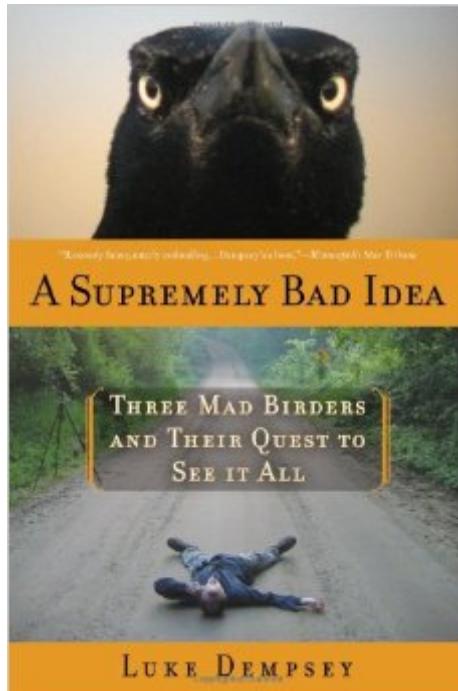


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# A Supremely Bad Idea: Three Mad Birders And Their Quest To See It All



## Synopsis

"Riotously funny, utterly entrallingâ |Dempsey's a hoot."â •Minneapolis Star Tribune It began innocently enough, when two eccentric guests at Luke Dempsey's weekend home pointed out a small bird flitting through his garden. Dempsey, entranced, found himself falling head over heels. Before he knew it, he and his friends were off on an epic birding journey down the backroads of America, in search of the country's rarest and most beautiful birds. A Supremely Bad Idea is the hilarious story of their tripâ •what WildBird magazine calls "as close as we have to Bill Bryson's A Walk in the Woods."

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I picked this book up because of the crazy-looking bird on the front cover -- I'm not a birder, nor did I think I had any interest in birding. But Dempsey's quick wit and hilarious anecdotes make the book not only a pleasure to read but also a really fascinating look into birdwatching, even for the uninitiated. The author is the antithesis of the geeky birdwatcher, relating his escapades with sharp, candid humor, and I found myself laughing out loud frequently -- beware of reading this in public places! It also made me much more curious about the birds I see every day, I even found myself wondering if I should buy a pair of binoculars and a bird book, just in case the brown bird with the reddish patch I keep seeing on the lawn really is a rare bird and not just some kind of sparrow. I have been recommending this book to everyone I know -- birders or not. Anyone looking for a well-written, witty read would enjoy it, and it leaves you afterward with a new appreciation of the

feathered beings in the backyard.

The other one-star reviewers have said a lot of this already, but I'm principally struck by the lack of respect Dempsey shows for almost everyone he encounters in this book other than his buddies and a few select birders who meet whatever criteria he has for not treating someone with utter contempt. There are a few moments that capture the joy of birding but these are drowned out by his constant mockery of the people he encounters on his travels. Large portions of the book consist of him berating, degrading and taking the cheapest shots imaginable at anyone he deems intellectually, culturally or even physically unfit. He may love birds but he doesn't think much of his fellow human beings. He certainly used the word 'mad' in his title in the British sense of being crazy, but what comes across is the common American understanding of 'mad': he tries to be funny but just comes across as angry, I didn't even bother to waste more of my time finishing the book; wish I could get my money back on this one. Worst birding book I've ever read.

When a friend recently gave me a copy of "A Supremely Bad Idea", I would have ranked my interest in bird watching as #3, directly behind elective groin surgery and spending quality time with my Mother in Law. (#4, BTW, is front row seating at a Celine Dione covers Barry Manilow concert.) But author Luke Dempsey has made me an enthusiast - very much of his work, and even of ornithology (well, at least to some extent). In the tradition of writers like Bill Bryson and Tony Horowitz, Dempsey gives us a glimpse inside a micro-culture we'd likely not otherwise explore. Wrapping important lessons in biology and ecology in an irresistible travelogue, Dempsey shares with readers his passion for birding and his observations about life here in his adopted homeland. We accompany the freshly divorced author and his quirky birding friends, Don and Donna Graffiti, on bird watching excursions across the U.S., learning at least as much about them and the colorful folks they meet along the way as the colorful birds they hope to see. Dempsey's voice is distinctive and his style - sometimes irreverent, occasionally endearing, and always entertaining - is a delight. Short ante-chapters work well to add dimension to the primary story line and help it keep pace. Discovering an author like Luke Dempsey gives me some appreciation for the adrenaline jolt a birder must feel when he spies a life bird for the first time. I hope we'll be seeing more of this author in the future.-Jeff YeagerAuthor, *The Ultimate Cheapskate's Road Map to True Riches*

I heard Luke Dempsey being interviewed on NPR promoting this book. It was a terrific interview that had me ordering a copy immediately after arriving home that day. The book however was not so

good. I wasn't bothered by the interactions with other people, or the foul language as other reviewers were (i did get annoyed with the constantly repeated tomato topic as someone else said though), but his writing just never grabbed me and pulled me in as a good book would. There are some good moments in the book and I wouldn't say don't waste your time reading it, but I would recommend that you try and find a used copy or borrow a copy to read.

This was a delightful book - as a very modest birder I am now inspired (especially to go to Central Park) and to never travel without my binoculars. And as a reader, I found the book well written and very funny and the characters were terrific - especially Don. Great read, lots of information, lots of laughs - highly recommended.

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