

B is for Bufflehead

About B is for Bufflehead:

With its menagerie of sapsuckers, loons, cuckoos, boobies, and an alphabet full of others, B is for Bufflehead makes it fun to learn about birds. Eye-catching and humorous photographs introduce over 60 unique North American bird species that have funny names, fascinating personalities, and unique behaviors. For instance, did you know that as many as 100 Pygmy Nuthatches sleep together to stay warm, that a puffin can hold over 60 fish in its beak at one time, that Redheads meow and purr, or that Great Horned Owls are the only animals that regularly dine on skunk?

Much more than a typical ABC book, B is for Bufflehead is designed to be easily adapted to each child's educational level. The photos, letters, and names are perfect for the earliest learners. The accompanying text is intended to intrigue young children with a few fun facts about each bird. For older kids (and adults), there is a section that offers more detailed information on each species, including range, habitat, feeding preferences, and even more fun facts. For fun, there is a section of baby birds and interesting images for a who's who challenge.

The book is filled with important learning concepts for kids to discover. Birds such as Red-faced Warblers, Yellow-billed Magpies, and Blue-footed Boobies teach them basics like colors and anatomy. More advanced topics, such as feeding, habitats, migration, adaptation, and conservation, are also presented throughout the book in simple, easy to understand terms.

B is for Bufflehead is an educational and entertaining book that will open a child's eyes to the wonderful world of birds. It is also a great way for parents and grandparents to share their passion for birds with their favorite little ones. This book is a must for any future bird lover.

Did you know. . .

- 🦉 Buffleheads eat their food underwater so bigger birds won't steal it from them?
- 🦉 Bald Eagles' nests can weigh over 1000 lbs and be over 12 feet tall?
- 🦉 Greater Flamingos and Roseate Spoonbills get their pink color from the food they eat?
- 🦉 Green Jays are so smart that they often use tools to dig food from crevices?
- 🦉 Common Loons can dive 200 feet underwater and hold their breath for over 3 minutes?
- 🦉 Eared Grebes spend up to ten months a year flightless?
- 🦉 White Ibises nest in colonies with up to 80,000 birds?
- 🦉 Brown Pelicans warm their eggs with their feet, not their breast feathers?
- 🦉 Great Egrets were almost hunted to extinction so their feathers could be used to decorate women's hats?
- 🦉 Rock Wrens pave the path to their nest with pebbles?
- 🦉 that you'll find hundreds of other fun facts throughout B is for Bufflehead?

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Praise for B is for Bufflehead:

New books worth reading—A year-end roundup of bird books that belong in your library. This ABC guide to birds introduces young readers to the avocet, cuckoo, eagle, loon, quail, and many other species. The author's short, lively commentaries about each bird, told from the bird's point of view, appear next to his exceptional photographs. —*Birder's World Magazine, December 2009*

“B is for Bufflehead”: a MUST book for young future bird lovers

This book will send your children on many fun-filled flights through their ABC's with a flock of fascinating feathered friends. One thing that separates this fun-filled children's book from others is the use of beautiful color photographs taken by the author. . . . You should definitely add this book to your youngster's (hopefully) ever-growing library. And don't be surprised if you end up liking it as much as your child (or even more!). —*Gary Bogue, Contra Costa Times, September 30th, 2009.*

B is for Bufflehead is one children's book we just can't wait to sell in our store. Adults will be as fascinated as their kids! Beautiful prose, intriguing fun facts about the birds, and spectacular photography combine to give our next generation a quality introduction to the natural world we all cherish. —*Cecil and Mike Williams, Wild Birds Unlimited, Pleasant Hill, CA*

Steve Hutchcraft has a stunning knack for capturing birds on camera as they make expressive poses or exhibit delightful behaviors. The stunning photographs coupled with the poetic prose that accompanies each picture quickly engages the young reader into the joys of learning about the ABCs of birds. This is a book that will not only engage children, but also parents or grandparents who wish to share a fun reading experience with their child or grandchild. —*Ted Robertson, Environmental Programs Director, Lawrence Hall of Science, University of California, Berkeley*

