

## Middle Grade Fiction and Nonfiction

### Middle Grade Fiction

#### [The Missing Manatee](#) by Cynthia DeFelice *Square Fish (2008)*

All Skeet Waters wants is to catch a big, beautiful tarpon on his fly rod - and to keep everything else in his life in Florida the way it's always been. But he discovers a manatee that's been shot in the head, and as he begins to unravel the mysteries surrounding the manatee's apparent murder he also begins to understand his parents' dissolving marriage. Skeet discovers that life is a lot like tarpon fishing, in which you can't look just at the surface of the water - you have to look through it, at what lies beneath. *The Missing Manatee* was a nominee for the 2006 Edgar Award for Best Juvenile Mystery. (From Barnes & Noble)

#### [The Missing 'Gator of Gumbo Limbo](#) by Jean Craighead George *HarperCollins (2000)*

One day, a state official arrives with frightening orders. Dajun the Gumbo Limbo alligator is scaring people nearby -- he must be killed! Liza Poole takes action to save the invaluable 'gator, but suddenly, he is nowhere to be found. Now, she must find Dajun before it's too late, and her search will lead her into the heart of an exciting eco mystery! (From Amazon)

#### [Flush](#) by Carl Hiaasen *Yearling (2010)*

Noah's dad tried to stop the *Coral Queen* casino boat's illegal dumping of pollution into the Florida Keys by attempting to sink the boat. Now Noah's dad is behind bars and out of action, and Noah is determined to finish what his father started with a few odd allies and one really great plan.

*Similar titles by this author: Scat, Hoot, and Chomp*

#### [Pagoo](#) by Holling C. Holling *Houghton Mifflin (1990)*

An intricate study of life in a tide pool is presented in text and pictures through the story of Pagoo, a hermit crab. (From Barnes & Noble)

#### [One White Dolphin](#) by Gill Lewis *Athenum (2013)*

When a baby albino dolphin caught in old fishing netting washes ashore, Felix and Kara work with vets and specialists to save her and reunite her with her mother, setting off a chain of events that might just save the reef from the dredging the town has decided it needs. Written by a veterinarian and brimming with bravery and beauty, this "poignant and satisfying story about acting for the greater good" (*Publishers Weekly*) taps into the radiance of nature and dives into the important, timely issue of environmental protection and ecology. (From Barnes & Noble)

#### [Shark Whisperer](#) by Ellen Prager, Illustrated by Antonio Javier Caparo *Scarletta Junior Readers (2014)*

Tristan, a particularly clumsy boy, is invited to an ocean-themed summer camp in the Florida Keys where he discovers that he and the other young teens there have very special and rare talents when it comes to the ocean. After the camp receives a distress call from ocean animals, Tristan and his new friends get pulled into a daring rescue in the Bahamas. With the help of sharks, dolphins, a quick-escape artist octopus, and some seabird bombers, the campers must use their young talents in an attempt to outwit an evil shark-finning, reef-blasting billionaire. (From Barnes & Noble)

#### [Adventure on Dolphin Island](#) by Ellen Prager *iUniverse (2005)*

A family vacation aboard a rented sailboat turns into a horrible nightmare when young Kelly Wickmer is swept off the boat in a raging storm in the Bermuda Triangle. Alone in the wild sea, the timid young girl must struggle for survival and fight her fears of the ocean and its creatures, especially sharks. A dolphin brings Kelly to a mysterious tropical island, unlike anything she has ever seen or heard about. She encounters stingrays, sea turtles, iguanas, giant tortoise, the fish of a coral reef, and more, and as she searches for a way off the island and

the dolphin that saved her, she will have the adventure of a lifetime. A percentage of the profits from sales will go toward marine education. (From Amazon)

## **Middle Grade Nonfiction**

### **I'm Not a Plastic Bag by Rachel Hope Allison *Archaia (2012)***

Based on the real-life occurrence of The Great Pacific Garbage Patch, an island of floating trash in a remote area of the Northern Pacific Ocean more than twice the size of Texas, *I'm Not a Plastic Bag* tells a moving story about loneliness, beauty, and humankind's connection to our planet. Produced in conjunction with American Forests and the Global ReLeaf programs, Archaia will plant two trees for each tree used in the manufacturing of this book. (From Barnes & Noble)

