

REVIEWS

YANMARA, SHIP'S CAT – Suzanne Hills. Published in soft covers by AM Publishing New Zealand, and available from Amazon at £7.78 / US \$10.60. 216 127mm x 203mm pages with a route plan, boat details and black-and-white photos. ISBN 978-0-9951-0768-7

Dog lovers beware! Although not in the first person, *Yanmara, Ship's Cat* is written from Yanmara's point of view and dogs are, without exception, baddies. No need to read further, in fact.. For cat lovers however, or those with an impartial view of the animal kingdom, this is a delightful book, and though written with pre-teen girls in mind this (pensionable) reviewer enjoyed it thoroughly.

Many members will recall Yanmara from *5000 Miles in 'The Variables'*, Suzanne's account of *Whanake's* South Pacific crossing which appeared in *Flying Fish* 2016/1. Yanmara was a kitten when they left Valdivia but Ship's Cat by the time they reached New Zealand, a transition which forms the background of the book.

Deep literature it ain't, but not only does Suzanne write extremely well, she also shows a deep understanding and empathy with cats and what motivates them – mainly fish, in Yanmara's case! Of course there's a strong element of anthropomorphism, not just towards Yanmara herself but also many of the other species she meets and – unlikely though it might sound – befriends.

For me pride of place must go to Karin and Rossi the Swiss Army Knife crabs, but we also meet Nina the sea eagle, Ken the dancing albatross, a pair of depressed and nameless jellyfish, Matt and Laurie the dolphins, Slater the suckerfish, Jeff and Octavia the octopuses, and Martha the humpback whale and her five-tonne son Little Arthur. Only Le Rat is not made welcome.

In addition to being a fine (and inexpensive) Christmas stocking-filler containing much gentle humour, *Yanmara, Ship's Cat* would make a great animated cartoon, or (with less detail) an appealing illustrated book for younger children. Suzanne tells me that Yanmara has a growing fan club and may soon have a presence on YouTube. She definitely should – like most cats she's a natural star! Highly recommended.

Anne Hammick