

# Letters from Gerald – Rob Butler

## Testimonials

*“BRAVO! Letters from Gerald engages readers from the very first page. It is the story of a young woman in post-war London, Eleanor Hutchinson, whose working-class upbringing and gender demands bravery and determination if she is to realize her dream of becoming an ornithologist. Scientific circles in the early 20th century were male dominated and the challenges were intimidating and often insurmountable for women hoping to break into the closed circle of academia and scientific research. Eleanor, having lost her parents in the London bombings and having no financial resources to attend university, takes a job as a librarian at the British Library and creates her own educational curriculum in science and ornithology. Her choice of a research subject, a backyard Robin she names Thales, the Greek father of science, is a remarkable part of the story. The cast of characters in the novel, from all walks of life and social classes, provide a unique window into Eleanor’s character and the cultural hurdles she faces. I won’t give away the mystery that unfolds with her back-and-forth correspondences with Gerald except to say that it stiffens the very backbone of a young woman whose self-discipline and determination would be inspirational to any young person considering a career in science.”*

– [Audrey D. Benedict, Author & Naturalist](#)

*“HIGHLY RECOMMENDED!! Marvellous. Memorable. Surprising. Rob Butler has skillfully combined the coming-of-age of a determined young woman with mystery, history, feminism, classism, and a refreshing dose of nature. Eleanor has been fending for herself since her parents were killed during the WW2 bombing of London. She was but a teenager. As this novel begins, early post-war, Eleanor is an assistant librarian at the British Library, while harbouring heart-felt ambitions of becoming an ornithologist. Her dreams are tempered by self-doubt given the male, privileged-class environment of her time. As when reading an Agatha Christie “who done it” murder mystery, the reader is compelled to turn page after page, paying attention to clues while puzzling just who is this Gerald character – the unseen, prolific letter writer who offers Eleanor timely encouragement. With delightful metaphors and many a pun, along with insights into the world of ornithology, this is a book well worth reading. For adults and teenagers.”*

– [Pat & Rosemarie Keough, Photographers and Authors of Antarctica](#)

*“Letters from Gerald is a wonderful read that engages the reader from start to finish. When I started to read it I could not put it down. The main characters in the book are never dull and you have an invested interest in what happens to them. Eleanor, the protagonist, endures trials and experiences sexism as a female of the era and in the field of ornithology, where she is subject to classism and elitism; which is something many women can relate to even today in 2024. I found myself relating to many of Eleanor’s trials in this still very male dominated field. Butler, who is an ornithologist and conservationist, puts his love and deep knowledge of birds into the book, which is evident. He lifts up and celebrates Eleanor who has many self doubts, showcasing the importance and equality of women birders and scientists. A must read for anyone who enjoys birds and wants to conserve and protect them!”*

– [Melissa Hafting, birder, ecologist, conservationist, photographer, former Audubon Awards Judge, founder of the BC Young Birders Program and author of Dare to Bird - Exploring the Joy and Healing Power of Birds](#)

*“I enjoyed your book very much. I liked the rich interweaving of world events, ornithology, and clearly what are your own travel and cultural experiences. A story about the aftermath of WWII in England may not be a new theme, but your angle on it – a woman’s quest for adventure and desire to pursue her passion for birds during that period – is unique. I could personally relate to many of the far-flung geographic locations (England and its universities, pubs, and wildlife preserves, Scotland, Rio Napo to high Andes in South America, the wild Southern Ocean, Panama, Hawaii, Galapagos), descriptions of natural history museums (in which I’ve spent countless hours), and ornithology elements (people, publications, meetings). I’m glad you included the details in Author’s Notes and References. It greatly enriched the reading experience. As a matter of fact, it stimulated me to read the book again so that I could appreciate the depth of some of the story elements that I missed in the initial read. Finally, it was a pleasure to engage with a story featuring appealing characters with unpolluted motivations. The absence of gratuitous sleaze and vulgarity was refreshing. So hearty, congratulations on your first novel. I can’t wait for the movie. And I hope you’ve got another book in the works!”*

– [Geoffrey Hammerson, Biologist and Author](#)