### **Sea Soup: Phytoplankton by Betsy T. Stevens, Illustrated by Rosemary Giebfried *Tilbury House (1999)***

A teaspoon of sea water can hold a soupy serving of a million phytoplankton! These tiny floating plants come in thousands of amazing variations. Invisible to the naked eye, phytoplankton are the source of our atmosphere, our climate, our ocean food chain, much of our oil supply, and more. They're also food for zooplankton, tiny animals that often look like weird life forms from outer space. *Sea Soup: Phytoplankton* was named a Notable Book for Children in 1999 by the Smithsonian Institute. (From Amazon)

### **Sea Soup: Zooplankton by Betsy T. Stevens, Illustrated by Rosemary Giebfried *Tilbury House (1999)***

A teaspoon of sea water can hold a soupy serving of a million zooplankton! These tiny animals often look like weird life forms from outer space or larger animals such as jellyfish. (From Amazon)

### **The Big Green Book of the Big Blue Sea by Helaine Becker, Illustrated by Willow Dawson *Kids Can Press (2012)***

Based on the idea that knowledge is power, *The Big Green Book of the Big Blue Sea* shows how the ocean works and why this immense ecosystem needs our protection. Experiments using everyday materials help explain scientific concepts, such as why the ocean is salty, how temperature affects water density and why fish don't get waterlogged. Young scientists will gain a hands-on understanding of efforts to combat environmental hazards. (From Amazon)

### **Gaia Warriors by Nicola Davies, Illustrated by James Lovelock *(2011)***

Inspired by the work of outstanding scientist and thinker James Lovelock and written by acclaimed author Nicola Davies, here is a book that takes a clear look at how and why Earth's climate is changing and the ways we can deal with it. Its style is simple and its explanations are compelling, illuminating not only hard facts but also the opinions and potential solutions of scientists all over the world. But there are other voices too, those of people young and old — lawyers, food producers, fashion designers, scientists, rock stars, architects, conservationists, kids, campaigners, and more — who are trying to change the way they (and we) live on the planet. At once comprehensive and accessible, this galvanizing call to arms includes web links and resources that make it easy to join the cause. (From Candlewick)

### **Climate Change by John Woodward *DK Publishing (2008)***

An in-depth look at the phenomenon of global warming--what's causing it, what it might lead to, and what we can do to fight back. (From Google Books)

**[How We Know What We Know About Our Changing Climate](#)** by Lynne Cherry & Gary Braasch *Dawn Publications (2008)*

When the weather changes daily, how do we really know that Earth's climate is changing? Here is the science behind the headlines - evidence from flowers, butterflies, birds, frogs, trees, glaciers and much more, gathered by scientists from all over the world, sometimes with assistance from young "citizen-scientists." And here is what young people, and their families and teachers, can do to learn about climate change and take action. (From Amazon)

**[What Are Global Warming and Climate Change?](#)** by Chuck McCutcheon *University of NM Press (2010)*

Global warming is one of the most talked about science subjects today.

Maybe you have seen pictures of polar bears or other animals stranded atop floating chunks of melting ice. Perhaps you have heard about or lived through extreme weather--hurricanes, floods, water shortages, heat waves, or electricity blackouts. Many of these events can stem from the world getting warmer. As that happens, the climate changes, too. This book helps young readers understand the sciences used to study global warming with a question-and-answer format supplemented by hands-on activities. (From University of New Mexico Press)

**[Endangered Manatees](#)** by Bobbie Kalman and Hadley Dyer *Crabtree (2006)*

This informative and affordable book tells young readers what manatees are, including species and subspecies names, plus which ones American readers are likely to encounter while visiting the waters off Florida. This book also features information about what "endangered" means and why manatees are considered to be endangered, rather than vulnerable or threatened. Simple-to-read text details manatee bodies and how well-adapted they are for swimming, manatee habitat, their life cycle, mating and feeding behavior. The book is filled with illustration, one of which is of a Stellar Sea Cow, a kind of manatee now extinct. Speaking of extinct, Kalman details how humans impact the manatees' world, as well as how people can help this engaging, gentle creature. Readers can find a glossary, an index and where to get more information in the back of the book. (From Children's Literature)

**[Olivia's Birds - Saving the Gulf](#)** by Olivia Bouler *Sterling (2011)*

One 11 year-old girl can make a difference-as budding ornithologist and artist Olivia Bouler has proven, single-handedly raising over \$175,000 for the Gulf Coast oil spill recovery. Devastated by the disaster and eager to do her part, Olivia wrote a letter to Audubon, "11 years old and willing to help" offering her own bird paintings to raise contributions for Gulf recovery efforts. The idea took flight, and Olivia proceeded to send out over 500 paintings, many of which are captured in this lavish picture book that recaps her valiant campaign to save birds affected by the spill. (From Amazon)

