



Mélusine: Birds of Many Feathers

Written by Geraldine V. Oades-Sese, Ph.D.

Illustrated by Franchesca Guerrero

Review by Juliet Moderow



I am currently a board member and education chair of the Northwest Illinois Audubon Society in Freeport, Illinois. For many years, it has always been my goal to share the wonderful world of birds with people of all ages. It is also important to me to make sure birding is inclusive to all people. As a woman of color and a daughter of immigrant parents, I'm not quite the image of a typical birder. However, thanks to many organizations increasing their inclusivity in the birding community, we are now able to see the birding world become more diverse and welcoming!

I am also mother of a bird-loving five-year old daughter who can already identify around 20 birds by their sounds and appearance. She also enjoys reading, so it is important to me that the books that she reads can show the diverse world that she lives in. In addition, she is biracial

and learns some of her grandparents' first language (Konkani) every time she visits with them. I try to ensure that my daughter is always reminded of where she came from and is accepting of others around her.

This is why I wanted to share a review of this amazing children's book. This story captures the joy of a young birder named Mélusine who is on an adventure to discover a mysterious bird with a song that she does not recognize. What makes this book different from most children's books about birds is that it not only teaches children about the

We first meet Mélusine as she wakes up excited to start her day with a birding adventure. She looks out the window and says hello to a vocalizing red-bellied Woodpecker, tapping and "churring" on a tree trunk. She then embarks downstairs and greets her mother in Tagalog, which is one of the languages spoken in the Philippines. It is here that you begin to notice how unique and special this book is. We not only learn about the birds and their songs and calls, but we also learn about many languages around the world. Throughout the book, you will see Mélusine explore her surroundings and meet a variety of birds around her as she tries to identify her mysterious bird that she recently heard. Along the way, she also interacts with the people around her using different greetings in various languages including Hindi, French, Haitian Creole, Australian, Polish, Swedish, Afrikaans, Japanese, Spanish, and Chinese. All of the phrases are translated in parentheses within the story, but also provided in a language glossary at the end of the book. The book creatively reveals any bird vocalization and any multicultural phrase in a different color so it stands out.

The illustrations by Franchesca Guerrero are quite splendid as well. It shows the beautiful colors of the world in both birds and people. I look back at some of the books I had as a child and wish I had books like these. I am thankful that my daughter will be able to see herself in this book as a young birder like Mélusine.

My favorite part of the book features Mélusine walking through a marketplace filled with a variety of people and bird species. Within the story you will read, "Like her feathered friends, people come in many different colors, sizes, and shapes—and with different abilities," which really captures what the book is all about. It is a lovely page illustrating the beauty of the world around us. Another great part of the book is that Mélusine keeps a life list, which is a fun way to keep children engaged in the birding hobby. There is also a section about the birds featured in the story, with their descriptions, fun facts, and QR codes to hear song recordings from the Macaulay Library.

I hope you enjoy this book as much as our family does. This would make a great gift to any young birder. In fact, there is more to come in the Mélusine series as she explores more of the planet for more birding adventures!

This book is ideal for children ages 4 to 8. The author also has developed a special section on her website for a Mélusine Birding Club and provides resources for parents and teachers.

You can find the paperback and hardcover editions available through <https://kiddiewinkspublishing.com/> via Shopify. ■