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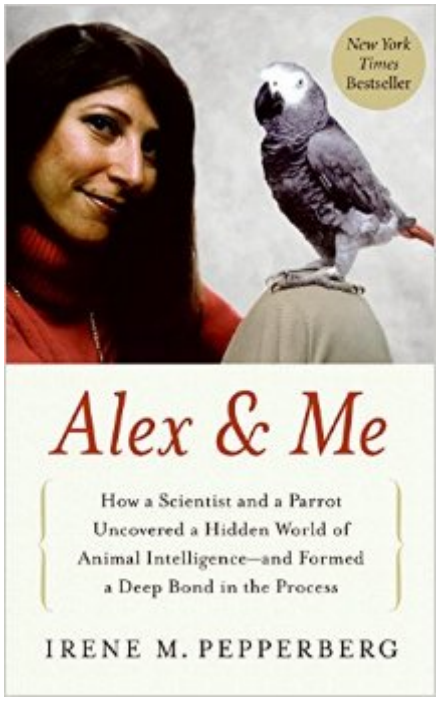
Alex & Me: How A Scientist And A Parrot Uncovered A Hidden World Of Animal Intelligence--and Formed A Deep Bond In The Process



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Synopsis

Alex & Me is the remarkable true story of an extraordinary relationship between psychologist Irene M. Pepperberg and Alex, an African Grey parrot who proved scientists and accepted wisdom wrong by demonstrating an astonishing ability to communicate and understand complex ideas. A New York Times bestseller and selected as one ofÂ the paperâ ™sÂ criticâ ™s Top Ten Books of the Year, Alex & Me is much more that the story of an incredible scientific breakthrough. Itâ ™s a poignant love story and an affectionate remembrance of Pepperbergâ ™s irascible, unforgettable, and always surprising best friend.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

....becomes "very much aware of that peoples' profound sense of oneness with nature. I resonated with that." Here Dr Pepperberg is talking about Native Americans' relationship with nature, and I find her view as a scientist all-encompassing and highly complementary with (and probably an enhancement to) her research -- TOTALLy unlike those of her colleagues at NIH who cut themselves off from the sumn-total of the reality of her work with Alex the Grey Parrot -- and who were so unflinching in their disparaging comments of her work with Alex.The book begins with the aftermath of Alex's untimely death -- he should have lived for at least another 20 years, and his death was a great loss not only to the scientific community, but to those "ordinary" human beings who were touched and changed by his presence.As the book continues, we read about "No Name" -- the parakeet that brought joy to a little girls's insulated world, and Bluey, Greeny and other

much-loved birds who brought sunshine into her otherwise lonely childhood -- and then Charlie, whose feathers found their way into an MIT meeting.And then, at Harvard, one question "What animal should I study?" brought Alex into Irene's life, for the next 30 wonderful, trying (including an extremely dense ticket agent, who had trouble understanding why "a bird" would need luggage), frustrating, joyful years.This book was a labor of love -- as were the 30 wonderful years with Alex, whose "brain the size of a walnut" astounded Irene and her colleagues with its information gathering and associative abilities.I was highly amused to read about the withdrawal of cardboard (he'd chew it) and feeding tofu to calm down Alex's raging hormones -- hey, whatever works!!!

There are so many ways that Alex and Me by Irene Pepperburg could have been better that it leaves me feeling as sad for the book that should have been as it does for Alex's death. Unlike Dr. Pepperburg, who for some reason thought the book should start with Alex's death, I will start at the beginning of the story. That is one of the main problems with the book-- Alex doesn't make an appearance until Page 58, more than a quarter of the way through the book. The first 25 pages contain excerpts from the sympathy mail she received upon Alex's death, which, since at that point we haven't met Alex yet, is somewhat meaningless. The next 28 pages take us through the tedious story of Dr. Pepperburg's childhood, college days and marriage, and I do mean tedious! It was nearly enough to make me put the book down and not pick it back up.Once Alex finally makes an appearance, the book becomes more interesting. However, Dr. Pepperburg doesn't do a convincing job of showing the bond between herself and Alex-- there are a few places where she shows it such as when Alex becomes deathly ill with Aspergillosis, but far too much of the book is spent detailing her problems finding research funding and her moves from campus to campus trying to find a home for her project.That being said, when she does allow the story to focus on Alex, it is touching and amusing. It is impossible not to fall in love with the parrot and become awed at the intelligence he demonstrates. I became so attached to Alex that when I finished reading the book I went back and re-read the first 25 pages because now I could finally relate to the sense of loss and grief expressed by others.At the end, there are two questions that Dr.

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