

# AUTHOR SPOTLIGHT WITH

## April Pulley Sayre



### What kinds of books did you like to read as a child? Do they influence your writing today?

I always loved science, but my favorite books were poetry books and fantasy books. I was lucky that my mom was briefly a school librarian and taught a children's literature course. So we had lots of Newbery books shelved in our home. Also, my mom started a science book business when I was in middle school. So our basement was filled with all the best elementary science trade books of the time. I packed books, cranked the catalog-card-making machine, and typed up catalog cards. In the process, of course, I read the books! I suppose they filtered into my brain in some way. At least they showed me the possibilities. But I had no idea, at the time, that I would become an author.

### How did you go from studying biology in college to writing books for children?

As a student at Duke I was editor of the popular science magazine, *Vertices*. I loved putting together those issues. Writing about science was a joy, so I searched for jobs that combined science and writing. I almost became a medical writer but I gave up that money to take internships with the National Wildlife Federation and later the National Geographic Society. Later I ended up working for the stellar Judy Braus and her staff of *NatureScope*. Just down the hall was the *Ranger Rick* staff. All these terrific writer/editors shaped my early writing. My first book contract came when I answered an ad in the Washington Post for writers of biographies for children.

### What is your writing technique or process when trying to convey a complex concept (like the cycle of life in *Trout Are Made of Trees*) to very early readers?

Picture books such as *Trout Are Made of Trees* really come from wonder, from my fascination with the world. Writing those books feels like less of a conscious process than some of my other books. I just try to share what I care about, what fascinates me. If there is a process, I would say it is to write a lot, to experiment with nonfiction voice. Voice is what makes a book for me. I have plenty of book ideas that never make it out of the research folders where I collect information. Some, though, just emerge. A turn of phrase can start their development. That was it with this book. For years I knew I wanted to write about this particular process. In fact, I did write some about it in a long book for middle schoolers, *River and Stream*. But it didn't truly begin until I was out in nature one day and I heard that title in my head: Trout are made of trees! Yes! That's it! I had found the voice, the way into the material.

### If you had to pick only one animal to write about for the rest of your life, what would it be?

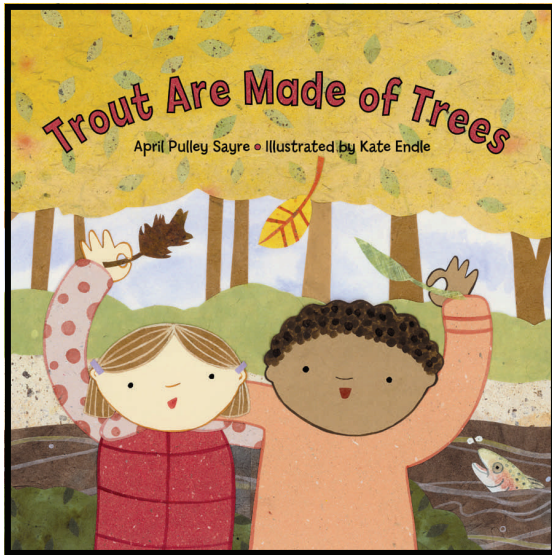
At the moment, my gut answer would be whales. I am writing about them now and I feel like moving to the shore, spending all my time on boats, and just studying them for the rest of my life. But two years ago, I would have said sea turtles. And if I think logically, the answer might be fish. Narrowing choices has never been a talent of mine. That's why I love writing books—I can follow my interests.

### You speak to many school children across the country each year about your books. What's the funniest thing that has ever happened during a school visit?

You know, I do get some wacky questions from kids. They ask me what I eat, or if I eat. They ask me what animals have bitten me or what happens if you fall down in an army ant swarm and cannot get up. But, mostly, my memorable moments at schools are of the heartwarming type. Sometimes I visit schools and meet little girls who have never before met an adult woman who loves science. Their eyes just shine with excitement when we talk. You can feel important "click" moments happening with young writers and young scientists. I had lunch with some young authors last week and one of them said, "I think this is the most important day of my life!" How could you not be moved by this?

# Books by April Pulley Sayre

**NEW!**



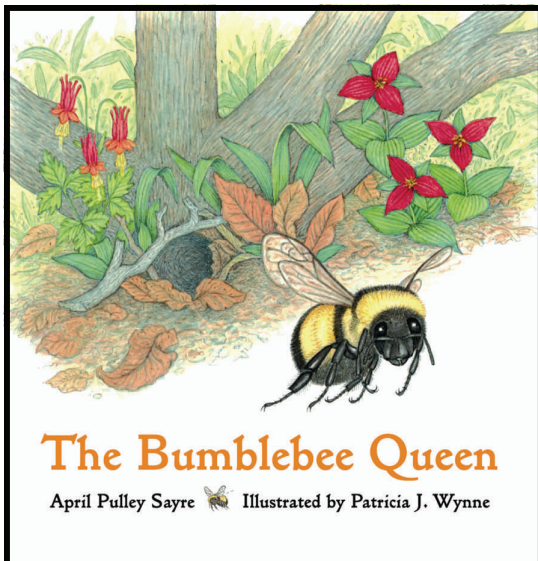
ISBN 978-1-58089-137-0 \$15.95 HC  
ISBN 978-1-58089-138-7 \$6.95 PB  
Ages 4-7 • Full-color illustrations  
8½ x 8½ • 32 pages

## Be a stream hero!

Did you know trout are made of trees? It's true. Trout eat the insects and small fish that eat the algae on the leaves that fall from the trees into the stream. And if you eat trout—well, you're made of trees, too! Follow two children on a fly-fishing trip with their dads as they discover the surprising ways plants and animals are connected in the food web in and around a stream. From leaves and bacteria to bears and people, we're all part of one big circle of growing and eating and living.

“An unusual blend of narrative, poetry, and science, this is an appealing introduction to the food web.”

—*Kirkus Reviews*



ISBN 1-978-57091-362-4 \$15.95 HC  
ISBN 978-1-57091-363-1 \$6.95 PB  
Ages 4-7 • Full-color illustrations  
8½ x 8½ • 32 pages

A bumblebee queen only lives one year, but in that short time she can create colonies of hundreds of bees. Follow one queen as she finds a nest, gathers nectar, lays eggs, and tends her colony through spring, summer, and fall.

“Gentle, informative, and appealing.”

—*School Library Journal*

“An exemplary natural history book for young children.”

—*Science Books and Films*

“Nourishing fare for young observers of nature.”

—*Kirkus Reviews*