

# Our Bird

by

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Illustrated by  
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There are many kinds of birds in the world. Some live in the forests. Some live in the deserts. Some live by the sea. Some live in the dark caves, and some live in towns and villages.

Birds are alike in many ways. All birds lay eggs. All birds have wings. All birds have feathers as well.

But birds are different, too.

Not all birds can fly.

Some birds are too large to fly.

The African ostrich is the largest bird in the world. It has long legs. It has a long neck. It has a small head. It can run fast like a car. It runs in the desert. It cannot fly, though. It uses its wings only for balance.

But our bird is smaller than a pigeon.







Some birds are aggressive and fearless.

This bird is called a fork-tailed drongo in English.

It is called jakweh in Mende.

It is called ken tankla in Temne.

It is called gusensi in Limba.

The jakweh has a strong black beak.

It has black feet.

It has black feathers.

It has a forked tail.

It builds its nest with the feathers of other birds.

So it chases larger birds for feathers.

It attacks birds that come close to its nest.

It will force a smaller hunting bird to drop its prey.

Our bird is not aggressive.







Did you see the hawk? Ta-ta ta-tah!

It is called gelei in Mende.

It is called en bal in Temne.

It is called gbinoh in Limba.

Oh, no, that was, too bad! That bird is wicked.  
The hawk just took the fish from the tray up on  
the roof.

But our bird does not take things from people. It  
feeds on insects in the bush.







Some birds are scary.

This bird is called an owl in English.

It is called mbui in Mende.

It is called en unful in Temne.

It is called yigi in Limba.

The mbui has big eyes. It has a short, sharp, curved beak. It is the owl that makes that spooky sound at night, "whuuhuwhuuu."

But our bird will not scare you. Ours is a lovely bird, and it does not cause trouble for people.







Some birds are too cunning.

This bird is called a shakira in English.

It is called sekui in Mende.

It is called en gbankap in Temne.

It is called keteketeh in Limba.

The sekui has sharp talons like pliers. It hides in the dried leaves to catch chicks feeding behind the hens.

But our bird does not feed on flesh. It feeds on earth worms and giant ants, which it finds on cassava farms and in short and tall grass.







Wow! Sha-la-laaa! What a perfect bird!

That bird carries many things in its belly!

That bird flies too fast!

It is called an aeroplane in English.

It is called balui in Mende.

It is called en bill afal in Temne.

It is called balunn in Limba.

They say it can fly fast from Africa, our home, to Canada.

Our bird is afraid of crashing in the ocean. Our bird does not fly to faraway places.







Some birds are happy medical doctors.

This one is called a vulture in English.

It is called yibei in Mende.

It is called en yiba in Temne.

It is called yiba in Limba.

The yibei performs its operations on dead bodies.

But our bird is not a doctor. It is more like a watchful host. It looks like it is waiting to greet you.

It keeps its tail up like a flag, all day long as it flies around.







Some birds are too noisy.

This one is called the village weaver bird in English.

It is called mbakui in Mende.

It is called en gbankoro in Temne.

It is called songo in Limba.

The mbakui talks all day long, saying, "kwi..kwi.. kwiii..... kuikui".

But ours is a very quiet bird. It does not have time for noise, as it flies among branches of short trees, looking for grasshoppers to eat.







This bird is called the cattle egret in English.

It is called yonegbei in Mende.

It is called en tam in Temne.

It is called lalagbeh in Limba.

It is white like a happy cloud.

It has long feet.

It has a long neck and a long golden beak.

It walks behind cows in the grass, hoping to catch insects.

But our bird is brown like chocolate. It has white under its neck and above its chest. It is a bird that feeds alone.



