

YOUNG NATURALISTS

Gracie. The Public Gardens Duck

By Judith Meyrick. Illustrations by Richard Rudnicki. 2007. Nimbus Publishing Limited. Halifax, Nova Scotia B3K 5M8 Canada. 32 pages. \$16.95. Cloth.

This is a delightful children's book, told from the perspective of Gracie the duck. The story is about the duck's quest for food crumbs in a public park near the CBC building in Halifax. Gracie spends most of her time, quite successfully, getting the attention of different people she sees in the park so that they will share their food with her.

However, one day, people are not giving food to her. "Mr. Black Suit", the person who usually feeds her, does not proffer up any of his muffin; nor does a pair of school girls, who actually apologize to Gracie. A young girl almost shares a piece of her peanut butter sandwich, until the girl's mother reminds her of the sign near the park entrance. What sign? What is going on? Gracie asks herself, puzzled about this change in her daily feeding regimen.

Finally, hungry Gracie reads some of the words on the sign and discovers that park policy has changed and feeding the ducks is no longer allowed. Gracie takes action, but even this doesn't work. The hungry duck is then forced to try the insects in the grass and then some plants in the pond, and finds that these are very satisfying. Pleased with herself, she now realizes that there is plenty of food in the park without relying on people for crumbs such as Mr. Black Suit – who comments to Gracie that she has adapted nicely.

The story is very compelling and suitable for ages 3 to 8 (at least) – my 12-year-old niece picked up the book and enjoyed it as much as her younger sisters did. The illustrations are dynamic and it is almost as if the people and ducks in this story are moving as you read it. Truly a delight – with a good lesson learned along the way.

ELLEN WOODLEY

Liana Environmental Consulting Ltd., RR 4, Fergus, Ontario N1M 2W5 Canada

NEW TITLES

Prepared by Roy John

†Available for review * Assigned

ZOOLOGY

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