

The BLUES Go Extreme Birding

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Sandy F. Fuller

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Dawn Publications partners once again with authors Carol L. Malnor and Sandy F. Fuller for the third book in the BLUES Go Birding series, *The BLUES Go Extreme Birding*. Similar to the previous books in the series, this book balances appealing, creative elements with accurate, factual information that will spark readers' curiosity and get them engaged in a new subject.

Bing, Lulu, Uno, Eggbert, and Sammi (the BLUES) are curious, adorable cartoon bluebirds searching for the most "extreme" birds they can find. As they travel from New York City to Brazil, they introduce readers to the fastest-moving, deepest diving, keenest-hearing, and even pinkest feathered birds, as well as other record setting birds. Along the way, their notes and field guide provides accurate and interesting facts about the featured bird, and an "Extra Extreme" gives a quick, one- or two-fact introduction to another bird with a related record setting skill or feature.

The authors and illustrators have successfully attempted to create a book that simultaneously grabs the reader's attention with art and fictional elements and accurately educates. Clear efforts have been made to distinguish fact from fiction. For example, because of the consistent design, the reader would know that the "notebook" and field guide sidebars are the "facts," while the speech bubbles are a funny, creative element. The facts in the narrative are more interspersed in the BLUES's dialogue; however, it is almost always Eggbert that gives the name and "record title" of the featured bird.

Although books with anthropomorphized, talking animals are sometimes dismissed as pure fiction, this book has two illustration styles which also helps emphasize the difference between fact and fiction. The bluebirds themselves are in a cartoon style, while the illustrations of the birds and their habitats are depicted much more realistically. Rather than a distraction, the little bluebirds act like quirky guides for the five-to eight- year-old reader, and the book would be most appropriate in the non-fiction section.

The first person narrative is slightly confusing, as initially it seems as though Uno is the narrator, but then later Uno is referred to by name, but this is so slight it most likely wouldn't be noticed by the intended audience. Another wonderful feature is the map on the last page plotting the BLUES adventure, which clearly shows the featured birds in their respective areas of the world.

The authors have also included resources for readers to learn more, and an online site with tips for bird watching and education tools for teachers. The resources will allow children to take their learning to the next level, and fulfill the publisher's mission of inspiring education about the environment and all the world's amazing creatures.

ALICIA SONDHI (March 7, 2011)

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