

"Rodent Friends"
Amanda Tigner's Collection of
Children's Books Featuring Rodents

Amanda Tigner

Bibliography List

Beaver:

Dixon, Ruth. Bartholomew the Beaver. Chicago: Rand McNally & Co., 1952.

Bartholomew is a lazy beaver who finally takes the example of his parents and begins swimming and felling trees. This Cold War era story uses the stereotypical quality of the industrious beaver to encourage children to be industrious workers.

Holmer, Marilyn F. Beaver Stream. Smithsonian Wild Heritage Collection. Norwalk, CT: Trudy, 1994.

This is a comforting story about a beaver who has lost its lodge and become separated from its family, but still manages to survive, eventually finding food, thwarting danger, and finding other beavers and a new lodge.

Lawrence, R. D. Paddy: A Canadian Naturalist's Story of an Orphan Beaver. New York: Avon, 1977.

Ideal for middle and high school age children, this is the story of a naturalist who saves an orphaned beaver. Though their friendship enriches the lives of both, Paddy must eventually return to the lake.

Hamster:

Ishii, Maiko and Haraguchi, Chizuru. Eds. The Official Hamtaro Handbook. Anita Sengupta. Trans. San Francisco: Viz Communications, Inc., 2002.

This book has everything a kid needs to know about Hamtaro, a hamster from a Japanese comic book recently featured in an American cartoon. Though the hamster characters are fanciful (they escape from their cages to help their humans daily), Hamtaro has done a lot to popularize hamsters as pets in the United States.

Groundhog / Woodchuck:

Cherry, Lynne. How Groundhog's Garden Grew. New York: Blue Sky Press, 2003.

Naturalist Lynne Cherry tells the story of a community of backyard animals who plant their own garden rather than taking vegetables from humans' gardens. Inspiring children

to work together and take part in community gardens in their neighborhoods, this highly educational book also identifies dozens of seeds, plants, insects, and animals.

Lamm, C. Drew. Woodchuck at Blackberry Road. Smithsonian's Backyard. Norwalk, CT: Trudy, 1994.

Lamm portrays life as a groundhog, from the perspective of Little Whistle-pig. The glossary page includes the definitions of words such as 'hibernate' and 'wamble,' and points out pages on which various plants, such as Indian paintbrush and coneflower, are illustrated for the budding naturalist.

Guinea Pig:

Baglio, Ben M. Guinea Pig Gang. New York: Scholastic, Inc., 1996.

This chapter book intended for middle school age readers is a story of animal-loving friends who start a guinea pig club, and teaches kindness and the importance of helping others.

Evans, Mark. Guinea Pigs. ASPCA Pet Care Guides for Kids. New York: Dorling Kindersley, 1992.

This guide provides practical information on guinea pig care for children. Among the topics included are grooming, feeding, guinea pig selection, and cleaning a guinea pig hutch. Evans takes a no-nonsense approach, handling potentially confusing topics for children, such as why the guinea pig eats its own droppings, without fuss.

King-Smith, Dick. I Love Guinea Pigs. Cambridge, MA: Candlewick Press, 1996.

Dick King-Smith shares his lifelong passion for living with guinea pigs. In easily comprehensible language, he discusses the guinea pig's history, its 'sensible' personality, and guinea pig chatter, feeding, and handling.

Mouse:

Lionn, Leo. Alexander and the Wind-Up Mouse. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1969.

This Caldecott Award winner is tale of a friendship between a real mouse and a wind-up mouse. Beautifully illustrated with collages, Lionn sends the message that it is better in the long run to be real, living creature than to be a toy.

Muskrat:

Savageau, Cheryl. Muskrat Will Be Swimming. Flagstaff, AZ: Northland, 1996.

Savageau's delightful story about a Native American girl who learns to appreciate her cultural identity by swimming with muskrats is inspired by her own heritage and childhood as a "Lake Rat."

Nutria:

Salley, Coleen. Epossumondas. New York: Harcourt, Inc., 2002.

This retelling of a Cajun folk tale features a baby possum that takes instructions far too literally.

This silly story made its way into the collection as it is the only children's book that I have come across that depicts a nutria, an aquatic rodent of the Americas.

Porcupine:

Bentley, Dawn. The Prickly Porcupine. Smithsonian Atlantic Wilderness Adventures. Norwalk, CT: Trudy, 2003.

Intended for beginning readers, this simple story follows a female porcupine as she lives amongst other woodland creatures, escapes a predator, and has babies. The book is divided into very short chapters to encourage young readers' confidence in reading chapter books.

Thompson-Hoffman, Susan. Little Porcupine's Winter Den. Smithsonian Wild Heritage Collection. Norwalk, CT: Trudy, 1992.

Like many books in the Smithsonian Wild Heritage Series, this story features a young animal that finds food, avoids a predator, finds its own kind, and at last secures a den. The book features an excellent glossary, including such terms as 'mountain mahogany bush' and 'bushy-tailed woodrat.'

Squirrel and Chipmunk:

Boring, Mel. Rabbits, Squirrels, and Chipmunks. Take-Along Guides. Minnetonka, MN: Northwood Press, 1996.

This field guide is full of interesting facts, including the feeding habits and ranges of several varieties of rabbits, squirrels, and chipmunks. Also included are activities to engage children in co-existing with rodents, such as making and hanging a nut ball.

Ehlert, Lois. Nuts to You! Orlando, FL: Harcourt, Inc., 1993.

Artist Lois Ehlert gives a squirrel peanuts and finds an unexpected visitor in her apartment one day. Throughout the book, illustrations are labeled with the names of the flowers and insects depicted, adding to the educational value of the book. Beautiful collages make the book extra special.

Potter, Beatrix. The Tale of Squirrel Nutkin. London: Penguin Group, 1995.

Beatrix Potter's tale of a squirrel who will not mind his manners and loses his tail to an owl is enlivened by beautiful reproductions of Potter's original watercolors. As in many of her stories, such as The Tale of Peter Rabbit, the main character pays a price for acting foolishly, but lives through the situation, becoming wiser rather than becoming dinner.

Swanson, Diane. Welcome to the World of Squirrels. Vancouver: Whitecap Books, 2001.

This book is filled with facts and crisp photos that emphasize the fast-paced, dynamic nature of squirrels' lives, as well as their contact with the human world.

Taylor, Graham. A Really Super Book About Squirrels. Kansas City, MO: Andrews McNeel Publishing, 2003.

Intended for older children or adults, this fanciful book is a collection of musings on how squirrels live and why they do what they do. The sketchy drawings and loose watercolors are charming, particularly the more fantastic scenes, such as the squirrel riding a paper airplane.

Wildsmith, Brian. Squirrels. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1974, 2000.

Stunning, speckled illustrations and the well written chronicle of squirrels' activities throughout the year make this book a classic.