

# Children's Book Guild News



CHILDREN'S  
BOOK GUILD  
of WASHINGTON, DC

## Monthly News

Authors • Illustrators • Children's Literature Specialists

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### About Me



#### Monthly News

The Children's Book Guild of Washington, DC is a professional organization of authors, illustrators and children's literature specialists promoting high standards in children's literature since 1945. Visit us at <https://childrensbookguild.org/>

[View my complete profile](#)

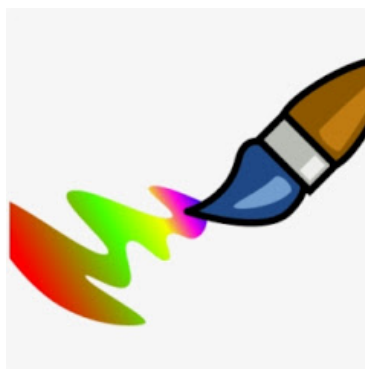
### Follow by Email



Saturday, February 27, 2021

## March 2021

### THE CHILDREN'S BOOK GUILD'S ANNUAL BUSINESS MEETING



The Guild's annual business meeting will be held Thursday, March 18, at 7 p.m., via Zoom.

Following discussion of the business agenda, join celebrated Guild illustrators Susan Stockdale, Gareth Hinds, Lulu Delacre, Roz Schanzer and Zara Gonzalez Hoang for a virtual tour of their studios. They'll share a "live look" or slide show of their work space, tools and media, or unique process. After their

presentations, the illustrators will answer questions from Guild members in breakout rooms. It will be a fun, interactive and informative experience for all.

Please note: The business meeting and virtual tour are open to Guild members only, and registration is required.

Illustration courtesy of clipart.email.

[Register Now!](#)

#### IN THIS ISSUE:

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**MAY 22: SAVE THE DATE!****ONLINE EVENT CELEBRATING THE 2020-2021  
NONFICTION AWARD FOR CATHERINE REEF**

The annual Nonfiction Award event will be held online this year at 1 p.m. Eastern time on Saturday, May 22. In addition to Catherine's talk, we will be featuring a cameo appearance by one of Catherine's book subjects: author Mary Shelley. Not to be missed!

More info coming soon, but please save the date. And please reach out to Mary Amato

([info@maryamato.com](mailto:info@maryamato.com)) if you can help with this event and/or serve on next year's event committee.

**LETTER FROM GUILD PRESIDENT KAREN DEANS**

Hello, Guild friends,

Just knowing these words are going in the March newsletter gives my heart a lift. As I write this, there is ice on the sidewalk and a chill in the air, but spring is on the way.

One warm and sunny spot that brightened our winter was February's program, featuring author-illustrator Jason Chin and his editor, Neal Porter. Jason generously shared his process, describing how he transforms creative impulse and rigorous

research into beautiful stories and art. He even gave us a crash course on the workings of the physical universe, which was both humbling and informative. We also got a sneak peek at his stunning new book, *Watercress*. Neal enhanced the program with the editor's perspective, talking us through the process of how books come to be at his imprint with Holiday House, Neal Porter Books. Yukari Matsuyama was, as always, an intuitive and engaged moderator.

February's chosen organization supporting racial justice in children's literature and education was Black Lives Matter. Thank you to all who donated. The Guild received \$125 in small donations, which were collected and presented to the organization as a gift from Members and Friends of the Children's Book Guild.

Our annual Guild business meeting for members will take place on March 18, at 7 p.m. As in years past, we will begin the meeting with the business portion, during which next year's executive committee slate will be announced and other items will be discussed. This will be followed by a presentation featuring some of our talented Guild members.

Our next Speaker Series event will be held on April 15, at 1 p.m. The Guild will welcome author Darcie Little Badger, who will be in conversation with her editor at Levine Querido, Nick Thomas.

Mary Amato has been busy planning for the Nonfiction Award event honoring the Guild's very own Catherine Reef, which will take place on Saturday, May 22, from 1 to 2:30 p.m. We look forward to hearing Catherine discuss her prolific career filled with interesting and vibrant subjects, one of whom will be joining us from the great beyond. Yep, you read that right. It's going to be fun. Registration will begin March 1, and you'll be receiving an email to set that in motion. As always, if you are interested and able to help with the event, please contact Mary directly.

I look forward to seeing many of you at the March business meeting. Meanwhile, have a productive, creative month!

Karen



Art: [Lulu Delacre](#)

## CALLING ALL GUILD ILLUSTRATORS!

We are looking to showcase your work as accents on the new Guild Website, with your name and a link to your site. Thank you to those who have already sent in your colorful gems, and we look forward to receiving more. This will really personalize the site and make it happy and beautiful, and also provide a little tease that will send people to your website.

