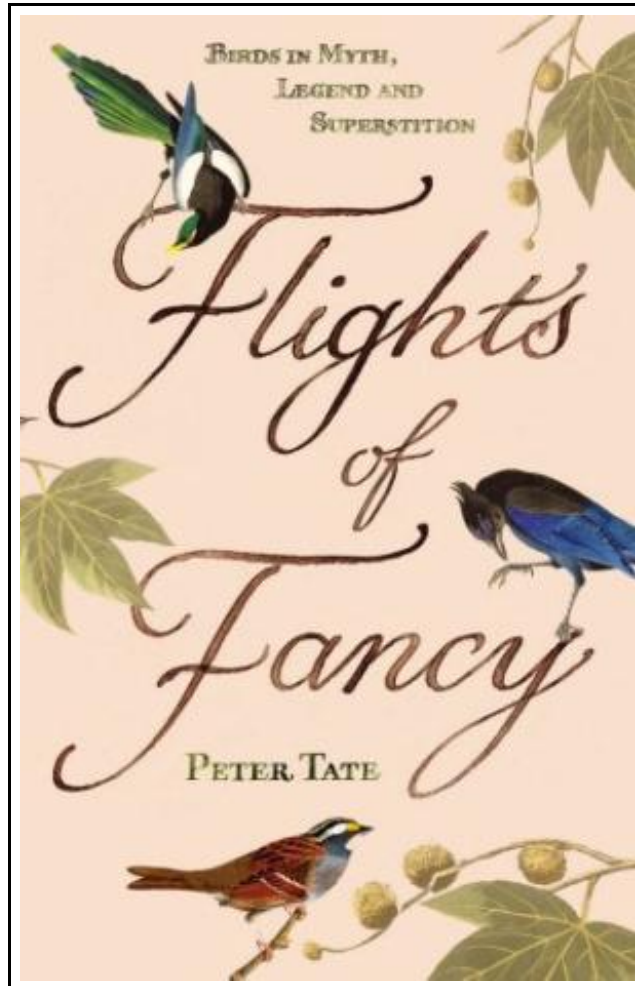


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Cornerstone. Paperback. Book Condition: new. BRAND NEW, Flights of Fancy: Birds in Myth, Legend and Superstition, Peter Tate, Did you know that Barnacle geese were once classified as fish? That both the Cherokees and the ancient Greeks were convinced that cranes regularly fought battles with pygmies? That the Swiss believed that any cuckoo that managed to survive for a year would turn into an eagle? Throughout history, birds have fascinated and intrigued mankind, so it is hardly surprising that an astonishingly rich body of myth, legend and superstition has grown up around them. "Flights of Fancy" explores the stories told about 30 of the world's best-known species, from the blackbird to the wryneck, drawing on traditions from every quarter of the globe. Some of the stories included clearly arose as a result of faulty observation, such as the widely held belief that nightjars sucked milk from cows. Others stemmed from attempts to explain unusual aspects of appearance or behaviour. But the vast majority seem to have their origins in people's delight in inventing stories - whether the legend that the blackbird was originally white, or the suggestion that witches kept owls as their familiars. And, as Peter Tate points out, what is so extraordinary is that the same story often crops up in many different parts of the world: the belief that eagles and snakes are sworn enemies can be found as far apart as Iraq and Mexico; the view that the raven is the harbinger of bad luck can be found throughout Europe from Denmark to Spain. A fascinating and wonderfully entertaining read, this is the ideal book for anyone interested in birds or myths - or both.

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