

News from Houghton Mifflin Books for Children
Contact: Children's_Books@hmco.com
For Immediate Release

LIVING COLOR

Written and illustrated by Steve Jenkins

From the two-time Caldecott Honor–winning Steve Jenkins now comes a new book about the majesty of the natural world around us. You don't have to go to a museum to witness the beauty of the great masterpieces. As Steve Jenkins so brilliantly illustrates, you can look in your own backyard!

Living Color (Houghton Mifflin, September 2007, \$17.00) is an explosion of color and science. This joyful celebration of nature showcases different animals' dazzling colors and the many ways in which their hue serves a scientific purpose. The long-wattled umbrella bird uses its flashy purple color to attract a mate. The pretty pink fairy armadillo's hue blends in with the South American plains where it lives. The common cuttlefish uses its various tones of green and yellow to communicate.

Young readers will love Jenkins's intricate and lively illustrations, which truly leap off the page. Parents will enjoy the wonderful scientific anecdotes and the opportunity to explore and savor the beauty of our natural world with their children.

Steve Jenkins has written and illustrated nearly twenty picture books for young readers, including the Caldecott Honor–winning *What Do You Do with a Tail Like This?* He lives in Colorado with his wife and frequent collaborator, Robin Page, and their children. To learn more about Steve, please visit www.stevejenkinsbooks.com, or to see a slideshow of his books, go to www.teachingbooks.net.

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Dear Editors, Writers, and Producers,

Steve Jenkins is fast becoming one of the most celebrated authors and illustrators in children's books today. His signature intricate and vibrantly colored paper illustrations make his subjects come alive for the reader. This has never been truer than in his latest work, *Living Color*, which Houghton Mifflin is proud to present this fall.

Living Color (September 2007; Houghton Mifflin) is a vivid exploration of the fascinating colors found in the natural world. From the scarlet ibis to the blue-tongued skink, Caldecott Honor winner Steve Jenkins shows readers how to look at our world in a whole new way: by taking note of the beauty that surrounds us every day but that we too often ignore.

Many of Steve's ideas come from his own children's questions, which prompt him to look at the world in a unique way, and his beautiful, detailed illustrations help readers to do so, too. His natural curiosity and interest in our surroundings have led to his prestigious career as an author of books that are perfect for animal lovers and budding environmentalists, but also for kids who are interested in engineering, movement, biology, and geography.

More than just a catalogue of color, *Living Color* provides detailed scientific information, teaching us not only to admire the beauty of the animal world, but also how unique colorations help different creatures survive, attract mates, signal friends, or hide from enemies.

Steve's work has garnered much attention in recent years, including a 2004 Caldecott Honor for *What Do You Do with a Tail Like This?* Steve's title *Move!* was named a New York Times Best Illustrated Book for 2006 and was met with rave reviews from the likes of *Time* and *Parenting* magazines. With titles such as *Actual Size*, which illustrates the real difference in animals' sizes, and *Next Stop Neptune*, Steve Jenkins has established himself as a skilled artist in the world of nonfiction picture books. You can learn more about Steve and his award-winning books by visiting www.stevejenkinsbooks.com.

Steve Jenkins is available for interviews to discuss his work.

A Conversation with the Author

Steve Jenkins

What inspired this book?

In the course of researching other books, I've compiled a sort of laundry list of animals that I found especially interesting — subjects waiting for a topic. These creatures might behave in unusual ways, live in seemingly impossible environments, exist in absurd numbers, or be especially striking in appearance. As an illustrator, it was this last group I found most intriguing. I realized that color was one of the most obvious visual qualities these animals shared. Thinking about the animals' color also raised a question — why red, or blue, or yellow? Few qualities of living creatures are arbitrary — natural selection sees to that. If being very colorful doesn't help an animal survive, it's an unlikely trait to be passed on to its offspring.

I decided that a book about animal color would present an opportunity to explain how natural selection works — how it determines an animal's appearance, as well as many of the ways it behaves. And, of course, it would give me the opportunity to illustrate some of these beautifully graphic creatures.

How much research was involved in the creation of the book?

I thought the research for this book would be straightforward, but found that discovering the function of color in many of these animals was surprisingly difficult. In many cases, it was easier to find out how than why a creature looks a particular way. Many books presented a technical explanation of coloration without exploring the reasons for one color working better than another. When I couldn't find an answer in print, I wrote biologists — often scientists who had written articles posted on biological science web sites — with questions about specific animals.

You obviously feel that it's important to educate young readers about the beauty of the natural world around them. How did you become interested in this theme?

I've been interested in it as long as I can remember. Perhaps because my father is a scientist, and took an early interest in explaining things about the natural world, I've found that understanding how or why something looks or acts the way it does increases my pleasure in it. I've found that to be true with my own children — they seem (even as teenagers) to be gratified by finding out how and why things are as they are.

What do you want young readers to learn from this book?

I'd like for them, first of all, to enjoy it. That may mean simply looking at the pictures and appreciating that extraordinary assortments of creatures share the planet with us. It

would be great if the book helps them develop the habit of looking past the appearance of something and wondering what makes it look or act the way it does.

What was the most surprising thing you learned while working on this book?

I was repeatedly amazed by the elegance and beauty of the solutions these animals have evolved to what are really problems of basic survival.

What is your favorite thing about being an author/illustrator?

There are a lot of wonderful things about writing and illustrating — it's hard to say what is the most rewarding. If pressed to choose one, I might pick the problem-solving part of the process — starting with an idea, or maybe just a simple question, and figuring out how to make it into a book that might give others the same sense of wonder and satisfaction that I have when I'm able to understand a bit more about the way something works.

Advanced Praise for LIVING COLOR By Steve Jenkins

*“It's difficult to imagine a science topic better suited to picture-book form than this one, which offers a pageant of the most stunning, vividly hued creatures on the planet. . . .

From the pink fairy armadillo to the purple deep-sea dragon fish, readers will be fascinated by the panoply of critters that often seem the stuff of fairy lore, and educators will applaud the clever concept of presenting survival adaptations as a biological fashion show.”

—*Booklist*, starred review

*“Jenkins once again astounds. . . . The combination of easy-to-understand language and gorgeous illustrations makes this a prime choice.”

—*Publishers Weekly*, starred review

“Color becomes the organizing factor in this new exploration of the quirks of the animal world. Jenkins’s design, always striking, reaches the heights of inspiration with this offering . . . guaranteed to be a browser’s delight.”

—*Kirkus Reviews*

“Once again, Steve Jenkins introduces science in a way that helps children learn concepts even as they have fun experiencing this brightly colored book, which reflects the stunning range of hues found in nature.”

—Ellen Mager, Booktenders Children’s, Doylestown, Pennsylvania

“The book’s real highlight . . . is Jenkins’s cut-paper collage: his animals are dazzling—vibrantly colored and detailed. For each of the featured animals, further information—size, habitat, and diet, among other facts—is provided in the end matter. There, Jenkins also answers questions like ‘How is animal color created?’ That’s a godsend, because it’s definitely the sort of thing curious young readers will ask.”

—*Horn Book*