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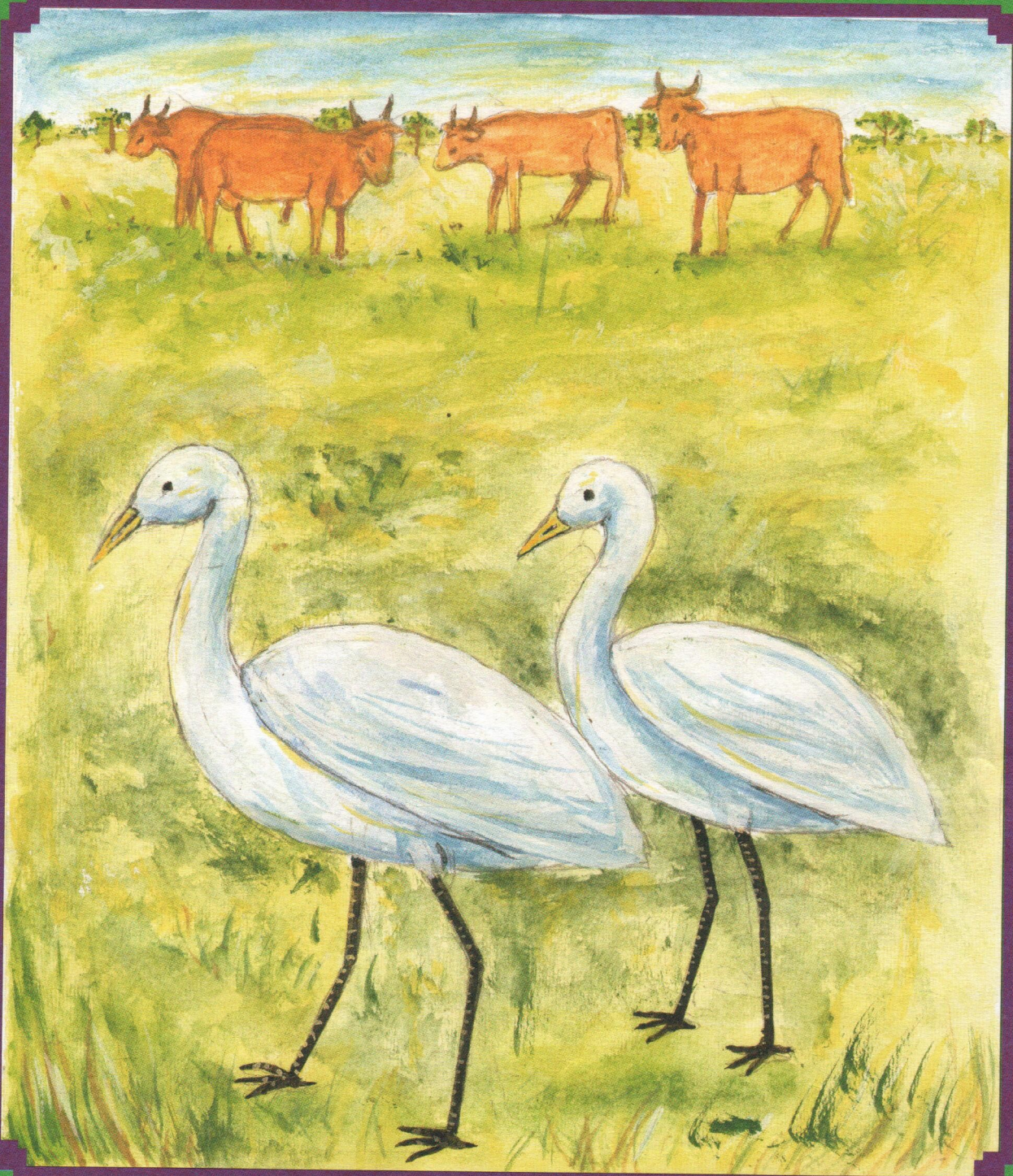
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Oh my goodness! Waa! Was that the sound of an earthquake?

No, no, not at all!

That bird is called a parrot in English.

It is called fabui in Mende.

It is called en puli in Temne.

It is called mitikondey in Limba.

The sound like pandemonium is parrots flying away.  
The parrots are going out to the forest to feed.

The parrots will return in a noisy crowd in the evening. Then farmers will know it's time to go home.

Our bird only feeds where it lives.

Our bird does not shout around like that.







Some birds get their names from what they do.

This one is called a Mombasa woodpecker in English.

It is called kpokpomanjei in Mende.

