Central Park is an 843-acre oasis in the middle of Manhattans vast network of steel, concrete, and glass. It is also, according to the New York City Audubon Society, one of the top ten birding spots in America. More than 200 species pass through the park on their migratory routes each spring and fall, close to one third of the bird species found in the United States. For the past two and a half years Cal Vornberger has been in the park every day photographing these feathered park residents. The best of those images are now collected in this gorgeous volume.

Vornberger's photos capture birds engaged in all types of activities: feeding, bathing, caring for their young, flying, singing. Among the more than 100 species featured are warblers, egrets, herons, kingfishers, a boreal owl, and hawks (including the famous Pale Male, whose eviction last December from its ritzy Fifth Avenue perch sparked nationwide news stories). Packaged inside the book is a removable foldout pocket guide. Vornberger's spectacular photography, interspersed with his comments about birds, the park, and photography, will appeal to all bird-watchers, nature lovers, photography aficionados, and visitors to New York's Central Park.

My Personal Review:
Birds flying up and down the Atlantic flyway inevitably encounter a huge patch of concrete, asphalt and brick. In the center they see a large patch of green, with plants and insects. That's why Central Park in New York City is one of the best birding spots in North America. Several hundred avian species can be found there. In addition, there is another species there in large number, Homo sapiens birdwatcher and still another smaller subspecies, Homo sapiens bird photographer.
With all these birds, birders and bird photographers, there was a huge niche for a book called "Birds of Central Park". Cal Vornberger has filled that niche.

Vornberger has digitally captured the wide variety of birds that pass through Central Park. He presents these birds by season rather than in taxonomical order, which helps to give an impression of the bird life in the park the way that a birder would see it. Like all good photographers Cal is concerned with the light. But his style is different from those of other bird photographers, like Art Morris or Tom Vezo. Instead of being concerned with artistic composition, or deep focus to give a sense of the environment, the author seems aimed at a sense of intimacy with the individual birds. Most of the birds pictured fill the frame completely, forcing us to focus on the individual.

What is amazing is not only how close Vornberger has gotten to his subjects, but how he has caught them in the details of their daily lives. I have never seen so many photographs of birds with food, whether insects, berries or crustaceans, in their mouth. And he has caught many of these birds in flight, reminding me of the bird pictures of the great Eliot Porter. But the artist that Vornberger's portraits most remind me of is the great John James Audubon. There is this same sense of intimacy and presentation against a subtle background.

Occasionally, Vornberger brings his own special aesthetic to the book, as when he pictures a cardinal taking off in the snow on the face page to the winter section. The bird's wings are cut off, the bird faces away from us and the only way that the reader can tell that the white background is snow is from the white snowflakes that follow the bird's ascent. And yet this picture captures a moment better than most technically perfect photographs.

Vornberger's occasional remarks interspersed with the pictures often present a little known fact about the subject or give a hint to other bird photographers hoping to duplicate his accomplishments.

This book should not be considered a guide to Central Park's birds, although there is a convenient pocket guide in a slipcover in the back of the book. Instead it is a testimonial to the birds of Central Park. New York lovers, birders and photographers will want to page through this book to recall the avian pleasures of the park.

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Birds of Central Park by Cal Vornberger - 5 Star Customer Reviews and Lowest Price!