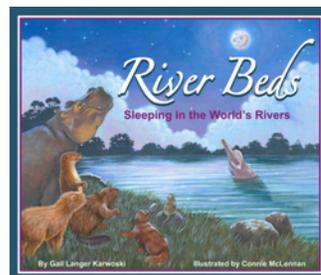
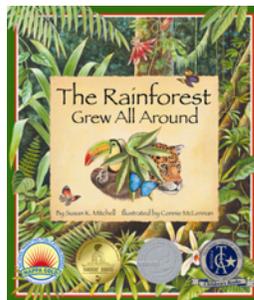
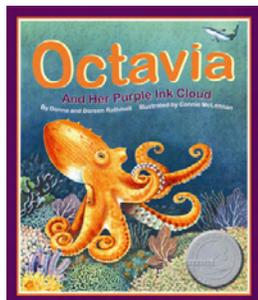
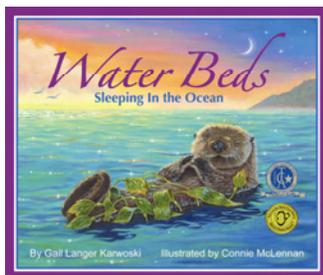


*A Conversation with Connie McLennan, illustrator of:  
Water Beds: Sleeping in the Ocean  
Octavia and Her Purple Ink Cloud  
The Rainforest Grew All Around and  
River Beds: Sleeping in the World's Rivers*



**How did you get into children's book illustrations?**

I had been a freelance advertising and editorial illustrator for a long time. In 1999, a local designer I knew was creating a business system (stationery, business card, etc.) for a small publisher/distributor who recently had relocated to our area. When the designer learned the owner was looking for an illustrator for a new book, she recommended me. *Domitila, A Cinderella Tale from the Mexican Tradition* was published in 2000. I did not do another children's book until 2004, when I illustrated both *The Wishing Tree* and *Water Beds: Sleeping in the Ocean*.

**What are the most frequently asked questions you encounter as an illustrator?**

THE single, most-asked question is, "How long does it take you to do an illustration (or a book)?" There are two answers to that question. The first answer is, "My whole life" — because that is how long it has taken me to be able to do my illustrations in whatever time it takes me to do them. The second answer is, "It depends." Many things determine "how long" an illustration takes. Each step may take a different length of time: reading and developing an idea (thumbnail sketches); waiting for the publisher's feedback; researching and collecting photo reference; doing a rough sketch; waiting for the publisher's feedback or approval; finalizing the drawing; transferring it to a painting surface and finally painting it. In general, the final painting usually takes anywhere from two to five days—depending on the medium and the level of detail. I have done a whole book in as little as two months and as long as eight. When more time is allowed, I often slot in other higher-paying projects at the same time.

**What sparks your creativity?**

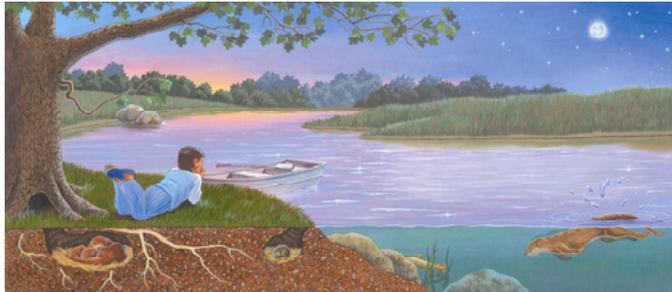
For book illustrations, I am inspired by looking at other books and all kinds of artwork, researching my subject, looking at photo references for it, and having a deadline. Nothing sparks "creativity"—and productivity — like the fear of missing a deadline and having bills to pay!

## Do you have a favorite medium?

I have two favorite mediums: watercolor and oil. They are very different from each other, and I enjoy alternating between the two, depending on what feels more appropriate for a particular project.

## What made you decide to be an artist?

It seems I didn't choose art as much as it chose me. An outstanding teacher told me successful painting is 5% talent and 95% desire. Painting is not mysterious; it is a learned skill, and anyone who really *wants* to learn can do it. I am very logical and equally balanced between "left-" and "right-brained." I guess I only became an illustrator because of my desire to draw and paint. If that hadn't gotten in the way, I might have been a doctor or a lawyer instead. My father was a veterinarian, so medical things always interested me. If I had applied my writing and research skills to medicine or law instead of illustration, I would have made a lot more money!



**Want to continue this conversation?** Schedule an interview!

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