B is for Bufflehead—an interesting ABC book. The pictures were incredible and the variety of birds, mixing common with the not-so common, kept me reading. . . . Good addition to a school library. —*The Brain Lair, September 27, 2009*

As a former schoolteacher and principal, I would recommend *B is for Bufflehead* for placement in all elementary school libraries. Gifting a child with the book will make it a reference source for the child well into adulthood for use at home, when camping, and when traveling to other locations. And, the photos, alone, may cause some children to take up the popular and enjoyable hobby of bird watching. —*Bruce Marhenke, retired elementary school principal and teacher*

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About the Author

Several years ago, Steve Hutchcraft left a successful business career to pursue his love for nature photography. As a photographer, Steve has built a portfolio of award-winning images, including his photograph of courting White-tailed Tropicbirds that won the prestigious North American Nature Photography Association's Showcase Award in 2006.

As a father, he has looked for ways to share his love of nature, and especially birds, with his young daughter. B is for Bufflehead is part of his ongoing effort to do just that. By sharing it with others, he hopes it will interest, entertain, and inspire many other future nature lovers.

Steve is a graduate of Stanford University and holds an MBA from Harvard University. He currently serves as a Director of the Muir Heritage Land Trust in the San Francisco Bay Area and has provided pro-bono strategic consulting for other environmentally focused organizations. Steve resides in Alamo, California with his wife June and daughter Heather.

PhotoHutch gives back

In order to help connect children with nature, PhotoHutch will be donating a portion of the proceeds from B is for Bufflehead to habitat conservation and environmental education programs throughout the United States. Current partners include:

The Muir Heritage Land Trust, Martinez, CA: The Muir Heritage Land Trust ensures a lasting quality of life for future generations by preserving and stewarding open space and fostering environmental awareness in the East San Francisco Bay Area. They have protected and currently steward over 2500 acres of natural habitat.

The Dauphin Island Bird Sanctuaries, Dauphin Island, AL: Dauphin Island is considered to be one of the ten most important sites for bird migrations in the world and was recently selected as one of the best locations in North America to view the spring migration. The Dauphin Island Bird Sanctuaries organization is dedicated to securing and maintaining a network of quality stopover habitats for migrating birds on this critically important, yet imperiled, barrier island.

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Frequently Asked Questions

What is a Bufflehead, anyway?

A Bufflehead is a small diving duck, relatively common throughout North America.

Why did you focus your book on birds?

I've enjoyed birds since I was a kid, and when I started serious photography, they became natural subjects for me. When I first started thinking of doing a book, I wanted to make sure it had educational value for children and found that birds provide a wonderful opportunity for kids to learn about nature. More importantly, whether kids live in an urban environment or a rural one, birds are easily accessible subjects from which to learn.

Why an ABC book?

I was trying to come up with a way to share my love of nature with my daughter when a friend suggested an ABC book. Though there are tons of ABC books out there, the idea of utilizing North American birds for all the letters of the alphabet provided a fun challenge for me.

How did you pick the birds for the book?

Actually, a lot of thought went into the selection process. First, my wife and I pulled out a bird book to see if it was even possible to complete an alphabet book of North American birds. It was, and we developed a target list of birds with silly sounding names and odd appearances that would be fun for kids and not intimidating. We added birds with descriptive names that could help teach concepts, and avoided birds named for obscure ornithologists of years gone by. For U, X, and Z, we didn't have a choice as only one bird exists in North America for each of those letters. Eventually we came up with so many interesting birds, we decided to include two birds for each letter where possible, one for the upper case and one for the lower case.

Did you really take all the photographs, and how long did it take you?

Yes, all the photos are mine. The photographs in the book are from the last seven years or so. Though once I decided to work on an alphabet of birds, I spent over two years completing it.

What was the hardest bird to photograph?

