

About Bruce & His Books

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Bruce McMillan was raised in Maine. He graduated from Kennebunk High School, and the University of Maine at Orono with a Bachelor of Science in biology.

He sold his first photo when he was a teenager. Then, in his early twenties he won a national photo contest sponsored by Bayer's Children's Aspirin to depict "the emotional appeal of children." He had yet to start his first children's book. He has traveled the world—Alaska, Antarctica, Bonaire, Culebra, Iceland, and across the USA—to photograph the wonders of nature and simple concepts for his acclaimed and honored books.

He teaches a course that is open to the public, *Writing, Illustrating & Publishing Children's Books*, at the University of New Hampshire. Two of his students have been successfully published. He speaks at schools and conferences across the USA. He also led summer tours to Iceland from 1997-2000 to see puffins and horses and where the books were photographed.

Bruce McMillan is a member of the Author's Guild and the Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators. He served as a judge for the S.C.B.W.I. Golden Kite awards in 1994.

His photographic work has appeared in exhibits throughout the country, as well as in magazines such as *DownEast*, *Life*, *Natural History*, *People*, *Reader's Digest*, *US*, and *Yankee*.

Articles:

Our Winters on a Maine Island, *DownEast*, January 1977.

Photographer or Photo-illustrator: What's the Difference?, *School Library Journal*, Feb. 1991.

Accuracy in Books for Young Readers: From First to Last Check, *The New Advocate*, spring 1993.

Tern Turn-on, *Natural History*, June 1993.

Playing with Math, *C.B.C. Features*, The Children's Book Council, Summer-Fall 1993.

Books Made into Movies:

The Remarkable Riderless Runaway Tricycle, 1982, Evergreen Firehouse Production, Phoenix Films.

Adult Books

Punography, Penguin, 1978 — featured in *Life* magazine, January 1979.

Punography Too, Penguin, 1980 — featured in *Reader's Digest* magazine, July 1981.

Honors and Awards:

Salmon Summer

Parent's Guide Children's Media Award, Outstanding Achievement in Nonfiction Honor - '98

Wild Flamingos

Star Review - *School Library Journal*, '97

American Bookseller Assn. Pick of the List, '97

The Picture that Mom Drew

Star Review - *Booklist*, '97

Jelly Beans for Sale

American Library Association Notable Book, '97

New York Pub. Lib. 100 Best Books for Reading and Sharing, '96

Summer Ice, Life along the Antarctic Peninsula

Outstanding Science Trade Book for Children - N.S.T.A./C.B.C., '95

Children's Book of the Month Club alternate selection, '95

Nights of the Pufflings

American Library Association Notable Book, '96

Parents' Choice Honor Book, '95

Certificate of Excellence - *Parenting* magazine, '95

A Lupine Honor Book - Maine Librarians Assn., '96

A Best Book of the Year - *School Library Journal*, '95

A Children's Book of Distinction - *Hungry Mind Review*, '96

A Best Kids' Book of the Year - *Crayola Kids* magazine, '95

A Few Good Books selection - *Booklinks* magazine, '95

A Blue Ribbon Book - *The Bulletin for the Ctr. of Children's Books*, '95

First photo-illustrated book featured on the cover of

The Bulletin for the Center of Children's Books, '95

First photo-illustrated book featured on the cover of

The Horn Book Guide

Star Review - *The Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books*, '95

Star Review - *School Library Journal*, '95

Outstanding Science Trade Book for Children - N.S.T.A./C.B.C., '95

Puffins Climb, Penguins Rhyme

American Bookseller Assn. Pick of the List, '95

Outstanding Science Trade Book for Children - N.S.T.A./C.B.C., '95

Two Star Review — *Science Books and Films*, '95

Sense Suspense, A Guessing Game for the Five Senses

American Bookseller Assn. Pick of the List, '94

Star Review - *School Library Journal*, '94

Penguins at Home, Gentoos of Antarctica

Outstanding Science Trade Book for Children - N.S.T.A./C.B.C., '93

Two Star Review — *Science Books and Films*, '94

A Beach for the Birds

Outstanding Science Trade Book for Children - N.S.T.A./C.B.C., '93
 John Burroughs Nature Book for Young Readers, '93
 Pointer Review — *Kirkus*, '93

