ForeWord Reviews

PICTURE BOOKS

Moon Loon
Sandy Ferguson Fuller
Down East Books
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The unforgettable, haunting call of a loon stirs the imagination of a young girl who visits a lake in Maine each summer. Based on the author's own experience in those verdant woods, the book's verses are filled with imaginings and facts about this remarkable black-and-white bird that changes to grey in the fall. Fuller dubbed the loon of her youth "Moon Loon."

As the girl enjoys summer fun on the waterfront, she hears the various calls of the loon: wailing, yodeling, and tremolo. As she knows, the tremolo call indicates fear. She surmises that the loon is a male, because it yodels. Loons are known to mate for life, which makes her wonder where his "wife" is, because he is the only loon, alone on the lake.

Throughout the summer, the girl watches the bird as he dives and fishes. When the season comes to an end, she wonders if the loon will fly away for the winter, just as she will head for her home: "June will be here very soon, and I'll come back / to share your tune. / I hope you find a mate, Moon Loon."

Although the sound of the verses is at times inconsistent-some lines are rhymed and others not-the information is solid and the book's sentiments are sweet. Fuller's elegant colored-pencil drawings are filled with detail that will be appreciated by anyone who has been to the north woods. A moth hovers over a candle flame; raccoons appear to be looking for garbage outside the cabin; moonlight shimmers over the water; a golden retriever swims with a ball wedged in his mouth; a dragonfly clings to the dock.

Although Fuller still returns to her Maine lake for a "special sense of peace," she is a resident of Colorado, where she directs the literary agency Alp Arts Co., consulting with authors and illustrators of children's books. She has been involved in creating picture books based on the songs of John Denver.

There is a peacefulness in Fuller's pictures, evoking lazy summer days away from the stresses of the world, a peacefulness that is important for both children and adults. The hazy moon is benevolent, the sun buttery warm, the pines fresh and green. The lonely loon, always at a distance, invites readers to appreciate nature wherever they may live.

Linda Salisbury