Far and away, the most difficult bird to capture was the Xantus's Murrelet. They only nest on a couple of the Channel Islands off the Southern California coast and spend the rest of the time at sea. I missed out on seeing them on several pelagic trips and had other trips cancelled due to inclement weather. Finally, during my third season of attempts, I lucked out on a pelagic trip and found a pair outside of their normal range and was able to snap the images seen in the book.

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Frequently Asked Questions (continued)

What was the last bird you needed?

Though I had other “M” birds, I wanted to add a Yellow-billed Magpie to the menagerie. Not only is it a pretty bird with a descriptive name, it has an important story to tell. Over the last few years, over 50% of its population has been lost to habitat destruction and the West Nile Virus. I am hoping the book will bring a little more attention to its plight.

How much travel was required to complete the book?

Tons. My wife and I traveled extensively to capture the images for the book, though much of the photography was done while I was building my portfolio and before I started the book. Most of the images were taken in the Southeast, the Southwest, and California, though Alaska, the Caribbean, and Mexico were also on our itinerary. After our daughter was born, our travel diminished significantly until I started work on the book. Then, it was off to Minnesota for the Upland Sandpiper and Common Loons, to Arizona for the Zone-tailed Hawk, and to Southern California on multiple occasions for the Xantus’s Murrelet.

What was your most memorable moment photographing the birds for the book?

I’ve had so many great ones, especially traveling the country with my wife in our trailer. But probably the most memorable was sitting in a blind photographing birds with my 10-month-old little girl on my lap. Every time a bird came in, she squealed with delight. Even though she scared most of the birds away, I was still able to get a couple of keeper images, including the Rufous Hummingbird and the Mourning Dove/White-winged Dove images that are in the book.

Have you ever written professionally before?

B is for Bufflehead is my first book, but hopefully not my last. However, I was the Co-Editor for the Sports Section of my school paper many years ago. I co-wrote a weekly column for the paper as well.

Why did you write in the first person for each of the birds?

I had worked pretty hard on the first draft of the text and plopped my daughter on my lap and began to read it to her. She quickly hopped off in search of anything more interesting. Obviously, I needed to try something different, and writing in the first person allowed me to make the birds more engaging and captivating.

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Frequently Asked Questions (continued)

Why did you choose to write the book for a wide range of learning levels?

I wanted the book to appeal to a wide range of kids and to grow with them as their learning needs change. The photographs, letters and names are suitable as a standalone toddler book. The simple prose accompanying each image is intended to spark an interest in younger children about the wonders of birds while providing a few fun and educational concepts and facts. The back section of the book serves as a reference for older children (and adults) who want to learn more about their favorite birds from the book.

Why did you decide to self-publish?

I could come up with a lot of reasons, but mostly it boiled down to three: editorial control, timing, and financial. I had an idea of what I wanted my book to be and how I wanted it to look, and I didn't want to lose that control. I wanted (and needed) the book to be available by the holiday season, so I had to get it completed quickly. Adding a publisher to the mix would have delayed that. Finally, many authors pour their heart and soul into a book, only to reap a dollar or two in royalties. By self-publishing, I am able to make more per book, provided I'm able to sell them. That's where my business experience in sales and marketing should help me, though I must admit, the stigma attached to self-publishers is worse than I expected. . . .

What has been the hardest obstacle to overcome in getting your book to market?

Ignorance. And mostly my ignorance. It is a pretty steep learning curve trying to get a book to market. I've missed a lot of deadlines in the self-publisher's playbook and spent some money with little or no return, but generally I'm happy with how the marketing is progressing. Fortunately, I've been lucky enough to make some wonderful contacts who have helped me get the book rolling, especially in the nature/birding marketplace.

Who did your layout, design, and editing?

Because I'm pretty handy with Photoshop and I had an idea of how I wanted the book to look, I did all the layout and design. That doesn't mean I wasn't open to advice. Neither the covers nor the title were my first choices; fortunately, my wife and my sister's family convinced me to change them to what they are now. For editorial help, I again relied on family and friends.

How long have you been a professional photographer?