Mouse Views, What the Class Pet Saw

Reading Rainbow Review Selection, '94
 Star Review - *Booklist*, '93
 Selection - Junior Library Guild, '93

Going on a Whale Watch

Outstanding Science Trade Book for Children - N.S.T.A./C.B.C., '92
 Pointer Review — *Kirkus*, '92

The Baby Zoo

American Bookseller Assn. Pick of the List, '92
 Outstanding Science Trade Book for Children - N.S.T.A./C.B.C., '92

Eating Fractions

American Library Association Notable Book, '91
 Star Review - *School Library Journal*, '91
 A Best Kid's Book of 1991 - *Parents Magazine*, '91

Play Day, A Book of Terse Verse

A Best Kid's Book of 1991 - *Parents Magazine*, '91
 Triangle Review — *The Horn Book Guide*, '91

The Weather Sky

Scientific American magazine Young Readers Book Award, '96
 Library of Congress Children's Book of the Year, '91
 Utah Informational Book Award Nomination, '93

One, Two, One Pair!

Certificate of Excellence - *Parenting Magazine*, '92

Mary Had a Little Lamb

Certificate of Excellence - *Parenting* magazine, '90
 Star Review - *School Library Journal*, '90
 The Original Art Exhibition — Jury Selection
 The Society of Illustrators Museum of American Illustration Selection -
 Junior Library Guild, '90
 Adkin Robinson Award, '91

One Sun, A Book of Terse Verse

American Library Association Notable Book, '91
 A Best Kid's Book of 1990 - *Parents Magazine*, '90
 Outstanding Science Trade Book for Children - N.S.T.A./C.B.C., '90
 Star Review - *The Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books*, '90
 Selection - Children's Book-of-the-Month Club, '90
 Selection - Junior Library Guild, '90

Time To...

Star Review - *School Library Journal*, '89
 New York Public Lib. 100 Best Books for Reading and Sharing, '89

Super, Super, Superwords

- Certificate of Excellence - *Parenting* magazine, '89
- A Best Book of the Year - *School Library Journal*, '89
- Star Review - *Booklist*, '89
- Star Review - *School Library Journal*, '89
- School Library Journal* Best Books, '89

Growing Colors

- Children's Editor's Choice - A.L.A. *Booklist*, '88
- Star Review - *Booklist*, '88

Dry or Wet?

- Star Review - *School Library Journal*, '88

Becca Backward, Becca Frontward, A Book of Concept Pairs

- Outstanding Science Trade Book for Children - N.S.T.A./C.B.C., '86
- Children's Editor's Choice - A.L.A. *Booklist*, '86
- Star Review - *Booklist*, '86
- Star Review - *School Library Journal*, '86

Counting Wildflowers

- American Library Association Notable Book, '86
- Star Review - *School Library Journal*, '86

Kitten Can...

- American Bookseller Assn. Pick of the List, '84
- Books For the Youngest Child, Update - A.L.A. *Booklist*, '85
- Library of Congress Children's Book of the Year, '84

Here a Chick, There a Chick

- School Library Journal* Best Books, '83
- Star Review - *School Library Journal*, '83
- American Bookseller Assn. Pick of the List, '83
- Selection - Junior Library Guild, '83
- A Best Kid's Book of 1983 - *Parents Magazine*, Dec '83

Ghost Doll

- The Lemme Book Award, '84

Autobiographical Sketch

When I was a child, I loved to read. That's how I learned to appreciate the written word. I'd discover authors and read all of their books. I bicycled downtown to Bangor, Maine, and with my dollar, bought a Franklin W. Dixon book. Then I went back every week with my allowance until I'd read all the others in his *Hardy Boys* series. (I didn't know it then but Dixon was a pseudonym for the in-house editors who wrote each book using the same style.) I read my mother's original editions of Laura Lee Hope's *Bobbsey Twins* (another editors-as-author formula series). We moved to Kennebunk and I read one Albert Payson Terhune collie book (a real author), and then all of the others from the Kennebunk library.

Now, I not only enjoy reading other people's words, I enjoy writing my own. As I write, I'm playing—playing with words and language. This is easily seen in *One Sun; Play Day*; or *Puffins Climb, Penguins Rhyme*. All three books were written in minimalist verse.

