



**Cox, Lynne. *Tales of Al: The Water Rescue Dog*. Knopf. May 2022. 224p. ISBN 9780593319376. \$27.00. PETS**

Open-water swimming legend Cox (*Swimming to Antarctica*) details her unique experience on Italy's Lake Idroscalo, where she observed the highly specialized training of Italian water rescue dogs—the Newfoundlands, golden retrievers, and German shepherds who save drowning people in Italy, Germany, and Switzerland. After seeing a video of an enormous dog leaping from a helicopter to rescue a swimmer, Cox visits SICS (Scuola Italiana Cani Salvataggio, an Italian school for rescue dogs) to learn more. There she is partnered with Donatella Pasquale and her two-year-old chocolate Newfoundland, Al. Al is adorable, loving, and strong, but also unreliable and unfocused; Pasquale fears he will never complete the training and testing demanded of the elite water rescue program. Cox also interacts with other colorful characters (including the intense Ferruccio Pilenga, the founder of SICS) and even takes part in some of the testing. She is a concise yet dramatic writer, with immersive descriptions of her childhood, her arduous swim training, the sensory experience of swimming, accents, the exploding flavors of Italian cuisine, and doggy behaviors. **VERDICT** A delight from start to finish; will be greatly enjoyed by fans of dogs, sports, and inspirational memoirs.—**Susan Riley**