

AUTHOR SPOTLIGHT

with

Adrienne Yorinks



You have written a few books about animals. Are animals a big part of your life?

Ever since I was a child, I have felt more comfortable around animals and nature than anywhere else. Well, except when reading a book, but when I think of reading as a child, I always found a place outside to be by myself and read. When we lived in an apartment building, I went to the terrace early every morning and when we moved into a house, I made a quiet place on new grass that was just for me.

As for animals, I felt a deep connection to them and animals tend to seek me out as well, so it has been a mutual gift to be with them. My brother had allergies so we couldn't get a dog or cat, but I ended up being followed by a goat at the Bronx zoo, rescuing a cat in a tree and bringing him inside, and in middle school, a neighborhood dog came to see me every afternoon after school and we would play in the woods together until dinner time. I have my undergraduate degree in animal behavior and I worked with monkeys while in college at the University of Wisconsin in Madison. When I lecture to kids I always tell them that when you grow up you can be or do anything you like. I did have 6 dogs at one time and I have bred both poodles and border collies. Now I have a border collie and a red toy poodle. I can't imagine living without a dog. I just wouldn't know how to start my day.

You have a degree in animal behavior. What interested you the most about hummingbirds and incited you to write this book with Jeanette Larson?

Hummingbirds are the most magical creatures. It was lovely to be able to write a book with my friend and colleague, Jeanette Larson. We talked about doing a project together for years and when Jeanette mentioned doing a book about hummingbirds, I was on board! We both are amazed with them and happy we could celebrate them in a book.

What was the most surprising thing you learned while doing research for *Hummingbirds*?



It seemed that every time I learned a new fact about hummingbirds, somehow they defied it. They need a lot of fuel to maintain their hovering and yet they can fly without stopping across the Gulf of Mexico. BY THEMSELVES! Alone and yet so tiny. That is remarkable.

The second remarkable trait they have is their ability to see ultra violet. We cannot see ultra violet. Perhaps this amazes me as much as makes me envious since I love color so much!

Are you a frequent birder? Have you traveled anywhere special to bird watch?

I dedicated this book to Wayne and Holly Mones and Wayne wrote our foreword. He is the Vice President of Audubon in charge of giving, which means he has raised a lot of money to support birds and bird sanctuaries. He takes Audubon members on trips to places like Patagonia and The Galapagos Islands. I learned a lot about birding from him and his wife, Holly. The first time I went birding with them in Southern New Jersey, I had a difficult time because I am a very physical person who likes to take long and strenuous hikes. It took the first time for me to realize that birding isn't about going fast. It is more like going to an outdoor museum searching for hidden wonders. When I was researching hummingbirds for this book, I went to Arizona where I went birding with Sheri Williamson, an excellent birder and hummingbird researcher. Waking up very early and birding before the sun rises really teaches you to appreciate this incredible activity. We saw hummingbirds, Scarlet Tanagers, and the most spectacular bird to me, the Vermilion Flycatcher. I recommend everyone to try birding and to go with experienced people. It is a lovely experience.

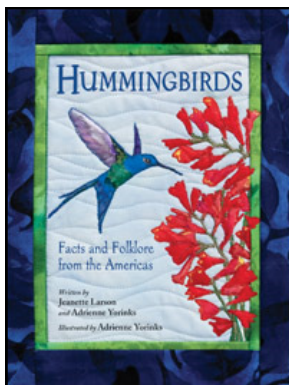
Your illustrations are made of textiles. Why do you enjoy using this medium for your books?

I adore fabric. Though painters can use every color to express themselves, textile artists can use every color, pattern, design, texture, fabrics from every country that produces them, and fabrics from the 1800's as well as today. It is a wonderful palette to play with. I even use photo-transfers on fabric as well as fabric paint, fabric markers, and glitter. What more can you ask for!

In what ways did the folklore aspects of *Hummingbirds* inspire your art?

My goal as an illustrator is to excite my readers so that they want to see every page and want to look at the book again. Particularly since I do a lot of nonfiction, I think it's important to surprise or delight or make my readers smile. In this book, I wanted to visually separate the factual parts from the folklore. I used double-page spreads for the folklore sections to contrast with tighter single spread and spot art for the factual parts. I also was conscious that I didn't want to portray any fallen human beings or dead foxes so I chose a part of the folktale that portrayed the scene before or after anything bad happened. For example, in the Yamana tale, "Why the Hummingbird Lives in the Mountains," I depicted the drama before Fox got clunked on the head. In the Aztec legend, "Why the Hummingbird Is a Fearless Warrior," I depicted the image after Huitzilopochtli, the Aztec leader, fell in battle. He transformed into a hummingbird. In my illustration, I chose the Sword-billed Hummingbird because I thought perhaps that this species inspired the first telling of the folktale so long ago.

By Adrienne Yorinks



Hummingbirds are fascinating little creatures that have captured the imagination of people for thousands of years. Since they are only found in the Americas, the myths and legends about this tiny bird originated from the peoples of North and South America.

In *Hummingbirds*, Jeannette Larson and Adrienne Yorinks have compiled facts and folklore about these intriguing fliers. Readers will get a glimpse into the different cultures that have been transfixed for centuries by this bird, as well as learn many interesting scientific facts discovered by modern-day ornithologists. Adrienne's bold and unique mixed-media quilts illustrate the hummingbird in nature and the mystery of these birds in ancient folklore.

ISBN 978-1-58089-332-9, HC, \$16.95
ISBN 978-1-58089-333-6, PB, \$8.95
ISBN 978-1-60734-272-4, E, \$6.99
Ages 9–11

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