



A Conversation with Robin Yardi

Author of
They Just Know

What was your incentive to write this particular book?

When my daughter was young we loved to talk about animals that didn't need their mothers. I remember playing mommy and baby butterfly with her (a game of her invention) and trying to explain, "Well actually, butterflies never meet their mothers." You should have seen her face! "Who teaches them to fly?" she asked. "Who makes them breakfast?" After years and years of watching butterflies in our garden this still amazes her, so I thought a book about the wonderful things animals can do all on their own would appeal to other kids too.

When did you become interested in writing?

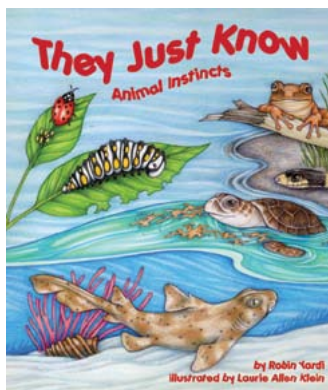
Like most adult writers, I wrote silly stories and made books when I was little. I remember a classmate who had to proofread my creative writing once complained that it was too long. "Ten pages!" she groaned. Luckily Donna, my editor at Arbordale, is more patient with my writing and my spelling has improved just a little since I was a kid.

What is the most frequently asked question you encounter as an author and what is your answer?

What do you write, and have you published anything? Well, I write about the whole world, but I only write for kids, and yes, now I am!

When are you most creative?

I'm most creative after a good long walk, and I take one almost every day. My neighborhood is full of beautiful plants and animals and I see something new on every walk. I've also been to our local Natural History Museum hundreds and hundreds of times. Really! When I was young I used to walk through it on my way home from school and I still take my kids there almost every week. I get both ideas and information there and it keeps my kids happy!



Do you have any advice for parents?

I'm a parent, and I'm a teacher too. I've taught both Kindergarten and third grade, and before that subbed everything up to eighth grade. So I do have a bit of advice! Read to your kids and let

your kids read. Turn off the TV and just talk to them. If you can, take them to your local library and museums. Most importantly, hug them at least once everyday!

What is most rewarding and/or challenging about writing children's books?

It takes a long time and a lot of patience to create a book that can be shared with families and schools.

It hasn't happened yet, but I'm looking forward to lots of funny questions from kids about the animals in *They Just Know*, even the ones that will be too smart for me to answer!



What animals in They Just Know have you seen before?

We get monarchs coming through our garden twice a year on their migration north and south. They lay their eggs and travel on, leaving behind little larvae that devour our milkweed. Then the milkweed grows back just in time to host a new crop of caterpillars. And every winter thousands of monarchs take shelter in a coastal grove of eucalyptus nearby.

I've had the pleasure of petting horn sharks at our local Sea Center. They are quite docile and have soft, pebbly skin.

I've loved finding ladybugs since I was a little girl. Once I had hundreds of ladybugs take up residence in the cracks of my windows and spend the entire winter living with me. I made quite a lot of wishes

that winter and really don't have many left. Now when I find ladybugs I give them to my children to wish on.

I've never seen a spring peeper, or pinkletink as some people call them, but I do love and worry about the world's amphibians. I've had pet frogs and toads and once ended up with about two hundred tadpoles!

I've swum among Green Sea Turtles in the waters of Hawai'i. These turtles are protected and you cannot touch them, but you can look deep, deep into their eyes. I've rarely seen anything so beautiful, curious and gentle.



As a kid in California I caught two species of kingsnake, both strikingly and stripingly beautiful!

What is your favorite animal NOT in They Just Know?

The Honduran Fruit Bat, just look at it! Have you ever seen something so adorable and hilarious in your entire life?

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