It is called ta gbongboh in Temne.

It is called kundondokoloh in Limba.

The woodpecker feeds on the bark of trees. The woodpecker pecks, pecks, pecks, pecks, pecks the wood with its strong beak.

That is why it is called a woodpecker.

Our bird has a soft beak. It has no time to peck hard wood.







Some birds live a risky life.

This one is called a laughing dove in English.

It is called bomukui in Mende.

It is called kaprem in Temne.

It is called horoto in Limba.

It thinks it is able to fly through any tiny space.

But that is how it hits a tree and dies. It thinks it can fly so fast.

So it closes its eyes when it flies over a small village like Mbelleh.

But it may hit a hut and die. We pick it up. We roast it. We eat it with cooked cassava.

Our bird loves us. But it keeps away from us because it knows we might want to roast it.







Oh my goodness!! Some birds are very romantic.

This one is called a rock dove in English.

It is called powei in Mende.

It is called kan fop in Temne.

It is called kuku in Limba.

The poweis keep kissing each other, time after time, whenever they are up on the roof.



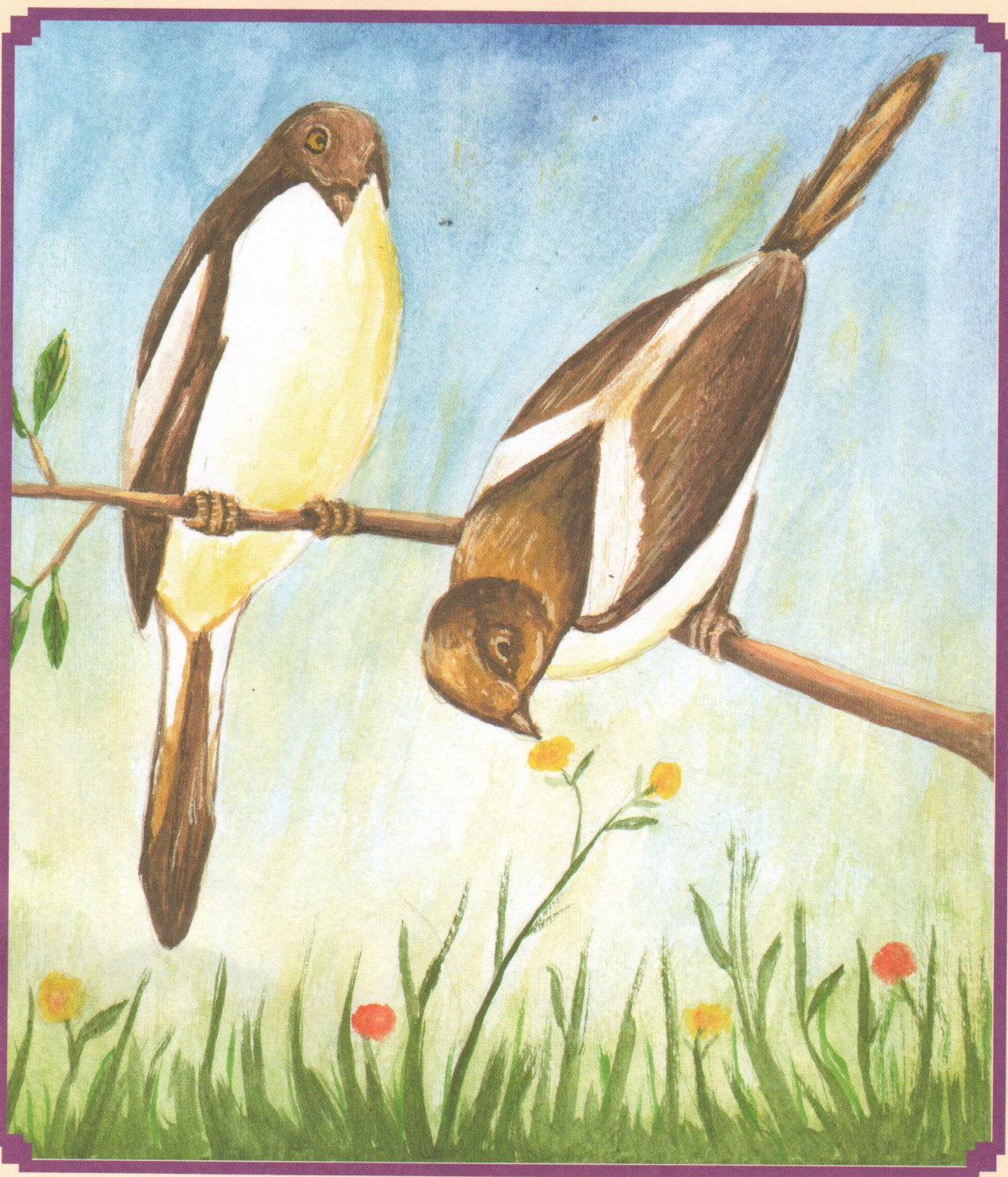




But our bird can sing like a wave on the ocean.  
This wonderful bird of ours is called jengbetutui.  
It sings its name all day long; Jangbetu..tu..tu..tu..  
tu..tu..tu..tu....

Our bird is called  
brown bush shrike in English,  
jengbetutui in Mende,  
enrrunu in Temne, and  
titima in Limba.







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Reading Sierra Leone books are written by Sierra Leonean authors and illustrated by Sierra Leonean artists. Each title tells a compelling story of contemporary Sierra Leonean children and young people. Titles in Reading Sierra Leone books include:

- City Girl • Tibujang Must Not Come • Gbargbartee and Tumbu • A Hunting Trip
- Sia and the Magic Basket • Amidu's Day Off • **Our Bird** • Yamah and the Tembeke Project

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### Reading Sierra Leone

is a collaborative initiative of PEN Sierra Leone and CODE. The goal of Reading Sierra Leone is to produce locally written and illustrated books that engage children and invite them, through reading and writing, to think, to learn and to improve their lives.

