



A Conversation with Ellen Prager

author of
Sea Slime

It's Eeuwy, Goopy and Under the Sea

*What is it like to be a leading marine scientist and author?
Learn what inspires Ellen Prager to write books for children
and investigate the wild world of ocean SLIME!!*

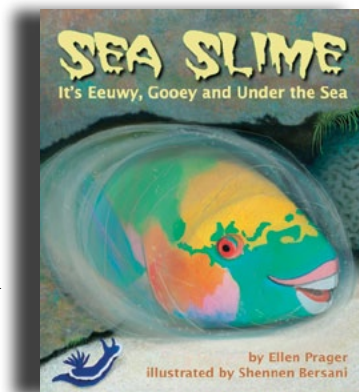
What inspired you to write Sea Slime?

While traveling around the country giving talks about my last popular science book, *Sex, Drugs, and Sea Slime: The Oceans' Oddest Creatures and Why They Matter*, I found that there was one thing everyone loved and laughed about, especially the kids. How undersea animals use mucus, aka slime. By the end of my talks, I had the audience yelling out - SLIME! It was so much fun that a children's book focused on the subject just seemed like a natural. Who doesn't think slime is fun, funny, weird, or gross - perfect! And as it turns out, a lot of marine animals use slime in some way.

You have written for adults and children, how is the process of writing for children different?

Writing for children is both a treat and tricky! I want the text to have substance in terms of science content and be accurate, but also fun

and maybe even funny. At the same time it all must be simple, short enough for the audience, and match up with something visually interesting. As a scientist, I was trained to use complex, technical terms and give lots of detail. Here it is the opposite. No jargon and keep it simple and short. I find the process challenging, yet fun. And in the long run it is very rewarding when kids and parents like the books and other scientists approve of them.



You have made a career as a leading expert in marine science, what initially sparked your interest in marine life?

As a child I loved nature. I used to run around the woods, climb trees, and jump over streams. I also always loved the water - any water - pools, the ocean, etc. Later, in school I became interested in science. Then in high school some of the lifeguards I worked with introduced me to scuba diving. I was hooked! In college I found a way to combine my passion

for nature, science, the outdoors, and scuba diving - marine science. It all came together at a semester program in St. Croix where I studied tropical marine science and had professors that were great role models and mentors. I wanted to be like them and do what they did. I feel very fortunate that I have been able to pursue a career that I am passionate about and now find ways with books like Sea Slime to share fun information and my enthusiasm with others, especially kids.

What advice would you give to a young child that wanted to become a marine scientist?



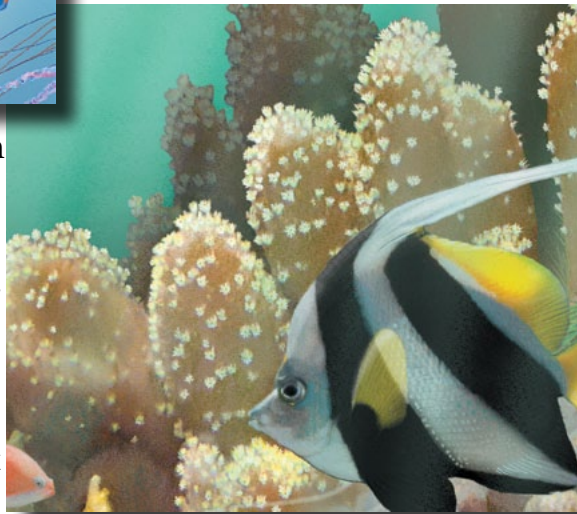
Work hard in school. Take science and math classes, and get out there. Volunteer, intern, or work at your local aquarium, nature center, museum, park, or science laboratory. Participate in events like coastal clean ups, ocean field trips, learn how to scuba dive, and read! And when you meet someone doing something you are interested in, don't be shy. Ask questions, ask for opportunities, ask for advice and show your enthusiasm and willingness to work hard (and sometime get messy). And be persistent. Don't give up, if you don't succeed at first. Keep trying.

What have you learned about sea animals and slime that surprised you the most?

That so many animals in the ocean have or use slime. It is a very energy efficient for marine animals to make mucus, so lots of animals do it. They use it for all sorts of things, like protection, travel, defense, hunting, etc. WOW!

What do you have coming up next?

After Sea Slime: It's Eeuwy, Gooley, and Under the Sea comes out, I have another book being released - The Shark Whisperer. It is the first book in a middle grade fiction series that combines humor and adventure with learning about the ocean, marine life, and ocean issues. And of course, undersea slime does come into play in the story - but I don't want to give it away. I'm very excited about these two books and hope that my readers will have as much fun reading them as I did in writing them!



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