I didn't learn to write until I was a big kid. My primary and secondary teachers had taught me to appreciate language, but I never had to write much in school. After I graduated from college, and after I'd been a producer and director at a public television station, I was an island caretaker on a coastal Maine island, McGee. There was neither electricity nor running water. In the summers I tended the island, and in the winters I taught myself to write. I practiced for two winters. I didn't write to produce a finished product. I simply wrote to improve my skills. Years later, I realized that the real joy in writing came not from the end product, but in the actual process of creating it.

When it was time to leave the island, I outlined what was to become my first book, *Finestkind o' Day: Lobstering in Maine*, and photographed it during my last few weeks on McGee. It featured my son, pre-school Brett. After I moved ashore, I wrote the first draft. Then I rewrote it many times. That's what writing is all about—*rewriting*.



When I was a child, my father, Frank H. McMillan Jr., sparked my interest in photography. He provided the tools, and always answered my questions. On my fifth birthday he gave me a simple camera and showed me how to use it. When I was nine he gave me a professional camera, a Rolleicord, for Christmas. At first I tended to be more creative with the Rolleicord than he thought I should be. He wasn't too pleased when I tried to photograph a burning Christmas candle—looking down at the flame from above!

With my father's guidance, my photographic skills improved. In high school I took pictures for both the school newspaper and yearbook. I even made a camera for a science project, a pinhole camera, using ordinary cardboard. I took a picture with it of my high school. I still have that picture and often share it with young audiences at schools I visit.

When starting a book project, I thoroughly research and study the subject first. Then, I simply begin photographing or writing. Sometimes the words come first; other times it's the photographs. Either way, I just start.

I built my house the same way I make a book. I learned all I could about my subject. Then I just started, first designing and then constructing my home. Twelve years later I completed my task—my home. It's where I still live and work.

What you don't see in my books are all the pictures that didn't make it past my critical eye. I take many more bad pictures than people can imagine—no kidding. I don't mind failing hundreds of times if in the end I get the perfect photograph of a whale breaching or a puffin flying. Just as it is with my writing, I keep doing it over and over until I feel that it's right. However, there are times when I can't reasonably do it over, such as my trip to Antarctica where I photographed *Summer Ice*, *Penguins at Home*, and *Puffins Climb, Penguins Rhyme*. On those occasions I take as many pictures as possible when I'm there—over 6,000 photos on my Antarctic expeditions.

A part of me, like most authors, is in each of my books. My interest in the natural world, based on my background and college degree in biology, is evident. *Counting Wildflowers* was about my fascination with wildflowers, and it became my own taxonomy lesson. *Growing Colors* was an extension of my interest in orchards and gardens. *Going on a Whale Watch* was my way of introducing readers to my newfound neighbors, the whales off the coast of Maine. My interest in baby animals and their names took me to San Diego and St. Louis where I photographed *The Baby Zoo*. However, there are some animals that seem to especially pique my curiosity and photographic eye.

Birds. Feeders hang on the plum tree outside my kitchen window. I watch the chickadees, hummingbirds, and all the other visitors. I play a game of trying to spot at least four species when I glance out my window, and most seasons I succeed.

I've gone to the ends of the world to observe birds and photograph them. I walked with penguins at the bottom of the world in Antarctica for *Summer Ice*, and *Penguins at Home*. I sat with puffins at the top of the world in Iceland for *Nights of the Pufflings* and *Puffins Climb, Penguins Rhyme*. I traveled near the equator to observe, study, and photograph flamingos on Bonaire, an island off the coast of Venezuela for *Wild Flamingos*. But I don't always have to go that far to find fascinating bird subjects. I've spent long summer days in Kennebunk, Maine photographing the Maine-endangered least terns for *A Beach for the Birds*.



Perhaps my interest in birds has to do with the fact that, unlike other animals I've worked with, I'm not allergic to them. For *Kitten Can...* I hired my twelve-year-old son, Brett, as my kitten handler. For *Mouse*

Views I hired a junior high student, Jessica Massanari, as my official mouse handler. Being especially allergic to horses, I kept my plans for a book with the Icelandic horses on hold. Then, I met and took my partner-in-life, Lori, to Iceland as my equestrian advisor and horse helper for *My Horse of the North*. The next year we got married on the puffin cliffs in Iceland.



I live in a rural Maine setting, and often see deer in the yard. Or I might see porcupines, raccoons, skunks, squirrels, and chipmunks. I watch woodchucks munch on the lawn and garden plants. In the evening I can hear coyotes howling.