Using the term "professional" loosely, about 6 or 7 years. Most of that time was devoted to building a portfolio of nature images. I have done a little portrait work, especially with kids, but I found that the digital age has driven the profitability down for that market. When I finally shot the Xantus's, I refocused my camera back on nature where it belongs.

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Frequently Asked Questions (continued)

What did you do before you were a nature photographer?

I spent about 20 years working in manufacturing, mostly in the heating and air-conditioning industry. My last assignment was running a small manufacturer, Amana Heating and Air-conditioning in Fayetteville, TN.

Why did you become a nature photographer?

Several years ago, I was given the opportunity for a career change (i.e. reorganized out of a job). About the same time I met a woman who was given a similar opportunity. So I decided to try something completely different, and I pursued my passion for nature and photography, and she elected to join me. As I built my portfolio, we traveled around North America in our trailer enjoying our beautiful continent and the wildlife it holds. Along the way, we married and had a daughter. After such an experience, the corporate world just couldn't compete.

What kind of equipment do you use?

I am a Nikon shooter, and now strictly digital. I travel with three camera bodies and an array of lenses from a 12mm wide angle to a 400mm telephoto.

What is your next project?

At my first book show in October, that was the first question many people asked me, and frankly I had to laugh. I've only had the book back from the printer for a few weeks, and I think I need to get this one flying off shelves before I work on my next one. That said, it doesn't mean I don't have a few ideas percolating around in the back of my head.

Why did you choose to donate a portion of the proceeds from B is for Bufflehead to charity, and how did you choose the ones you did?

I think it is important to give back to the community and I wanted to partner the book with conservation and environmental education efforts. The Muir Heritage Land Trust in Contra Costa County, CA is dedicated to preserving open space and important habitat where I grew up and currently live. The Dauphin Island Bird Sanctuaries organization works to protect critical migratory habitat in my wife's home state of Alabama. Both organizations are well respected and do great work protecting land for generations to come.

What are your hopes for the book?

Besides selling lots and lots of copies, I hope the book can help introduce nature to our children. Children today are spending too much time indoors on their computers and gaming consoles, and I hope the book helps to get them interested in the natural world and gets them outside to experience it.

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Frequently Asked Questions (continued)

Does the book have a website?

Yes, www.bisforbufflehead.com. Though a work in progress, the site will not only promote the book, but also provide children and educators a place to learn about birds. I'm including Do-It-Yourself projects such as feeders, birdbaths, birdhouses, and even suet recipes. I am also including lesson plans on how to use the book to teach children simple concepts such as colors and anatomy and more advanced concepts such as feeding, habitats, migration, adaptation, and conservation. The site also includes links to other sites where kids can learn more about birds.

Where can we buy the book?

B is for Bufflehead will be available nationally on November 10th. Then, you will be able to purchase the book online at www.bisforbufflehead.com and on the Barnes and Noble and Amazon websites. Also, more and more local bookstores are signing up to carry the book everyday. Many nature stores, such as Wild Birds Unlimited, have signed up to carry the book as well.

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B is for Bufflehead

The Story behind B is for Bufflehead

When I was looking for a way to use my photography to help introduce my daughter to the wonders of nature, a friend suggested creating an ABC photo book. My first thought was “aren’t there enough of those already?”

After some thought and a little research, my wife and I decided to create an ABC book that would introduce kids to the birds of North America. We wanted to engage little ones without intimidating them, so choosing the right birds to include was essential.

We started with a target list of silly sounding names and funny looking birds. We then added birds that had interesting stories to tell. We had no choice for the letters U, X, and Z, as only one species occurs in North America for each of them. We also wanted to use birds with descriptive names that could help teach concepts, instead of birds named for obscure ornithologists of years gone by. Once we had the target list, a quick comparison to my portfolio showed I had a lot of work to do. However, I didn’t realize how daunting the task at hand would turn out to be or how long it would take to finish it.

