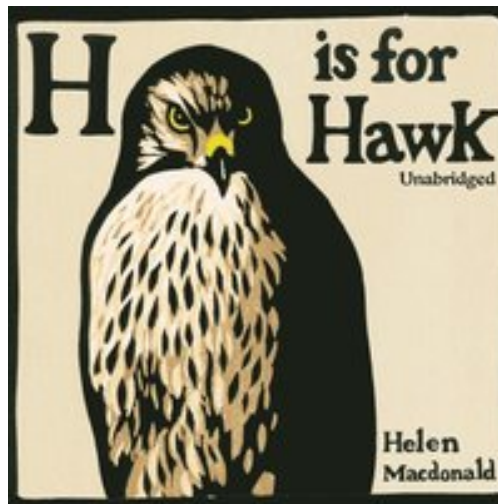


H is for Hawk

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Helen MacDonalld

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Winner of the 2014 Samuel Johnson Prize Shortlisted for the 2014 Costa Biography Award
In real life, goshawks resemble sparrowhawks the way leopards resemble housecats. Bigger, yes. But bulkier, bloodier, deadlier, scarier, and much, much harder to see. Birds of deep woodland, not gardens, they're the birdwatchers' dark grail. As a child Helen Macdonald was determined to become a falconer. She learned the arcane terminology and read all the classic books, including T. H. White's tortured masterpiece, *The Goshawk*, which describes White's struggle to train a hawk as a spiritual contest. When her father dies and she is knocked sideways by grief, she becomes obsessed with the idea of training her own goshawk. She buys Mabel for GBP800 on a Scottish quayside and takes her home to Cambridge. Then she fills the freezer with hawk food and unplugs the phone, ready to embark on the long, strange business of trying to train this wildest of animals. 'To train a hawk you must watch it like a hawk, and so gain the ability to predict what it will do next. Eventually you don't see the hawk's body language at all. You seem to feel what it feels. The hawk's apprehension becomes your own. As the days passed and I put myself in the hawk's wild mind to tame her, my humanity was burning away.' Destined to be a classic of nature writing, *H is for Hawk* is a record of a spiritual journey - an unflinchingly honest account of Macdonald's struggle with grief during the difficult process of the hawk's taming and her own untaming. At the same time, it's a kaleidoscopic biography of the brilliant and troubled novelist T. H. White, best known for *The Once and Future King*. It's a book about memory, nature and nation, and

how it might be possible to try to reconcile death with life and love. Narrated by the Author.



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