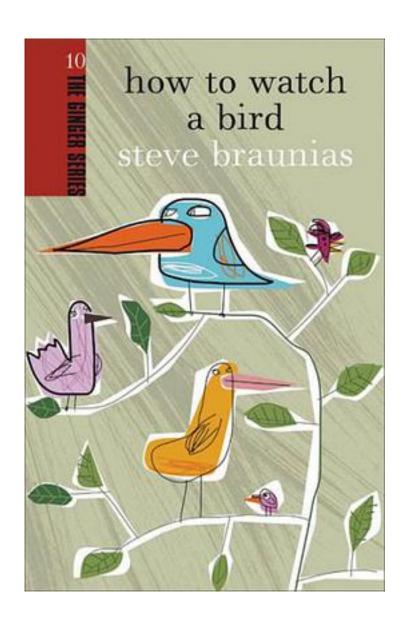
How to Watch a Bird



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Steve Braunias writes: 'When a black-backed gull flew past the balcony of my girlfriend's apartment in downtown Auckland on a sultry evening last summer, it came so close to where I was standing, so suddenly and dazzlingly, a white flash against the black night, I was bowled over with happiness. I thought: 'Birds, everywhere.' That became the opening sentence for my next Sunday column. 'Birds are everywhere in New Zealand, on coasts, riverbeds, in bush, forests, islands, at sea, on lawns, roofs, telephone wires - a massive, fleeting population, an irresistible presence. I wanted to know more about them. 'This book, then is my personal journey - a beginner's guide to bird-watching. It's also a New Zealand history, a geographical wandering, and an affectionate look at the people who are captivated by birds. Mostly, though, it's a book about birds - from the flightless ratites who once had it good here, in a land without predators, to the introduced birds, the migratory birds which fly incredible distances to get here every year, and the birds modern and completely at home here.'

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| 目录: |
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