This rural Maine setting is reflected in my books. On my daily trip to pick up the mail, I pass by our former post office where the tree that I photographed for *The Weather Sky* still stands. Up the road I photographed fruits and vegetables in Harry Boothby's garden for *Growing Colors*. When I was shooting that book, Harry was all smiles when I'd show up with my camera. He knew part of his garden—the part I wanted to be picture-perfect—was soon going to be weed-free, courtesy of Bruce.

My books demonstrate experiments with different artistic styles and techniques. I photographed *Grandfather's Trolley* in black and white, then handtinted the photos with oil colors, just as they did in the trolley era. *Growing Colors* was for me an exploration of color and how far I could take it within the limits of conventional color film. *Mouse Views* was a lighting challenge: make the photos look natural so that no reader will realize the entire book is photographed using electronic flash.

In Iceland I had to be even more creative with my light sources. *Nights of the Pufflings* was a nighttime photographic challenge. In the darkness of the northern night I improvised and used the light beams from two cars' headlamps aimed at the girl nestling the rescued puffling in her arms.

In addition to writing and photographing my books, I also do something that most other writers and illustrators don't do. I design my own books. I take pride in their design and am especially pleased when reviewers—as they have many times—comment on the “well-designed book.” *Mary Had a Little Lamb*, in keeping with the contemporary retelling of the old classic, was designed with hand-drawn borders to set the book back in time. In *Nights of the Pufflings*, *A Beach for the Birds*, and *Summer Ice* the photos are chosen for both content and the interaction between them on the two-page spread. The viewer's eye is subtly directed from photo to photo. In designing each book, I'm also aware of the target

audience. The type in *Puffins Climb*, *Penguins Rhyme* was specifically chosen as a simple non-serif face that beginning readers can easily recognize with its straight-line “a” and hook “g.”



Three books into my career I realized that I was making books with happy endings. It wasn't a conscious decision. It was a reflection of my personality. I love a happy ending. Since then, I've consciously followed my heart and whenever possible my books have one. It might be a rainbow in *The Weather Sky*, a smiling pumpkin in *Growing Colors*, a rescued young puffling being set free in *Nights of the Pufflings*, or a mouse finding its way home in *Mouse Views*. Even my word-game book, *Puniddles*, has a happy ending—a young gardener's “hoe, hoe, hoe.”

My books fit into one of three categories: documentaries about nature and science, stories that mix the real world of photography with the world of fiction, and concepts that teach while telling a story, too.

A documentary is, perhaps, the easiest to make because the photographer records events, not creates them. This is the approach of most photographers. An event happens, and using the photographer's interpretation, the image of the event flows through the camera lens and onto the film. Examples of my books made in a documentary style are *Summer Ice*, *Penguins at Home*, and *Apples, How They Grow*.

My fictional storybooks mix the real world of photography with the world of make-believe. *The Remarkable Riderless Runaway Tricycle*, *Ghost Doll*, *Mary Had a Little Lamb*, and *Grandfather's Trolley* use photography as the illustration medium to tell a make-believe story in a very real way. When I'm shooting them, these books require more creative imagination. The finished book often stimulates young readers to question, “Did this really happen? Did that tricycle really roll all around town to get home? Did that doll really become a ghost? Did that lamb really wander all around school?” Is it fiction or nonfiction?

Sometimes, to point out the general difference between fiction and nonfiction, I often test young audiences with *Grandfather's Trolley*. After reminding readers that “I wrote this story,” I begin reading “I remember, when I was a little girl...” and pause to listen for giggles as I ask, “Is this story fiction or nonfiction?”

My concept books show simple ideas visually. *Beach Ball—Left, Right* looks deceptively simple. Young readers view an almost wordless picture story while learning left and right. In making a concept book, I start with the basic concept, such as left/right, counting, fractions, colors, shapes, or time. I search for a way to visually represent that concept, such as a beach ball on left or right pages. Once I find the subject to photograph, the concept becomes an image in a story setting. In the last step the images flow back through the camera's lens and onto the film, and at this point it's similar to a documentary.

Because of the way I work, I don't consider myself a pure photographer. That's someone whose goal is to produce a photograph as the finished work of art. I think of myself as a photo-illustrator. For me the

finished work of art isn't the photograph. It's the book. The book, the whole—the entire book designed with interacting and interrelated photos—is greater than the sum of its parts. It is greater than each individual photo.

