



Roger Tory Peterson: A Biography (Mildred Wyatt-Wold Series in Ornithology)

Douglas Carlson

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Beginning with his 1934 *Field Guide to the Birds*, Roger Tory Peterson introduced literally millions of people to the pleasures of observing birds in the wild. His field guide, which has gone through five editions and sold more than four million copies, fostered an appreciation for the natural world that set the stage for the contemporary environmental movement. When Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* sounded a warning about the threat to birds and their habitats in the 1960s, the Peterson field guides had already prepared the public and the scientific community to heed the warning and fight to save habitat and protect endangered species—a result that Peterson wholeheartedly approved.

In this authoritative, highly readable biography of Roger Tory Peterson (1908-1996), Douglas Carlson creates a fascinating portrait of the complex, often conflicted man behind the brand name. He describes how Peterson's obsession with birds began in boyhood and continued throughout a multifaceted career as a painter, writer, educator, environmentalist, and photographer. Carlson traces Peterson's long struggle to become both an accomplished bird artist and a scientific naturalist—competing goals that drove Peterson to work to the point of exhaustion and that also deprived him of many aspects of a normal personal life. Carlson also records Peterson's many lasting achievements, from the phenomenal success of the field guides, to the bird paintings that brought him renown as "the twentieth century's Audubon," to the establishment of the Roger Tory Peterson Institute to carry on his work in conservation and education.

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