

Bird Brother: A Falconer's Journey and the Healing Power of Wildlife

Rodney Stotts

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Rodney Stotts's heartfelt memoir reveals how he became a master falconer.

To expand his drug business, Stotts needed his own apartment. But he had to prove he could afford rent first. He began working with the Earth Conservation Corps (ECC), part of a team tasked with cleaning the Anacostia River. In 1994, he was involved in reintroducing and growing a new population of the native bald eagle around the river. Working at the ECC offered him a new sense of purpose, and he shifted away from drugs in his pursuit of becoming a falconer.

In 2017, Stotts's son, Mike, expressed his interest in becoming a falconer, too. The memoir uses Stotts's sessions with Mike to explain important lessons about wildlife management techniques, including information about the equipment needed and feeding and habitation requirements. Through illuminating details about the history of falconry, raptors' habitats, and the factors that influence raptor populations, the book imparts knowledge about protecting the species and increasing their numbers.

Stotts's passion for wildlife conservation is demonstrated in moving scenes, as when he climbs a thirty-foot fence to rescue a juvenile bald eagle, when he takes care of an injured Eurasian eagle-owl, and when he travels to educate children and adults about raptors, including how people can contribute to their conservation and engage with wildlife. His future goal is to build a wildlife sanctuary that also serves as a refuge for disadvantaged youth.

The book is embellished with impressive photographs that capture the beautiful relationships between Stotts and his bird friends. The loving relationship that can be cultivated between humans and the amazing birds is shown through charming moments between the birds and Stotts's audience, too.

Bird Brother is a memoir that is apt in its demonstration of nature's ability to transform people.

EDITH WAIRIMU (January / February 2022)

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