Fortunately, locating many of the birds I needed to complete the alphabet was simplified by the birding listservs on the internet. The people on Minnesota’s “mnbird” listserv helped me track down the Upland Sandpiper. To help me improve my loon images, one gentleman even volunteered to be my loon guide for a day. The folks on Arizona and New Mexico’s “BIRDWG05” listserv pointed me to potential spots for Zone-tailed Hawks. The people on Mt. Diablo Audubon’s “EBB Sightings” listserv patiently helped me find targeted birds in my own area.

The most trying bird in my quest was by far the Xantus’s Murrelet. These little guys spend most of the year out at sea and only come to two small islands off the coast of Southern California to breed. To make things even more difficult, they leave their nest burrows before dawn and return after dusk. Therefore, the only way to find them is on the open ocean, not an easy task considering they are less than ten inches beak to tail. After two seasons of failed attempts to photograph one, I was rewarded on a pelagic trip hosted by the Los Angeles Audubon Society. Ironically, they weren’t even supposed to be seen on that particular trip. So after two years of chasing birds around the country, I had finally completed the photography.

The book is designed to be easily adapted to each child’s level. The photos, letters, and names are perfect for the earliest learners. The accompanying text is intended to intrigue young children

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The Story behind B is for Bufflehead (continued)

with a few fun facts about each bird. For older kids (and adults), I've provided a section that offers more detailed information on each species, including range, habitat, and feeding preferences. For fun, I've also included a section of baby birds and interesting images for a who's who challenge.

Throughout the process of creating this book, my knowledge and appreciation of birds has grown tremendously. I've also succeeded in exposing our little one to their marvels. I'll never forget the experience of trying to photograph with her sitting on my lap, squealing with delight as each new bird approached. I hope that her enjoyment of our feathered friends will last her a lifetime and that B is for Bufflehead will inspire other future bird lovers to get outside and enjoy the wonderful world of birds.

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B is for Bufflehead

The Birding Marketplace

Why stock a children's book about birds? Because birding is big business. In fact, the United States Fish and Wildlife Service estimates that there are 48 million active birders in the United States. They also estimate that birders spend nearly \$36 billion annually on their hobby. B is for Bufflehead will appeal to those birders, a majority of whom are over 45, that want to share their passion for birds with their favorite little ones.

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General Information

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Contact: Steve Hutchcraft, stevehutchcraft@photohutch.com, 925-324-5510

National Release Date: November 10, 2009, National Young Readers Day

Local and Select Retailer Release: October 2009

Price: \$19.95

Initial Run: 5000 copies

Binding: Hardcover; sewn and case bound

Trim: 8 1/2 x 8 1/2 inches

Pages: 80

Photographs: 85

Color: Full color, full bleed throughout

Genre: Children's Non-fiction, Nature, Education, Alphabet Books

Audience: Children ages 1-10

Targeted Market: Grandparents, Parents, Nature Lovers, Birders,

Websites

www.bisforbufflehead.com

- Comprehensive look at the book, including several sample pages
- Educational projects for kids
- Lesson plans for teachers (in development)
- Links to other fun and educational birding sites
- Media Room

www.photohutch.com

- Author's photography site with dedicated section on B is for Bufflehead.
- Link to www.bisforbufflehead.com

Facebook Pages—B is for Bufflehead

Twitter—PhotoHutch

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General Information (continued)

Non-profit Partnerships

- Muir Heritage Land Trust, Martinez, CA
- Dauphin Island Bird Sanctuary, Dauphin Island, AL

Personal Appearance Calendar

Radio Programs

- Birds and Nature, WMNY, Pittsburgh, PA, November 7
- The Wild Side, 1370 WVLY, Wheeling, WV, November 8

Book signings

- Songbird Station, Columbia, MO, October 9
- Northern California Independent Booksellers Association, Oakland, CA, October 10
- Wild Birds Unlimited, Pleasant Hill, CA, November 12, 14
- Storyteller, Lafayette, CA, Early November
- North American Nature Photographers Association, Reno, NV, January 2010

Audubon Society meetings

- Mt. Diablo Audubon, December 3

Charitable Events

- Muir Heritage Land Trust, Autumn Celebration, November 12