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CLARION REVIEW ★★★★☆ PICTURE BOOKS

South America Rainforest Animals

Maria L. Lopes
AuthorHouse UK (Dec 29, 2012)
Softcover $21.35 (28pp)
978-1-4685-7873-7

Most children will never get to explore the Amazon rain forest or see its native creatures in person. But they can explore Maria L. Lopes's *South America Rainforest Animals,* a colorful picture book dedicated to educating children about some of the inhabitants of the rain forest.

After a short introduction by tour guide Marcus, a scarlet macaw, readers are introduced to basilisks, caimans, marsh deer, foxes, gold lion tamarins, howler monkeys, jaguars, toucans, and other animals. The photographs of the animals are handsome, but with many similar images available in other books, to say nothing of the Internet, the pictures alone don't set the book apart.

Luckily, the author's text is informative and mostly kept at a level suited to adults reading to young children. The words are confined to a small box at the bottom of each page, keeping most of the page free for an unimpeded view of the animal.

Lopes begins with an "About The Book" section that mentions "pictures of endangered animals" and bringing readers "up close with rain forest animals and plants that are in danger of extinction." While they don't specifically say so, these phrases seem to indicate that all of the animals featured in the book are endangered—even piranha and leaf-cutter ants, which are not considered officially endangered, although they might be negatively affected by forest clearing. This fuzziness of terminology might not be a major concern in a book clearly targeted for beginner zoologists, but the addition of an explanatory note would have been helpful for older readers.

Marcus the scarlet macaw is not seen after the first page, and the book might have benefited from some sort of concluding remarks about the rain forest tour. But Marcus's voice and the safari-tour guide approach work well throughout the book, keeping things exciting as animals are spotted: "There is a lizard crossing the river! That's a basilisk."

While the text in *South Americ Rainforest Animals* is well done, it's not flawless. The back cover text, for example, contains a sentence in dire need of punctuation.

With *South America Rainforest Animals*, Lopes is helping to foster a sense of wonder about animals. Perhaps it will help young readers become the next generation of responsible stewards of the natural world.

PETER DABBENE (April 16, 2013)

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