

Flyaway: How a Wildlife Rehabber Sought Adventure and Found Her Wings

by Suzie Gilbert

Her story is a fascinating account of living with wildlife as well as a lesson on how to balance life and work (to the extreme!) Suzie is a gifted writer, who takes a situation and teases it apart into many layers. Flyaway will make you laugh and then in a lickety split, it will make you cry.

Suzie began her career at an animal hospital and from there took a straight path to opening a rehabilitation center out of her home called Flyaway, Inc. Her husband John and children Mac and Skye show infinite patience and good humor in sharing their home with Suzie and the wildlife she brings in. As patients come and go, a sense of awe fills the reader as they experience the heart wrenching struggles, comedic incidents and tender moments a rehabber lives through on a daily basis. It is not just a bird here and there, miraculously brought back to life and then set free as the song, "Born Free" echoes magically from the woods. Rehabbing is physically difficult and heartbreaking work.

It is also not a very well known career choice. The general public does not understand the extent to which many rehabbers forfeit their personal lives in order to dedicate themselves to saving wildlife. Suzie opens herself up here to the conflicted emotions that come with this career choice...is she neglecting her family for the sake of these animals? Or, is she enriching her children's lives in an immeasurable way? Ultimately she has no choice but to continue. To stop would be to toss away the very essence of her heart and soul, that which makes her the person that she is. It is not an easy task. Suzie must learn when to hang on and when to let go. Not every animal makes it. In fact, many of them do not. On the occasion when an animal can be saved and set free, it can make up for every heartbreak that has come before it.

As owls, ducks, red tailed hawks and a various assortment of songbirds stream into her home, a profound lesson in the value of each individual life is learned. As I read this book, I remembered an old story about a man who met another man throwing starfish into the water on a beach. The first man asked why he was doing it, when there were thousands of starfish on the beach. He wanted to know, "What difference could he possibly make"? As the second man threw another starfish back into the water, he replied, "It makes a difference to that starfish". That is why rehabilitators do what they do. They know that each individual life is precious and has value. Each life they save does make a difference. To that animal, to themselves and to anyone who cares about the wildlife we share our world with.

Entertaining, while teaching us a vital lesson about the value of life, this book is a wonderfully good read. I highly recommend it!

Stella Miller