)*. Youngsters will be entranced by the lilting cadences of Sayre’s impeccably rhymed couplets, and the older people who read to them will marvel at how smoothly the exotic names of the different species rhyme.

A new couplet on each two-page spread lengthens the list of colorful bird names: “Worm-eating Warbler, Woodpecker, Wigeon. Piping Plover, Poorwill, Pintail, Pigeon.” The wigeon is identified in the book’s glossary as a duck that “eats plants in fields, marshes, lakes, and large ponds.” Poorwills, like bobolinks and chachalacas, are named for the sounds they make, and timberdoodles are noted for their spiraling courtship flights.

This is illustrator Gary Locke’s second children’s book. His work has appeared in publications including *Time*, *Sports Illustrated*, and the *Weekly Standard*. He is known for his political caricatures, a trademark that carries over to his work in this book. Admitting that he knows full well that birds do not have teeth, he has nonetheless given them impressive dentation, as well as clothing, cigars, pipes, surfboards, and occupations that relate to their names and behaviors. Indeed, if the book can be said to have any flaw, it is that adult readers may wish the glossary included realistic pictures of the birds to help identify them in the wild. Realism is not the book’s purpose, however, and grown-ups can always refer themselves to a field guide. In the meantime, they will enjoy rhyming the birds’ names and identifying their exaggerated features for the children who are the book’s true audience.

The author, who specializes in natural history, has written more than fifty children’s books. *Stars Beneath Your Bed* was an ALA Notable book, and she is a three-time winner of the John Burroughs Award.
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