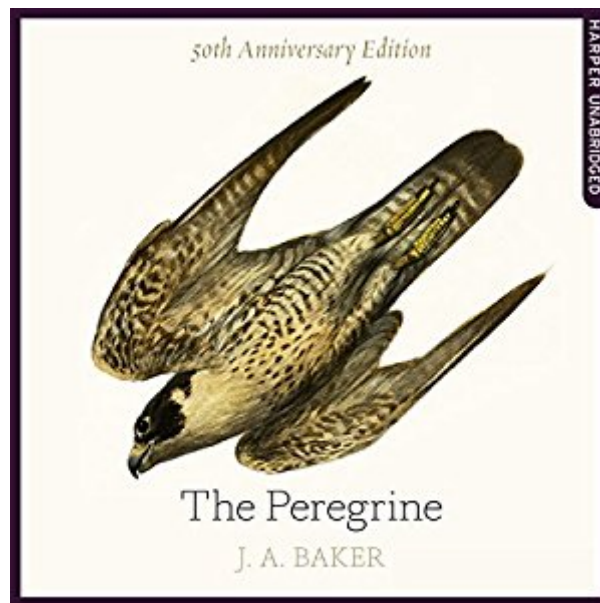




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The Peregrine: 50th Anniversary Edition: Afterword By Robert Macfarlane



Synopsis

Reissue of J. A. Baker's extraordinary classic of British nature writing, with an exclusive new afterword by Robert Macfarlane. Despite the association of peregrines with the wild outer reaches of the British Isles, *The Peregrine* is set on the flat marshes of the Essex coast, where J. A. Baker spent a long winter looking at and writing about the visitors from the uplands - peregrines that spend the winter hunting the huge flocks of pigeons and waders that share the desolate landscape with them. Such luminaries as Ted Hughes and Andrew Motion have cited this as one of the most important books in 20th century nature writing, and the best-selling nature writer Mark Cocker has provided an introduction on the importance of Baker and his work. Among fragments of letters to Baker was one from a reader who praised a piece that Baker had written in RSPB *Birds* magazine in 1971. Apart from a paper on peregrines which Baker wrote for the Essex Bird Report, this article - entitled 'On the Essex Coast' - appears to be his only other published piece of writing, and, with the agreement of the RSPB, it has been included in this updated new edition of Baker's astounding work.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Glorious observation of these avian wonders, over time and with respect. As a bonus the natural habitat and seasons of the peregrine's year are noted in sparse and vivid detail so rich it is more like a haiku poem than descriptive prose. I find myself re-reading sections of this book many times just to savor the beauty of the language. Amazing to realize that J.A. Baker observed these wild creatures at the border of Chelmsford, England and the North Sea ... like so many other birds and

animals living in the urban hinterland that we pass every day and do not see. I also find myself compelled to read this book outside just to be a little bit immersed in their world.

Purchased this after listening to an interview with director Werner Herzog, who stated that this is the only book that he *requires* all of his film students to take. He writes: "I don't read, from Werner Herzog, I don't read, from a filmmaker normally but I do read. The book I would really recommend is an obscure book published in 1967: *The Peregrine*, by J.A. Baker, who is somebody about whom we know nothing, literally nothing. He wrote in Great Britain when the last peregrines were dying out - now they have bounced back a little bit. He observes peregrines and it's a most incredible book. It has prose of the caliber that we have not seen since Joseph Conrad. And an ecstasy - a delirious sort of love for what he observes. The intensity and the ecstasy of observation is something that you have to have as a filmmaker or somebody who loves literature. Whoever really loves literature, whoever really loves movies, should read that book. In a way, it's almost like a transubstantiation, like in religion, where the observer becomes almost the object - in this case the falcon - he observes. He writes, for example, about the falcon soaring high up, and then higher and higher until the falcon is only a dot. Then he writes, "and then we swoop down," as if he had become a falcon himself. And there's a variety of moments where you can tell that he has completely entered into the existence of a falcon. And this is what I do when I make a film, I step outside of myself into an ekstasis in Greek, to step outside of your own body, a point outside. Baker steps into the fog and in an ecstasy of observing the world it is unprecedented."

I love this book because Werner Herzog said "I think it's an instrument of the cowards." Referring to Storyboards. I absolutely love to hear Werner Herzog speak. At work, my office mate and I are always saying, "it's the instrument of the cowards." Please excuse!

I can't believe I enjoyed reading an entire book about a bird I've never seen. J.A. Baker's prose border poetry. Dense, descriptive and nothing short of a visual buffet that envelopes your mind and takes it on a flight to an ever more pleasurable vantage point.

I bought this after being recommended it by Werner Herzog in his Rogue school of film making. I highly recommend this for a transcendental experience of how to become a falcon/ tiercel.

I am taking time reading this because it is dense and so descriptive of a bird I have no hands on knowledge and a country i've never been to. These birds and many other animals are facing extinction so books like this, written by people who know them and love them, give us a window to see what wonderous creatures they are. Very good read.

The peregrine is probably the best book I ever read or will read. It is the diary of a man obsessed with peregrines, but also with nature in general, a man who longs to be away from civilization, yet his descriptions of both the birds he observes as well as their surroundings are highly civilized, very poetic and what is more: every word sounds true and utterly convincing. The peregrine took me by surprise: a diary recording the killings of a few falcons and the landscape in which the killing took place does seem all that fascinating, however, every swoop J.A. Baker describes is dramatic and different from the preceding one, a rainy day becomes a festival of glittering drops, shiny feathers, wet soil. In the Summerhill the author takes it one step further, describing a landscape as he sees it, as it changes with the setting sun, with a storm approaching, a landscape observed from a abandoned barn; without the drama of the swoops all that remains is pure poetry.

Book is nice. But the printed text in book and in introduction is in different quality.

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