To see examples of where and how the spots will be placed, check out these three links:

<https://www.childrensbookguild.org/mission-statement>

<https://www.childrensbookguild.org/membership-criteria>

<https://www.childrensbookguild.org/guild-history>

Each illustration must be a 300 dpi PNG, no smaller than 300 X 300 pixels and no larger than 500 x 500 pixels, with a transparent background, if possible. If the image background is not transparent, it will be adjusted for the website. Feel free to provide from 1-3 images, and we will do our best to place as many on the site as possible.

## JASON CHIN: RESEARCH AND CREATIVE PROCESS

by Valerie O. Patterson

Author and illustrator Jason Chin was the Children's Book Guild's featured speaker on February 18. His longtime editor, Neal Porter, was a surprise guest, and Guild member Yukari Matsuyama emceed the event. Chin is the award-winning author-illustrator of science and nature books for young readers. His *Grand Canyon* received a Caldecott Honor and a Sibert Honor, and it was the 2018 NCTE Orbis Pictus Award winner. He also is the author-illustrator of *Your Place in the Universe*, *Redwoods*, *Island: A Story of the Galapagos*, *Coral Reefs*, and *Gravity*, as well as the illustrator of *Water Is Water* and *Pie Is for Sharing*. His newest illustrations appear in the forthcoming *Watercress*, by Andrea Wang, which already has garnered several starred reviews prior to its March 30 release.

Matsuyama introduced Chin, and he began his talk by recounting how he approached researching and portraying the vast scale of distance for his book *Your Place in the Universe*. Conveying complex concepts—such as lightspeed, which captures time as much as distance—in ways that the child audience can grasp is one of Chin's hallmarks as a writer and artist. He shared his thumbnail sketches and indicated that he found doing scale drawings himself opened his eyes and made the numbers more real to him. He began his first concept with a child the height of five stacked books, and then a giraffe the height of four children standing on top of one another. One fact that surprised him during the research for the book was that the discernible height of Earth's atmosphere is 6,000 miles, whereas the planet's radius is only 4,000 miles. To depict this vastness, he turned the book 90 degrees to create a long illustration stretching over two pages, with the atmosphere filling most of the spread. For comparison, a tiny Mount Everest is at the bottom, and the space station orbits above. Chin said that he does book dummies first, and he spends a lot of time planning his paintings before he puts brush to paper.

Next Chin talked about his research and process preparing to illustrate Andrea Wang's *Watercress*, a story from her own childhood in Ohio with parents who had experienced the Great Famine in China (1958-1962). To prepare, Chin read books and researched at museums. He visited the Ma Yin Yu Tang House, a courtyard house built in China and then dismantled and recreated in Salem, MA, in order to get the details of the mother's Chinese house right. He researched clothing in China under Mao, even down to eyeglasses that would have been worn then. In a small detail about the famine that could be missed by readers, he showed in one panel green trees through a window; in the next painting, the trees were bare. He recounted that during the famine, people would eat anything, including leaves and even tree bark. Chin also conducted research at the Harvard-Yenching Asian Studies Library. During this time, he did a number of exploratory sketches, using brush and ink, then pastel, and then watercolor. He loved the look of pastel but ultimately rejected it as not right for the book. He was drawn to Chinese brush art and watercolor. On the cover art, the reader can see the impact of Chinese brushwork techniques in the depiction of bamboo juxtaposed with Ohio cornfields. Chin finished his talk by showing the evolution of one of the paintings for *Watercress* from a drawing on a light table to the finished work.

Matsuyama then asked Porter about working with Chin over many years. Porter said the two met when Chin worked at Books of Wonder, a children's bookstore in New York City. He received a dummy at one point for *Redwoods*, but he did not think he would be interested in doing a nonfiction book on the subject—until he opened the dummy and saw what Chin had created. Porter said he has enjoyed working with Chin on nonfiction projects, but he also pointed out the appeal of the rhythm of Chin doing illustrations for other writers in between. When Porter saw the text of *Watercress*, he immediately knew that Chin was the right artist for the project.

Matsuyama drew from questions from the audience. One question was whether Chin's own heritage made getting the details for *Watercress* even more important. He said yes. He is of Chinese heritage on his father's side; his mother is of European heritage. But he grew up in New Hampshire and considers himself thoroughly American in his perspective. Awareness of the limitations of that perspective spurred him to go the extra mile to be as correct as possible. He also appreciated Porter breaking one of the publishing "rules" by introducing Chin to Wang, so they could discuss the book.

Another question was about how Chin does not flinch from using difficult vocabulary in his books. Chin said he tries not to underestimate the reader. His rule of thumb is "to write as simply and clearly" as possible. But, when a word is "necessary," he uses it. He also uses side notes and illustrations to help convey complex information.

