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Book Review

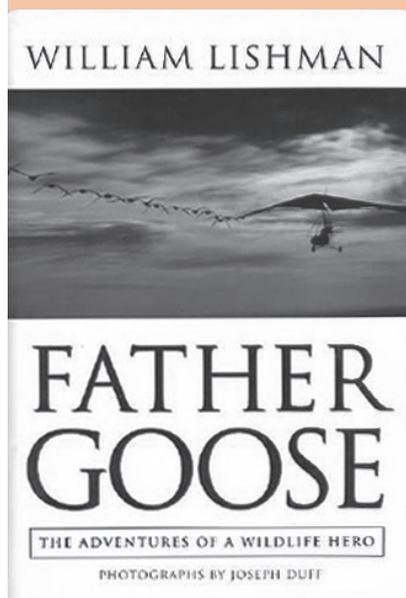
William Lishman

Father Goose

Orion, London, 1995.

ISBN 0752802380

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Bill Lishman is the eccentric brilliant Canadian artist-sculpture-poet who had a vision of flying with birds, and turned this into the environmentally, eco-evolutionary, revolutionary idea of using ultra-light aircraft to teach formerly migrating birds to migrate. You may know the charming film *Fly Away Home* (1996: directed by Carole Ballard, with Jeff Daniels and Anna Paquin), or have read other articles on this, such as Jennifer Ackerman "No Mere Birds" on cranes (*National Geographic*, April 2004 pp. 38-57), or the children's book by Shirley Tanaka *The Illustrated Father Goose* (Little Brown, Ontario, 1995), or the many related web-sites, such as Lishman's foundation <http://www.operationmigration.org/> (last accessed 28 March 2007).

What is the issue? Human settlement, across North America, and in Northern Asia and Europe, has resulted in barriers of agriculture and urbanisation that stopped many migratory birds from being able to move from lush summer pastures to temperate winter safety. But a human pilot, in one of the traditional meanings of the word, can navigate the birds safely from landing paddock, to paddock, so that a flock of hand-reared, human-imprinted, engine-accustomed, ultra-light-imprinted goslings can be safely guided (piloted) to a winter refuge. If this is done once, the birds' instinct lets them retrace their flight-path back north for summer, and mating, and the next stage of a humanly-restored natural life-cycle.

Of particular interest for Australian readers is the mention (Chapter 5: Ultralight Romance) of Bill Moyes, the Australian ultra-light pioneer who adapted the flexible delta-winged Rogallo device (a two-sided wedge-shaped parachute, if you can imagine such a thing) to carry a human. This was the stimulus, in the late 1960s, for renewing the initial pioneering experiments of Otto Lilienthal. Oddly, perhaps, Lishman says nothing about Hargreaves, the other Australian pioneer, whose study of kites led both to the invention of the box-kite, and directly to the Wright brothers' use of a box-kite-like bi-plane

Lishman writes lucidly, heart-warmingly, while revealing his burning curiosity for many things. This is what makes the book so rich for anyone who wants to explore the mathematics, science, and history of such topics as: seasons, ecosystems, bird flight, bird brains, turbulence, thermals, bow-waves, bird migration, human flight, welding, Colt revolvers, modern art, the Lunar Module, ultralights and Lilienthal (and the Wright brothers, Montgomery, and other pioneers of flying), Konrad Lorenz and imprinting of hatchling on adult or simulated-adult, aero-engines, Autohenge (a latter-day scale-replica Stonehenge made of crushed carbodies), Antarctic penguins, Peter Scott, ... This is a book that tingles the connections in your brain (well, it did that for me — maybe it will for you)! Did I say eco-warrior?

Maps, history, dates, patterns, flight, physics, logic, problem solving, calculations, chancey weather, ... mathematics!

As "Father Goose," Mr. Lishman was best known to the rest of the world for Operation Migration, the non-profit that formed out of the bird project. But his work was so varied that, when asked by strangers what he did for a living, his typical response was to ask: "Can you start with an easier question?" His eclectic talents meant he could be described in any of the following ways: Artist (mainly metal sculptures, including a 13-metre high "iceberg" sculpture installed at the Canadian Museum of Nature in 2015), inventor (a rocking chair made of curved metal pipes), Bill 'Father Goose' Lishman taught Canadian geese to fly with him. (Submitted by Carmen Lishman).

comments. Read Story Transcript. Carmen Lishman says there was "never a dull moment" growing up with Bill Lishman for a father. "He grew up on a farm so he always said the best hours are between 5 and 8 a.m.," she told As It Happens host Carol Off. "So we were up early. We were outside." Lishman — an award-winning artist, writer and filmmaker — was the first person to lead a flight of geese with an aircraft, a feat that inspired the 1996 Oscar-nominated fil