



The History of Ornithology in Virginia

David W. Johnston

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Host to a large and diverse bird population as well as a long human history, Virginia is arguably the birthplace of ornithology in North America. David W. Johnston's *History of Ornithology in Virginia*, the result of over a decade of research, is the first book to address this fascinating element of the state's natural history.

Tertiary-era fossils show that birds inhabited Virginia as early as 65 million years ago. Their first human observers were the region's many Indian tribes and, later, colonists on Roanoke Island and in Jamestown. Explorers pushing westward contributed further to the development of a conception of birds that was distinctively American.

By the 1900s planter-farmers, naturalists, and government employees had amassed bird records from the Barrier Islands and the Dismal Swamp to the Blue Ridge and Appalachian Mountains. The modern era saw the emergence of ornithological organizations and game laws, as well as increasingly advanced studies of bird distribution, migration pathways, and breeding biology. Johnston shows us how ornithology in Virginia evolved from observations of wondrous creatures to a sophisticated science recognizing some 435 avian species.

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