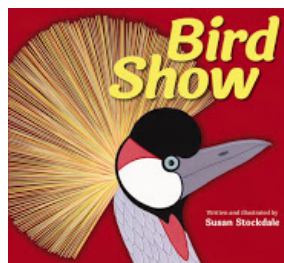
Chin's presentation was fascinating and illuminating. Karen Deans closed the afternoon by thanking Chin for his presentation, Porter for his special guest appearance and Matsuyama for her emceeing.

## MEMBER NEWS

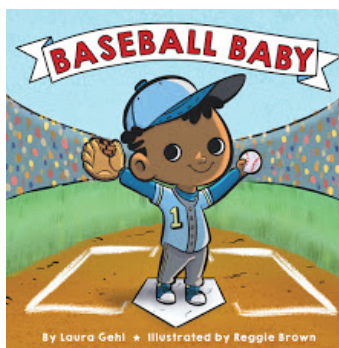
On her website JOY HAKIM is offering freebie readings for kids to do at home during this astonishing time. Use this link to see her "do-it-yourself" lessons for children and parents, with an emphasis on history and science: <https://www.joyhakim.com/diy-lessons.html>.



PHYLLIS NAYLOR's 1999 novel, *Walker's Crossing*, has been optioned by New Brinley Pictures, LLC, and Arcady Bay Entertainment. The story takes place on a western ranch, and the plot centers on the fears and prejudices of a homegrown militia and its effect on a 13-year-old boy, his friends and the ranch community that is all he has ever known.



SUSAN STOCKDALE's picture book *Bird Show* will be published by Peachtree on March 1. The book features 18 spectacular birds from around the world, imagining their plumage as clothing. *Kirkus Reviews* called it “a posh performance to read aloud or alone.” Susan invites you to her virtual *Bird Show* debut [P&P Live! program](#) on Friday, March 12, from 10 to 10:45 a.m.

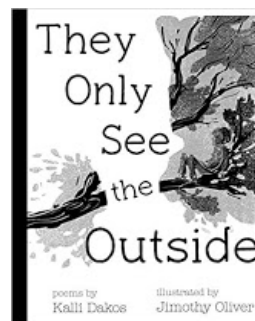


LAURA GEHL's board book *Baseball Baby* will be released on March 2. The book is illustrated by Reggie Brown and published by Simon & Schuster.

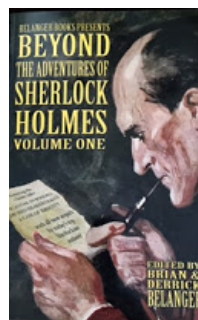


SUSAN L. ROTH's newest book, coauthored with Cindy Trumbore, is *Butterfly for a King: Saving Hawai'i's Kamehameha Butterflies*. It is featured in Susan's first-ever book trailer, which boasts music by Cindy Trumbore's daughter: [Butterfly for a King trailer](#).





**KALLI DAKOS** has a new book of poetry to celebrate in March! *They Only See the Outside* (Magination Press) explores children's inner experiences, which may not be seen from the outside. Topics include the heartbreak of losing a pet or friend, bullying, the monotony of homework, secret wishes and dreams, and the challenges of facing life's sadness. There are also humorous poems about embarrassing moments in school that will bring laughter.



**BRENDA SEABROOKE's** story "Tableau of Death," in which Sherlock Holmes again tangles with arch criminal John Clay (from "The Red-Headed League"), great-grandson of a royal duke, and again outwits the wily miscreant, was published in an anthology of such stories by Belanger Books.

**CATHERINE REEF** will join a panel of biographers to present a Zoom workshop on writing about figures in science and medicine, on Wednesday, March 3, at 6 p.m. EST. Presented by Biographers International Organization, the workshop is free and open to the public, but advance registration is required: [BIO Workshop Registration](#).

### "QUICK LINKS"...

**ROZ BEITLER** informs us that *Telephone Tales*, published by Enchanted Lion Books, written by Gianni Rodari, illustrated by Valerio Vidali and translated by Antony Shugaar, received the 2021 Batchelder Award (<http://www.ala.org/alsc/awardsgrants/bookmedia/batchelderaward>). The award recognizes outstanding children's books translated into English and published in the United States. Guild members may recall that Tasha Muresan, then an editorial associate with Enchanted Lion Books, spoke to the Guild in November 2018.

And SUSAN ROTH recommends this article from the *New York Times* on the value of picture books for readers of all ages: <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/02/20/opinion/sunday/picture-books-reading.html>.

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### Virtual Programs at Politics and Prose

During the pandemic, Politics and Prose continues to host free events for children and adults--virtually. These can be viewed live, in real time, or afterward, as recordings. You can view P&P's events calendar and register for events at: <https://www.politics-prose.com/events>. (Advance registration is required to receive a link.) March's programs will feature Guild members Deborah Kalb, Susan Stockdale, Hena Khan, Terry Catasus Jennings and Ann McCallum Staats.

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