CODE is a Canadian NGO supporting Development through Education for over 50 years ([www.codecan.org](http://www.codecan.org)). PEN Sierra Leone is a local chapter of PEN International ([www.pen-international.org/centres/sierra-leone-centre/](http://www.pen-international.org/centres/sierra-leone-centre/)). The goal of PEN Sierra Leone is to reinvigorate and encourage writers to play an active role in rebuilding the country after the long civil war. It runs a national school club programme, which focuses on encouraging reading and writing among young people.

Reading Sierra Leone receives expert advisory support from Critical Thinking International (CTI), the We CARE Foundation of Liberia and the International Book Bank ([www.internationalbookbank.org](http://www.internationalbookbank.org)).

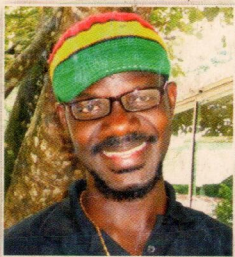




## Our Bird

The text is a series of general statements about "some birds," followed by "but our bird..." and then clues about the attributes and behaviour of a certain Sierra Leonean bird. There is an occasional interjection aimed right from author to reader: "Hey, did you see that? What is that bird doing?!" These are welcome breaks from the pattern and they enliven the text.

## About the Author



**Rainny Richard Ansumana** (Richard Brito, Son of Papa Richo) is a descendant of Mbelleh. He believes that writing for children is not just a personal interest, but his responsibility. Village life is the source of his inspiration to write for children and when he writes he says that he does so from the perspective of children. In his world, "Literature is my food, drama my sickness, and I will die a poet."

## About the Illustrator

**Sahr Ellie** was born in 1957 in Sawolla, Gbane Chiefdom, Kono District. As a little boy going to school he realized he had a talent for art when a friend drew a picture of a lady, inspiring and challenging him to draw one, himself.



His dream of being an artist came true when he entered the Government Technical School. There he excelled in the arts and sat the G.C.E O. Level exams. He has worked for lots of organizations and participated in many arts competitions. He is married with a son and two daughters and is presently working as the senior artist at the Health Education Division in the Ministry of Health and Sanitation in Freetown, Sierra Leone.