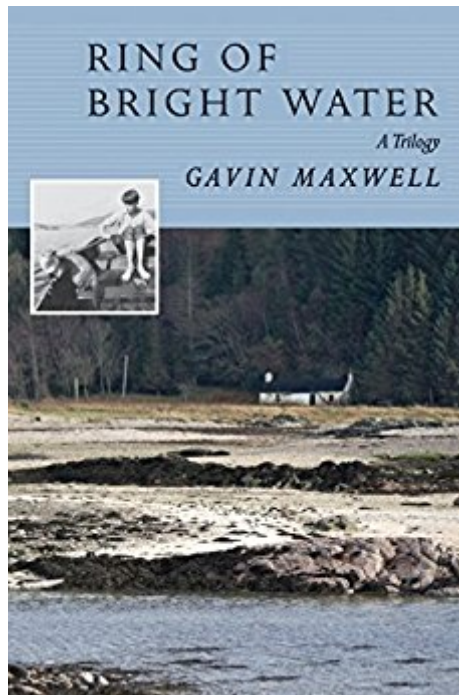




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Ring Of Bright Water: A Trilogy (Nonpareil Books Book 111)



Synopsis

This volume weaves together the Scottish otter stories from Gavin Maxwell's three non-fiction books, *Ring of Bright Water* (1960), *The Rocks Remain* (1963), and *Raven Meet Thy Brother* (1969). Maxwell was both an extraordinarily evocative writer and a highly unusual man. While touring the Iraqi marshes, he was captivated by an otter and became a devoted advocate of and spokesman for the species. He moved to a remote house in the Scottish highlands, co-habiting there with three otters and living an idyllic and isolated life "at least for a while. Fate, fame, and fire conspired against this paradise, and it, too, came to an end, though the journey was filled with incident and wonder. Maxwell was also talented as an artist, and his sinuous line drawings of these amphibious and engaging creatures, and the homes they occupied, illustrate his story. This book stands as a lasting tribute to a man, his work, and his passion. It was received and has endured as a classic for its portrait not only of otters but also of a man who endured heartaches and disappointments, whose life embodied both greatness and tragedy. He writes with rare eloquence about his birth, his devotion to the beloved Scottish highlands, and the wildlife he loved, while refusing to ignore the darker aspects of his nature and of nature in its larger sense.

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Customer Reviews

Gavin Maxwell (b. 1914, d. 1969) was a Scottish naturalist, adventurer, writer, and someone who proceeded through life to a much different beat than most of us. It helped that he was an aristocrat and came from money. From 1948 to 1968, he lived off and on at "CamusfeÀrna", which is what he called his remote house on the coast of the West Highlands. He had many adventures there, most of which centered around his interactions with various animals -- including stags, wildcats, seals, porpoises, killer whales, and numerous wildfowl -- but the stars of his naturalist world were a handful of otters. He wrote three books about his otters and his life at CamusfeÀrna - "Ring of Bright Water" (1959), "The Rocks Remain" (1963), and "Raven Seek Thy Brother" (1968). This trilogy brings all three together, although parts of the second and third books that deal with matters of Maxwell's life other than CamusfeÀrna and his otters have been omitted. RING OF BRIGHT WATER: A TRILOGY has two interrelated aspects to it. The first concerns a philosophical yearning for a wild and unsullied natural world, in which man lives by himself and "at one with nature", not unlike Thoreau's "Walden". Maxwell expresses this philosophy in his Foreword: "I am convinced that man has suffered in his separation from the soil and from the other living creatures of the world; the evolution of his intellect has outrun his needs as an animal, and as yet he must still, for security, look long at some portion of the earth as it was before he tampered with it." And so Maxwell retreated to CamusfeÀrna (with occasional trips abroad, such as to his brother's villas on a Greek isle or to his family "estate" or to his apartment in London - Maxwell could afford to indulge his naturalistic instincts in ways unavailable to most of us). But the world - and, I think, a certain element of Maxwell's own personality - wouldn't permit a permanent idyllic retreat to nature, and over its course the TRILOGY traces the sad death of the dream of CamusfeÀrna. The other aspect of the TRILOGY - the bright and shining aspect - is provided by the otters. Five, in particular, are featured in the book: Mij (a previously unknown species from the marshes of Iraq), Edel and Teko (from West Africa), and Monday and Mossy (native Scottish otters). Maxwell kept all five for extended periods of time as personal companions and household pets. Their playfulness, affection, and intelligence are captivating. Overall, the book infectiously communicates what Maxwell describes as "a thralldom to otters, an otter fixation, that I have since found to be shared by most other people who have ever owned one." Here is just one of seemingly countless anecdotes, which takes place after CamusfeÀrna received a rare heavy snow: "We improvised a toboggan, to the huge delight of Teko, who would straddle it to be towed round at ever-increasing speed. He seemed to understand the

idea very soon, and when we pulled the toboggan to the top of a slope he would climb on it and wait with obvious impatience for someone to shove it off down the slope. As it began to slow he would kick with his hind legs to maintain the impetus, and when his chariot came to rest he would work angrily at the ropes with his teeth, as if by so doing he could once more coax it into movement."At the same time, the book demonstrates time and again that an otter is not simply a more exotic dog or cat. Keeping an otter as a pet is a demanding and time-intensive proposition, and it has its dangers: Edel and Teko, the two of Maxwell's otters that became most famous, both launched sudden, savage attacks on humans, one resulting in the loss of two of a lad's fingers. This edition is exemplary, as is usual for publications of David R. Godine. It is sturdily bound and contains dozens of drawings and photographs. It also has the considerable virtue of including the relevant portions of the second and third books about CamusfeÁrna, rather than being limited to the 1959 book, "The Ring of Bright Water". If, due to its fame, you read only that 1959 book, you will be getting only half the story of the otters. As enchanting as the otters are, I don't much care for Gavin Maxwell, who comes across as prickly, arrogant, and egocentric. And RING OF BRIGHT WATER: A TRILOGY is as much about Maxwell, perhaps even more so, as it is the otters.

I LOVED Mr. Maxwell's passion - it simply never went away. It was evident and evocative in every sentence and every paragraph. I would recommend this book to anyone who wants to know what it feels like inside the mind of a passionate and committed lifelong outdoors person. I chose this rating because I read a lot, and I know how rare it is to be touched as deeply as this book touched me. In my opinion it is essential to read all three books, not just "Ring." They are flawless as one long book. The final chapter of "Raven, Seek Thy Brother" is as fine a piece of writing as I've ever chanced across, anywhere.

Oh, how I enjoyed the first of the three books. I've often heard about this book but never had the opportunity to read it. The author's description of everything, whether in nature, in his precious pet or even the inside of his humble abode, fascinated me. I'm looking forward to reading the next book in this series.

Poignant slice of an extraordinary life. The sequels are, although true, are kind of sad and depressing.

The writing is good, but the author comes across as self indulgent and insensitive to society.

This is one of my favorite books, so this particular copy is a holiday gift for my niece, who is also an animal lover! I was VERY CLOSE to Gavin's home in Scotland this past June, so I have a very good idea of the terrain and coast. I would recommend this book to anyone who appreciates the lives of animals AND Scotland!

always loved this book

gorgeous book!

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