

Sylvia and the Birds

How the Bird Lady saved thousands of birds, and how you can too

JOHANNA EMENEY & SARAH LAING



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INSPIRING YOUNG READERS TO HELP AND PROTECT OUR NATIVE BIRDS

Part graphic biography, part practical guide to protecting our bird wildlife, this remarkable book for young readers and their families is fully committed to detailing the wonders of our native birds, the threats they face and how we can help them. Based on the life of 'The Bird Lady', Sylvia Durrant, who helped over 140,000 sick, injured and lost birds during her lifetime, it inspires a reverence for the natural world and is a call to action to all young ecologists and environmentalists.

With charming illustrations by Sarah Laing, an engrossing text, mātauranga Māori insights, activities and how-tos, it offers hours of enchantment and engagement.

Whimsical, loving and layered, *Sylvia and the Birds* makes a unique contribution to children's knowledge of the natural world, now in a new paperback edition.

Shortlisted for the Elsie Locke Award for Non-Fiction at the 2023 New Zealand Book Awards for Children and Young Adults

'*Sylvia and the Birds* would make a great Christmas present for the whole family to explore' — Alex Eagles, Kete Books

'Part-graphic biography, part-practical guide to protecting our wildlife, it's a handsome, generous, book ... A book that should be in every household and school.' — Maria Gill, KidsBooksNZ

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Johanna Emenev teaches creative writing at Massey University, where she gained her PhD. She has published three books of poetry: *Apple & Tree* (2011), *Family History* (2017), and *Felt* (2021), and an academic book, *The Rise of Autobiographical Medical Poetry and the Medical Humanities* (2018). Johanna lives on a lifestyle block in North Auckland with her husband and a menagerie of animals.

Sarah Laing is a writer, illustrator, and cartoonist. Her books are *Coming up Roses* (2007), *Dead People's Music* (2009), *The Fall of Light* (2013), *Mansfield and Me: A Graphic Memoir* (2016) and *Let Me Be Frank* (2019), and she co-edited *Three Words: An Anthology of Aotearoa NZ Women's Comics*. In 2010, she was the Sargeson Fellow and in 2013 the University of Auckland/Michael King Writers Centre Fellow. She lives in Wellington with her children.

SALES POINTS

- Driven by two visionary authors — a highly-skilled poet and creative writing teacher, and one of this country's best-known illustrators and graphic novelists
- Elevates the children's book through rich layering and the cartoon sections, which will tempt even reluctant readers to engage and explore
- Activities in the back of the book add another participatory element

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Taking wing

By the time this photograph was taken, I was 17 and almost fully trained as nurse. I could clean, suture and dress wounds, splint broken bones, administer medication, and make sure my patients were bathed and comfortable.




LOVE birds

One evening on duty, I met a young orderly called Allan Beaumont, who was working at the hospital while he was training to be a teacher. We became boyfriend and girlfriend pretty soon after our first meeting.

In 1951, when I was 18, we decided to get married. Allan had been offered a job in Pigeon, near Te Kaiti, and I agreed to go with him. I didn't feel angry about having to give up nursing. It was just what happened in those days: when a woman got married — often when she was very young — she would rely on her husband for money, and accompany him wherever he went. Her main job from then on would be to keep the home clean and tidy, to make the meals, and to look after the children.

Nesting



By 19, I'd had my first child, Clifford. I found motherhood easy after having looked after so many babies.

TAKING CARE OF OUR ENVIRONMENT



THE TOROA (ALBATROSS) IS MY FAVOURITE BIRD, AND WHAT IS SO SAD IS THAT, JUST LIKE JEAQUILLS AND OTHER SEABIRDS, THE ADULTS FEED THEIR CHICKS A LOT OF PLASTIC WASTE THAT THEY HAVE PICKED UP ON THE BEACHES OR IN THE SEA, THINKING IT IS TASTY MORSELS LIKE SQUID, FISH AND SALPS.

Eventually, this plastic binds up their intestines, and stops them from digesting proper food. It can also irritate their stomach lining, giving them painful ulcers.

Royal Albatross Centre staff collect more than 6 kilograms of plastic rubbish every month at Pilots Beach, below the albatross sanctuary at Tairāra Head, on the Otago Peninsula.




In January 2020, scientists at Massey University looked inside the stomach of a southern royal albatross that had died mysteriously. They found a flattened 500-millilitre plastic bottle and fragments of a balloon.