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Clarion Review

Juvenile Fiction

Of the Wing: The Legend Awakes

Georgia Anne Butler
Karl Eric Leitzel, illustrator
Pinchey House Press
Softcover $7.99 (218pp)
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★★★★★
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Claire Bell is an eleven-year-old girl living in the mountains of Pennsylvania. Her mother Louise grapples with the difficulties of being a single mom and trying to home school Claire while providing an income for the two of them to live on. Although Claire's father was killed when she was three his love for all kinds of nature especially birds was something he shared with his wife and daughter. When Claire was just a toddler she wandered off alone into the woods and became lost. She was rescued when a red-tail hawk circled the place where she lay attracting the attention of someone who came to see what the bird was circling. Since that day Claire has had an uncanny ability to attract birds. While her mom is preoccupied with other things Claire roams the mountains near her home with her black and white sheep dog Sammy and sometimes her best friend Victor.

Claire's yellow gold eyes set her apart from other children and she attempts to hide behind colored contact lenses. But she will soon learn that it is this very difference that makes her special. Claire's fascination with birds and their preservation leads her to some unlikely acquaintances and some uncomfortable situations: Jerry lives in a shack in the midst of the woods with his pet chicken and becomes known as the Chicken Man; Billy the neighborhood bully lives with his grandmother and helps her take care of her carrier pigeons; Victor struggles with his partnership with Billy and their common bond of video games versus his friendship with Claire. Claire sees Billy as mean and vindictive a bully to be avoided at all costs. She cannot understand how Victor can be friends with him.

Readers will discover more than fourteen varieties of birds and learn how to identify

them in their natural environment. Author Butler has presented a wealth of information about the Pueblo Indian traditions bird identification and environments and the history of carrier pigeons. She has masterfully created an interesting story that deals with single-parent families bullying and intergenerational relationships. It would have been difficult for her to cover anything else in these 204 pages. This initial offering the first novel for the author is the first in the Of the Wing trilogy. The second title is due out in 2010. The use of fiction in introducing readers to the natural world in such detail makes this a book worth sharing.

Joyce Rice