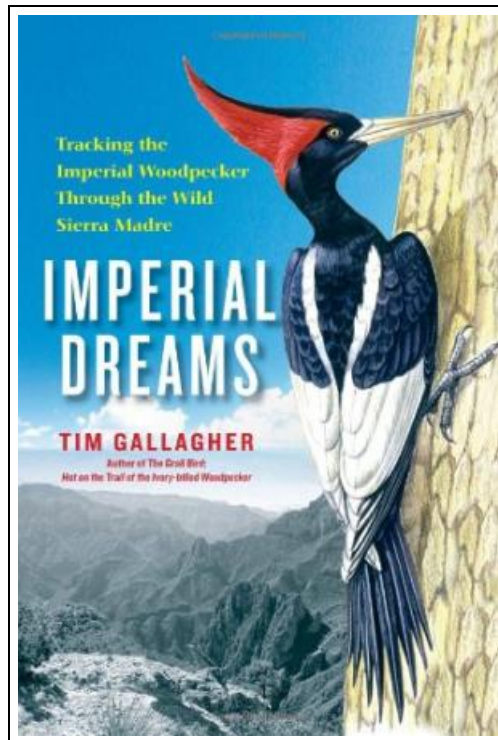


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Reviews

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(Zetta Armstrong III)*

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Atria. 1 Cloth(s), 2013. hard. Book Condition: New. Explorer and naturalist Tim Gallagher is obsessed with rare birds. Here he follows up his 2005 book *The Grail Bird* with an account of his search for the imperial woodpecker in Mexico. Larger even than the ivory-billed woodpecker, the imperial is the largest of all *Campephilus*, last filmed in 1956 and last spotted in the 1990s in the Sierra Madre Occidental. The savagely beautiful landscape is home to a rich variety of wildifeas well as to Mexican drug cartels. Guided by a map of sightings bestowed on him, Gallagher treks through this mysterious, historically untamable territory, though his quest takes a harrowing turn as he encounters armed drug traffickers, burning houses, and fleeing villagers. "With a 'natural-treasure map' in hand, Gallagher intends to hike the mountains where the imperial woodpecker once lived and determine once and for all if it has been lost forever. His passion is stirring, but it is the narrative power of his words that will pull readers in. As he follows the trail of those who sighted the bird and interviews people who carry its call in their memories, Gallagher tells the story of the country he visits, from Pancho Villa to Geronimo, Mormon settlers, Aldo Leopold, and now, sadly, the terrifying blight of narcotraficantes. In the midst of guns and drugs, the bird men remain dedicated and determined. Gallagher returned home with a story for the ages and gives armchair travelers, bird lovers, and history buffs a spectacular view of the struggle for modern Mexico's soul. Gallagher has set a gold standard for nature writing. A triumph."Booklist (starred review) 279.

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