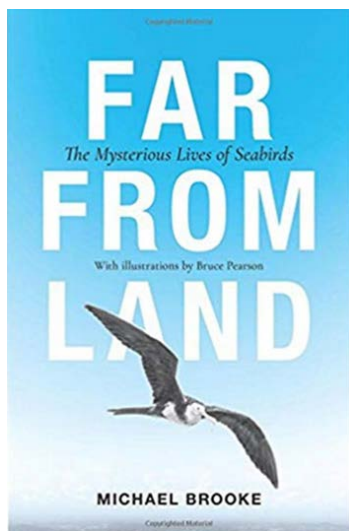


Birder's Book Review

Far From Land: The Mysterious Lives of Seabirds

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*Far From Land: The
Mysterious Lives of Seabirds*
Michael Brooke with
illustrations by Bruce
Pearson
ISBN 978-0691174181, 264
pages, hardback
2018, Princeton University
Press, \$29.95

Can birds sleep while they fly? Do murres swim or fly when they migrate? (The answer might surprise you!) Do albatross really fly thousands of miles on foraging trips to glean food for hungry chicks? Why do male and female of some species feed in distinctly different areas?

If you've ever wanted to know the answers to these questions, or simply satisfy a curiosity about "the secret life of pelagic birds" then *Far From Land: The Mysterious Lives of Seabirds* by Michael Brooke may be the next must-read on your list. And in the case that you are not interested in learning juicy tidbits like where Cory's Shearwaters go in the winter, you probably know a birder who is, and after all, it's not too early to start that holiday shopping!

Over the span of 249 pages, Brooke's takes us through an introduction of pelagic birds, explaining what they are and how they differ from our more familiar terrestrial feathered friends, and ends with a look at the interactions between seabirds and people. In between we get to experience life at sea as a pelagic bird, first hatching and leaving the nest (or scrape or burrow as the case may be), then wandering the seas as a "teenager", and finally returning to the nesting area to produce the next generation.

Chapters explore in detail the effects of wind, weather, and currents on foraging strategy and success, the predilections of individual birds and variability in behavior, how birds find food, and how birds feed. These in-depth looks at how birds interact with their environment, fill niches in the food chain, and mechanics of feeding are largely possible due to relatively new technology. The author explains what types of instruments are used, how they work, and what we've learned, and the findings are nothing short of fascinating.

By the end of the book you'll know if birds really spend their teenage years on the wing without alighting on shore, how murres get where they are going (and where they go), live the amazing journey of a chick-feeding tubenose, and understand why we don't see albatross with any regularity off the Carolinas, but regularly see South Atlantic nesting storm-petrels, European shearwaters, and Greenland-nesting Dovekies.