



# Imperial Dreams: Tracking the Imperial Woodpecker Through the Wild Sierra Madre

*Tim Gallagher*

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**Imperial Dreams: Tracking the Imperial Woodpecker Through the Wild Sierra Madre** Tim Gallagher Explorer and naturalist Tim Gallagher is obsessed with rare birds. A decade ago, Gallagher was one of the rediscoverers of the legendary ivory-billed woodpecker, which most scientists believed had been extinct for more than half a century—an event that caused an international stir. Now, in *Imperial Dreams*, Gallagher once again hits the trail, journeying deep into Mexico’s savagely beautiful Sierra Madre Occidental, home to rich wildlife, as well as to Mexican drug cartels, in a perilous quest to locate the most elusive bird in the world—the imperial woodpecker, a giant among its clan.

The imperial woodpecker’s trumpetlike calls and distinctive hammering on massive pines once echoed through the high forests. Two feet tall, with deep black plumage, a brilliant snow-white shield on its back, and a crimson crest, the imperial woodpecker had largely disappeared fifty years ago, though reports persist of the bird still flying through remote mountain stands. In an attempt to find and protect the imperial woodpecker in its last habitat, Gallagher is guided by a map of sightings of this natural treasure of the Sierra Madre, bestowed on him by a friend on his deathbed. Charged with continuing the quest of a line of distinguished naturalists, including the great Aldo Leopold, Gallagher treks through this mysterious, historically untamed and untamable territory. Here, where an ancient petroglyph of the imperial can still be found, Geronimo led Apaches in their last stand, William Randolph Hearst held a storied million-acre ranch, and Pancho Villa once roamed, today ruthless drug lords terrorize residents and steal and strip the land.

Gallagher’s passionate quest takes a harrowing turn as he encounters armed drug traffickers, burning houses, and fleeing villagers. His mission becomes a life-and-death drama that will keep armchair adventurers enthralled as he chases truth in the most dangerous of habitats.

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