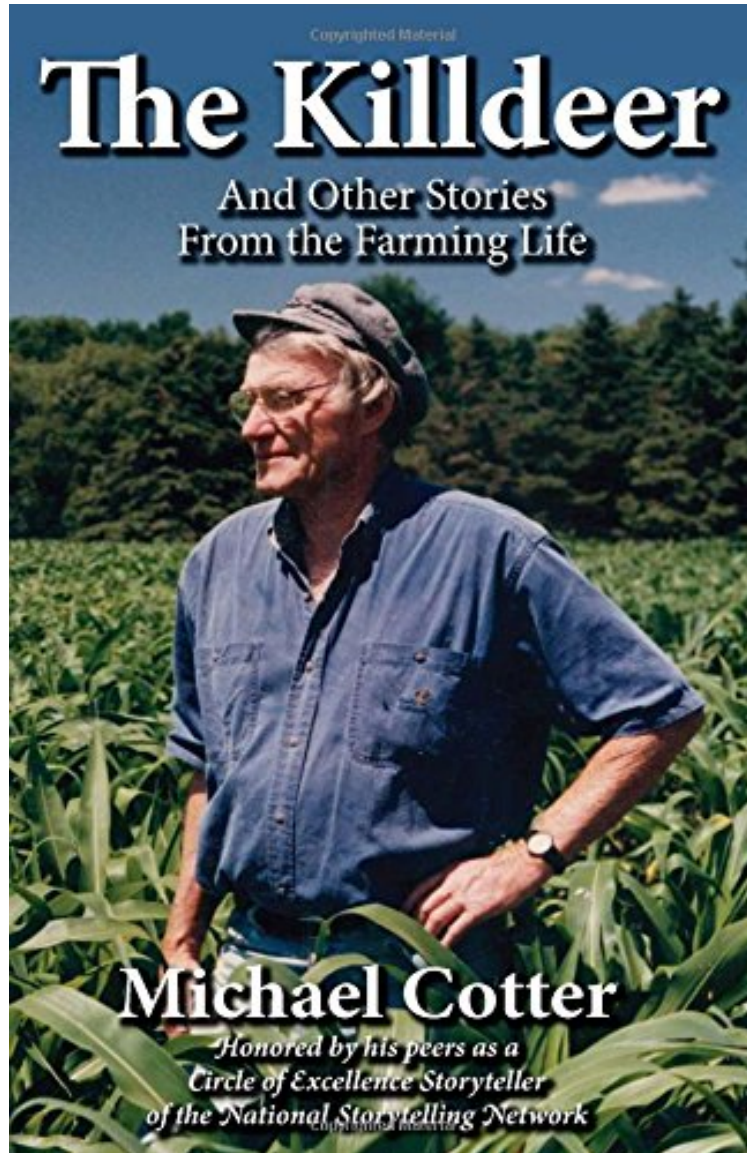


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The Killdeer: And Other Stories From the Farming Life

Michael Cotter

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Michael Cotter : The Killdeer: And Other Stories From the Farming Life before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Killdeer: And Other Stories From the Farming Life:

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“Even after dark, if you are quiet and attentive, you can hear a Killdeer far off. Sandbars, mud flats and grazed fields are where you find them. They are commonplace. So much so, that you might miss them if not for the unique sound they make as they fly overhead, or dart back and forth on the ground, as if wondering which way to go next. So it is with Michael Cotter’s stories. They are like a comfortable pair of slippers. Not flashy at all, but each time you put them on and walk in them, you are so glad you did. They appear so ordinary, but the way they wrap around your soul surprises you. And like slippers you thought you’d never buy, Michael’s stories surprise you. Even though they are not flashy, energetic or dramatic in ways we have come to expect in this digital age, they are grounded in universal truths, with timeless characters. They provide us with a sense of memory, wisdom and peace that celebrates the human spirit, and revels in the common man, woman, boy and girl that is in us all. When Michael tells his stories, it’s as if time stands still. We are reminded of who we really are....down deep....after the television is turned off, the radio is silenced, and we have put our egos on the shelf to rest a spell.”--Rex Ellis, Director of Museum programs, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.

"The Killdeer" by Michael Cotter is one of those wonderful books that is going to bring pleasure to a great many different sorts of people. Cotter is a professional storyteller so his vignettes, told in a way that seems perfectly natural, are, of course, very carefully and artfully composed. Storytellers have spent years reacting to their audiences, picking up all the little nuances of their listeners, and seamlessly blending this live response into the fabric of the tale. That quality of resonance rings in these written stories. Cotter is a Minnesota farmer and his stories are mainly about the struggle and satisfaction of working that land over three generations. There are lots of horse stories; one tends to forget how much a part of a Midwestern farmer's life involved horses. One such is an amusing tale of gypsies and horse-trading, and immediately there sprang to my mind a story my grandmother told about hiding under the bed with her little sister when all the grownups were gone and they spotted gypsies coming up the road along side their farm. "Those gypsies stole our watermelons," grandma said, "every last one of them!" But I had forgotten all about that story— or about gypsies, for that matter—until I read "The Killdeer." That is the great art of the storyteller: he brings your own long forgotten stories to mind. By coincidence, Alison Gopnik had a column in the Wall Street Journal recently about a University of Utah anthropologist who had lived with a tribe of hunter/gatherers in Botswana. The anthropologist analyzed the conversations of these people and found that in the daytime it was pretty much business-as-usual, but at night, when they gathered around the fire, people told stories 81% of the time:—"stories about people they knew, about past generations, about relatives in distant villages, about goings-on in the spirit world...they talked about people and places that were far away in space and time and possibility, they transmitted cultural wisdom and historical knowledge to the next generation, and they explored the mysterious psychological nuances of other minds." Fire gave humans the evening, not to work, but to talk. Bookreview.com suggests you put a copy of "The Killdeer" on the bedside table in your guestroom. You may find that, regardless of the day's headlines and all the electronic gadgets that rule our daylight hours, even the breakfast conversation can be a great deal more fun.