

# A sound mind



**THIS** lovely book is part of Leaping Hare Press's Mindfulness series, of which the publisher states: "Explore simple, practical steps that are written by expert, heart-driven authors." Claire Thompson, the author of this book, works for BirdLife International and also has a personal interest in mindfulness and its facilitation.

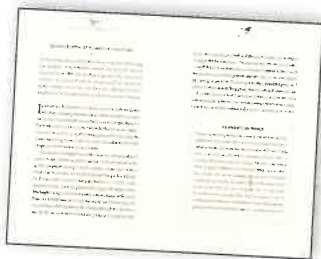
This short tome offers a different perspective on birding, one which we should perhaps all apply to our own experiences. We are encouraged to add compassion to our pastime and to consider the very being of our avian charges – outlining a 'back-to-basics' approach. Particularly poignant is the author's description of noticing the birds on an everyday urban walk as if she'd

"discovered a whole new world".

Throughout the book, we are provided with numerous mindfulness practices that can be added to our outdoor encounters. Some of these are well-known mindfulness techniques and others are ones the author has developed specifically for the natural world such as the notion of a 'sit-spot', one which I particularly liked.

Clare conjures up beautiful imagery all the way through the book; for example, on page 89 she describes an experience with Northern Gannets at a seabird colony in a truly mesmerising way. The book is also peppered with quotes and proverbs which break it up nicely, offering 'pauses for thought' while reading.

The third chapter 'Dancing with waves' is a tangent into mind and consciousness which may lose 'hardcore' birders. However, it felt good for the book's topic to return to birds again towards the end of it. The energy builds as you



## MORE INFO

- *The Art of Mindful Birdwatching: Reflections on Freedom and Being* by Claire Thompson (Leaping Hare Press, Brighton, 2017).
- 144 pages, six black-and-white illustrations.
- ISBN 9781782404286. Hbk, £8.99.

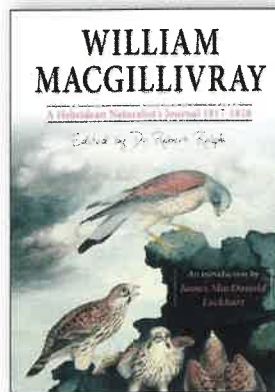
start reading the final chapter, which is beautifully vibrant and profound. Fully focusing on birds, it explores seasonal changes and migration, making an interesting and informative read.

I leave this review with a final quote from the author that defines mindfulness in nature:

"Mindfulness isn't a hobby or a therapy. It's simply the awareness we can nurture to learn to live in tune with the natural flow of the world." **Joe Harkness**

• See pages 48-50 for our feature on how birding can improve your wellbeing.

# Shooting times



various families he stayed with, so there is a lot to learn about life in the western Highlands and Hebrides 200 years ago.

A leading naturalist who later published a mammoth *History of British Birds*, he had no binoculars nor identification books to speak of, and tended to go forth with a gun and a collecting box. This helped him in his development as a naturalist, but in this edition of an early journal (when he was just 21) descriptions of the birds he shot have been edited out, so the bird content is often reduced to short lists.

The shooting (from Wrens and Linnets upwards) seems somewhat gratuitous (he recommends that 'sportsmen' shoot Starlings, as up to nine can be killed with one shot). It is an interesting window into a very different world. **Rob Hume**

I enjoy old writings about the Highlands and islands and was looking forward to this, but found the writing style makes it less of a good and satisfying read than I had hoped.

Macgillivray recounts his travels by day and his adventures (often getting a bit drunk) in the evenings with

## MORE INFO

- *William Macgillivray: a Hebridean Naturalist's Journal 1817-1818* edited by Dr Robert Ralph (Acair Ltd, Stornoway, second edition, 2017).
- 214 pages.
- ISBN 9780861524419. Pbk, £15.

# BOOKSHELF



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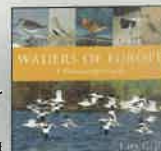


outside of the breeding season can be problematic for even the most confident of birders.

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