Written in her own words, this unique introduction to backyard and endangered birds features Olivia's hand-drawn illustrations, bird facts, and full-color photos celebrating Olivia's campaign. *Olivia's Birds* supports Audubon's conservation mission, including Gulf Coast cleanup efforts and is printed on FSC eco-friendly paper. *A 2012 Parents' Choice Gold Awards winner!*

**[The Sea, the Storm, and the Mangrove Tangle](#)** by Lynne Cherry *Farrar Straus Giroux (2004)*

A seed is jostled from a branch of a mangrove tree and floats to a lagoon in the Caribbean Sea. It takes root, sprouts leaves, and slowly begins to grow. Over many years, the mangrove will provide a home and nourishment for numerous creatures of land and sea. Among its roots come to live fiddler crabs and shrimp; in its branches dwell lizards and hummingbirds. Soon the tree is dropping seeds of its own, and other mangroves are growing, creating a tangle whose benefits extend even to large mammals like dolphins and manatees. There are endpaper maps that indicate where mangroves are located and the names of common animals and plants found in them.

Ever threatened by hurricanes and even more by human destruction, the mangroves of our planet are endangered, but in Lynne Cherry's richly illustrated story one such habitat survives, giving readers hope and inspiration for preservation of these ecosystems in the real world. (From Amazon)

**[Marvels in the Muck: Life in the Salt Marshes](#) by Doug Wechsler *Boyd's Mills Press (2008)***

Stunning photos and expert text reveal the secret lives of salt marshes. Along the coasts, where ocean tides mix salt water with fresh water, nature has created salt marshes—soggy places full of natural wonders. For years, salt marshes were maligned, drained, or filled in. Now salt marshes are valued as the home of fascinating wildlife, including more than twenty different species of birds. Ornithologist and photographer Doug Wechsler takes the reader on a down-and-muddy tour of the year-round activity in these wonderlands. Young readers will marvel at the strange and skillful birds and unusual vegetation, beautifully adapted to live and thrive in salt marshes. Kids will appreciate what has taken so long for us to learn: salt marshes are delicate wetlands, well worth defending. (From Amazon)

**[A Journey Into a Wetland](#) by Rebecca L. Johnson, Illustrated by Phillis V. Saroff *Lerner (2004)***

Takes readers on a walk in a swamp, showing examples of how the animals and plants of wetlands are connected and dependent on each other and the wetland's watery environment. (From Google Books)

**[A Journey into an Estuary](#) by Rebecca L. Johnson, Illustrated by Phillis V. Saroff *Lerner (2004)***

Takes readers on a walk at a sheltered bay, showing examples of how the animals and plants of estuaries are connected and dependent on each other and the estuary's mix of fresh and salt water. (From Google Books)

**[Watersheds: A Practical Handbook for Healthy Water](#) by Clive Dobson and Gregor Beck *Firefly Books (1999)***

Water is our most vital resource, yet few understand even the basics of watershed ecology. *Watersheds: A Practical Handbook for Healthy Water* provides a fascinating overview of the fundamentals of ecology from the simple concept of a watershed to the biological intricacies of a wetland ecosystem and its implications on the environment.

More than 100 illustrations, especially done for this book, help explain the numerous environmental issues and the intricate web of life that connect each of us to all other life on the planet through out involvement in the watershed cycle. Special "How Can I Help?" sections throughout the book provide practical and meaningful ways in which individuals can make a difference to the health of watersheds by reducing water and air pollution, preserving native forests, and helping restore the health of streams and rivers. (From Amazon)

**[Swamper: Letters from a Louisiana Swamp Rabbit](#) by Amy Griffin Ouchley *Louisiana State University Press (2013)***

Swamper, a fictitious swamp rabbit, lives in the bottomland hardwood forest, or overflow swamp, which is a very real environment. In twelve letters addressed to his human friends, Swamper shares his vivid observations about life in a Louisiana swamp. With excitement and captivating detail, he explains ecological concepts such as food webs, energy flow, decomposition, and reproduction. He recounts adventures like escaping his predators, the great horned owl and the red fox, and swimming for his life after a flood forces him to find higher ground. The alert swamp rabbit even describes the seasonal migration of birds and the monthly phases of the moon.

While educating students about the interconnected life cycles found in a natural habitat, Swamper's first-hand account of the richness and value of the wetlands will also help young readers develop a deeper appreciation for this delicate ecosystem. Though written for all ages to enjoy, the content specifically aligns with life science and environmental science educational standards for 4th through 7th grades.