

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

Amanda Tigner

I have always loved rodents. As a child, my favorite book to check out at the library was CappyBoppy, a story about a capybara (a large aquatic rodent from South America) that was taken to the United States to live as a pet. I loved to watch muskrats in the creek, and one summer, I befriended a groundhog, giving it apples and other tasty snacks. When I came to Michigan State, I soon discovered that muskrats live in the Red Cedar and that a groundhog family lives behind Kresge. Best of all, I discovered that the fox squirrels in East Lansing are very friendly, so I started giving them peanuts just about every day.

This collection of children's books about rodents began in 2002, initially spurred by my desire to learn more about the local squirrels. I wanted to know how they live, how they build their dreys, and what foods I could give them. One book led to another as each piqued my curiosity further. The collection focuses mostly on non-fiction about squirrels and large aquatic rodents, but is growing to include fiction and small rodents like guinea pigs and hamsters. Many of the books are by artists and naturalists. Currently, I look for books with excellent illustrations, especially those with a modern look. I am also on the lookout for CappyBoppy.

Not only do these books inform my research in the representation of animals in American culture, but they also provide a sense of connection to nature and the world of childhood that can all too easily be lost at university. Graduate school is often a maze of academic jargon and complex problems, and a collection of children's books affords me the chance to escape to a simpler world from time to time.

I welcome the chance to engage others and their families in getting to know rodents.