



A conversation with author
Roxie Munro

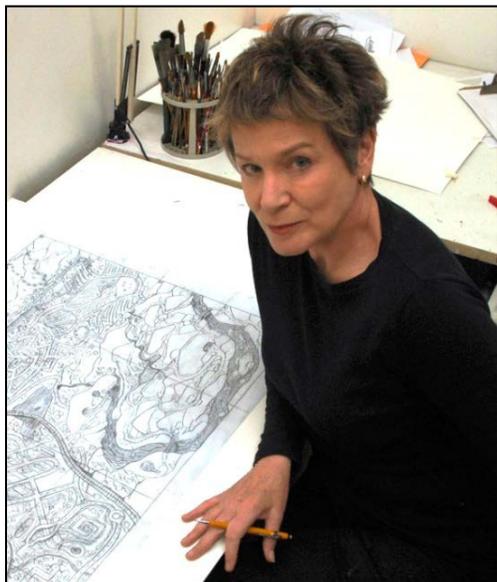


Photo credit: Bo Zaunders

Roxie Munro talks about her new book,
Rodent Rascals.

- ★ “A fun, unique, and informative addition to all children’s nonfiction collections.”
—*Booklist*, starred review
- ★ “Munro’s animals—particularly her impossibly cute guinea pig—strongly exude shaggy, button-eyed appeal.”
—*Kirkus Reviews*, starred review
- ★ “[Munro writes] with warmth and enthusiasm.”
—*Publishers Weekly*, starred review

Roxie, please tell us about *Rodent Rascals*.

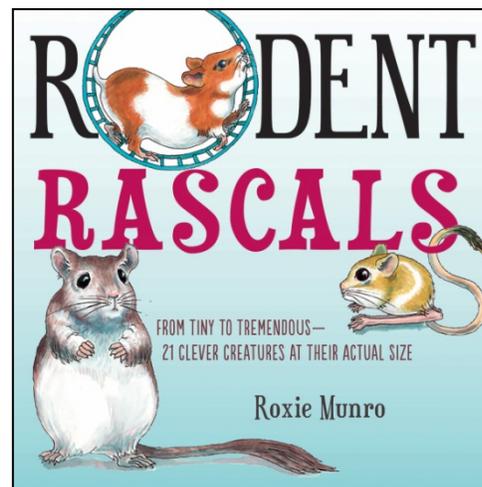
I’ve done several books on living creatures; each book had a certain “device” to wrap the content around and make it fun and maybe a game—all very visual—for children. In *Hatch!* (about birds) it was guessing birds from their eggs; *Busy Builders* (bugs) was about structures they build; in *Slithery Snakes* children guessed the creature from skin patterns. Children love the “ick” factor, and it occurred to me that rodents might be fun. I worked up a simple proposal, and, doing preliminary research, found out all sorts of fascinating facts. I met one morning with my wonderful inspiring editor, Mary Cash, and she suggested size as a concept. An hour later we had the book idea nailed.

Did any experience with rodents inspire you to write this book?

Though I’ve seen a lot of rodent critters, I’ve never been really afraid of them. My theory is that animals are just trying to live their lives, like we are. They don’t have hostile intentions toward humans.

What was the process like for illustrating the book? Was it tricky to include life-sized illustrations?

Because I was once a TV courtroom artist, I’ve learned to work almost anywhere. The time to begin the art coincided with a November 2016 trip to the UK (I was speaking at SCBWI British Isles). I decided, bravely, or maybe stupidly, to start the art while staying in an old hotel on the English Channel. I brought paper, pens, paintbrushes, and little jars of color. It is scary to start the art (which I do before I write the book, contrary to most children’s book creators)—it sets the tone for the



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whole project. But I sat at a table in my hotel room, and began. With the first few ink lines, I started to fall in love with my characters, and only grew more fond of them as time went on. Dealing with how to express size became an issue only later in the book (the rodents progress throughout the book's page-turn from smallest to largest), but I think it works.

How did you decide to include the 21 rodents featured in the book—and at actual size?

We wanted a variety, of course. There are many different kinds of squirrels, many kinds of rats, lots of gerbils . . . so I made a big chart of the potential cast of characters, did a ton of research, and narrowed them down by color, size, location, and behaviors.

Do you have a favorite rodent or one that is especially fascinating to you?

Well, the Norway (common brown) rat is pretty amazing, as is the “Hero Rat” (Giant African Pouched Rat). And some of the sweet-looking creatures (kangaroo rat, guinea pig, capybara) attracted me. Plus, I love the prairie dog, scanning his fiefdom, with attitude.

Are there any other animals you might write about in the future?

Aha! Funny you ask. Yes, I have another creature book in the hopper for Holiday House . . . think lush color. And a more or less silent and cool environment. Hint: the polar regions are silent and cool, but are NOT full of color!

About the Author

Roxie Munro is the author and illustrator of more than 40 books for children, including *Masterpiece Mix*, which was called “brilliant” in a *Huffington Post* review. Her books have been named *Smithsonian’s* Best Science Books for Children, Outstanding NSTA Science Trade Books, and winners of the Society of International Librarians Honor Award. Her studio is in New York City, where she also lives.

To view Roxie’s video interview featuring *Rodent Rascals* on KidLit TV visit:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gI8sVQSy1S0>.

Images from the making of *Rodent Rascals*



Hotel room "studio"



Makeshift "light table" in hotel with chipmunk sketch



NYC studio



NYC studio



NYC studio