In addition to bringing my audience into contact with my books by speaking around the United States, every August I also lead “Book Adventure” tours up to Iceland. This is where I photographed *Nights of the Pufflings*, *Puffins Climb*, *Penguins Rhyme*, *My Horse of the North*, and *Gletta the Foal*. Tour members participate in the annual puffling rescue and get to ride the unique Icelandic horse. Iceland is my favorite place in the world outside of the United States. That is why my wife and I chose the puffins cliffs of Vestmannaeyjar as the perfect place to wed in 1997, as the pufflings circled overhead and killer whales frolicked below.

In a way, I've already written my autobiography in book form. It's *The Remarkable Riderless Runaway Tricycle*. But I'm not the little boy in the story—I'm the tricycle. The tricycle has a vision. It knows where it wants to go and demonstrates great perseverance. Like the tricycle, I've also shown great perseverance in building my home, and in pursuing my career. No matter what anyone else thought, I believed in myself and persevered. Just as the tricycle did in the story, I stayed true to my vision. And like all of my books this one had—a *happy ending*.



Children's Books by Bruce McMillan

- Days of the Ducklings*, Houghton Mifflin, 2001
Gletta the Foal, Marshall Cavendish, 1998
Salmon Summer, Houghton Mifflin, 1998
My Horse of the North, Scholastic Press, 1997
Wild Flamingos, Houghton Mifflin, 1997
The Picture that Mom Drew (co-author Mallat), Walker & Co., 1997
Jelly Beans For Sale, Scholastic Press, 1996
Grandfather's Trolley, Candlewick Press, 1995
Summer Ice, Life along the Antarctic Peninsula, Houghton Mifflin, 1995
Puffins Climb, Penguins Rhyme, Harcourt Brace & Co., 1995
Nights of the Pufflings, Houghton Mifflin, 1995
Sense Suspense, A Guessing Game for the Five Senses, Scholastic Press, 1994
Penguins at Home, Gentoos of Antarctica, Houghton Mifflin, 1993
A Beach for the Birds, Houghton Mifflin, 1993
Mouse Views, What the Class Pet Saw, Holiday House, 1993
Going on a Whale Watch, Scholastic Press, 1992
Beach Ball—Left, Right, Holiday House, 1992
The Baby Zoo, Scholastic Press, 1992
Eating Fractions, Scholastic Press, 1991
Play Day, A Book of Terse Verse, Holiday House, 1991
The Weather Sky, Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1991
One, Two, One Pair!, Scholastic Press, 1991
Mary Had a Little Lamb (by Hale/illus. McMillan), Scholastic Press, 1990
One Sun, A Book of Terse Verse, Holiday House, 1990
Time To..., Lothrop Lee & Shepard (Morrow), 1989
Everything Grows (by Raffi/illus. McMillan), Crown, 1989
Super, Super, Superwords, Lothrop Lee & Shepard (Morrow), 1989
Fire Engine Shapes, Lothrop Lee & Shepard (Morrow), 1988
Growing Colors, Lothrop Lee & Shepard (Morrow), 1988
Dry or Wet?, Lothrop Lee & Shepard (Morrow), 1988
Step by Step, Lothrop Lee & Shepard (Morrow) (current dist. is Apple Island Books), 1987
Becca Backward, Becca Frontward, A Book of Concept Pairs, Lothrop Lee & Shepard (Morrow), 1986
Counting Wildflowers, Lothrop Lee & Shepard (Morrow), 1986
Kitten Can..., Lothrop Lee & Shepard (Morrow), 1984
Here a Chick, There a Chick, Lothrop Lee & Shepard (Morrow), 1983
Ghost Doll, Houghton Mifflin (current dist. is Apple Island Books), 1983
Puniddles, Houghton Mifflin, 1982
Making Sneakers, Houghton Mifflin, 1980
Apples, How They Grow, Houghton Mifflin, 1979
The Remarkable Riderless Runaway Tricycle, Houghton Mifflin (current dist. is Apple Island Books), 1978/85
The Alphabet Symphony, Greenwillow Books (current dist. is Apple Island Books), 1977/85
Finestkind o' Day, Lobstering in Maine, J.B. Lippincott, 1977