An eloquent meditation on today's natural world

Red Dirt Country
Field Notes and Essays on Nature

By John Gifford

From airport birdwatching and getting lost in an urban forest, to rethinking society’s ill-fated war on wildlife and our struggle to reshape the American landscape, Red Dirt Country invites readers to savor the joys of our natural surroundings. Written by Oklahoma native John Gifford, this timely book is a literary meditation on the Oklahoma landscape and the rich biodiversity of the southern Great Plains.

Inspired by such naturalists as Gilbert White, Susan Fenimore Cooper, and Henry David Thoreau, the essays in Red Dirt Country reveal the rewards of close observation and the author’s deep respect for the natural world. With his keen eye for detail, Gifford chronicles life along a suburban creek, noting from month to month the habits of the area’s birds, mammals, and trees. With particular attention, he captures the grace and majesty of that sleek raptor, the Mississippi Kite, during its yearly nesting cycle in the southern plains.

Even as Gifford extols the surprising beauty of Oklahoma, he ponders the larger environmental concerns and challenges that we face today, such as the cataclysmic wildfires and droughts threatening the American West, and modern society’s impact on vital lands and wildlife.

A compelling work of creative nonfiction, Red Dirt Country harkens back to America’s most beloved masterpieces of nature writing. At the same time, Gifford provides a distinctly contemporary reflection on today’s suburban wilderness, inspiring us all to develop a deeper connection to our natural surroundings.

John Gifford is a freelance writer, essayist, and naturalist. His work has been widely published for more than two decades and has appeared in American Forests, the Saturday Evening Post, Southwest Review, the Atlantic, and the Christian Science Monitor.