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## FUN IN THE MUD: A WETLANDS TALE

Written by Sally Bolger Illustrated by Regina Shklovsky

**November 19, 2018; Petaluma, California**— Have you ever seen a wetlands fairy? This luxuriously paced tale of the wetlands' most secretive inhabitants weaves rich fantasy with fun wetlands facts. Meet fairies Jack and Mini and listen as they give you a tour of their wetlands home. Whether swimming with the smolts, attending frog pond sing-alongs, or watching the Pickleweed Parade, there is fun to be had in every corner of this mystical habitat.

Mixing facts with just a dusting of fantasy, *Fun in the Mud: A Wetlands Tale* explores all the nooks and crannies—and the animals who live in them—of the muddy, magical world of the wetlands.

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Written by: Sally Bolger

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### CHILDREN'S BOOK COUNCIL

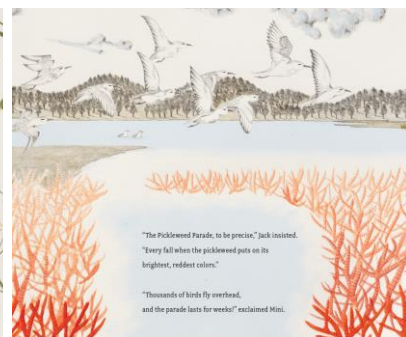
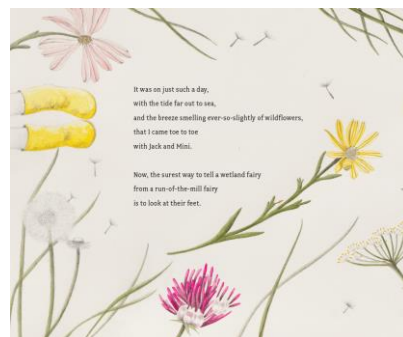
*Fun in the Mud* has been included in the Children's Book Council's October Hot Off the Press reading list. This reading list is a unique online bibliography that features anticipated bestsellers, either recently released or forthcoming, published by CBC members.

### BESTSELLER

*Fun in the Mud* was the #3 on the Petaluma Bestseller Kids and YA list!

**Sally Bolger** is a writer, explorer, and conservationist. As a project manager for the Point Reyes National Seashore Association, she helped restore the Giacomini Wetlands in West Marin. This is her first book for children. [sallybolgerwrites.com](http://sallybolgerwrites.com)

**Regina Shklovsky** is an illustrator and designer based in Sonoma County. This is her first book for children.



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## **More about the Author – FAQs**

### **What inspired you to write the book?**

Point Reyes National Seashore is one of the places closest to my heart. From the first time I visited Drakes Beach in the 5th grade, it has always held a special magic for me. Wanting to give back to the place that I love, I joined the board of the non-profit Point Reyes National Seashore Association in 2006. At the time, the Association was raising money to restore the wetlands that had historically existed where Lagunitas Creek enters the southern end of Tomales Bay.

In the 1940s, with the help of the Army Corps of Engineers, what once had been wetlands was leveed and turned into a dairy ranch. But in the years since the levees were built, the understanding of the importance of wetlands had grown. In 2000 the rancher, Waldo Giacomini, sold his ranch to the National Park Service, turning from the legacy of what many considered the finest cattle ranch in West Marin, to the legacy of the Giacomini Wetlands. The Point Reyes National Seashore Association was raising the money to restore the wetlands and create habitat for the threatened and endangered species that we were hoping to help recover. I was given the great gift of becoming the Association's project manager for the restoration.

As project manager, I sat at meetings with experts from over a dozen fields as they debated how to create habitat for the species we were trying to protect, and how to create a matrix of interconnected habitats necessary for a vibrant, thriving ecosystem. How deep should the ponds be for California Red Legged Frog? How could we create the brackish water needed by Coho salmon? How high should the mounds be to shelter Ridgeway's Rail? How long could various plants be covered by high tide and still thrive? It was from my own delight at learning about the wetland's tapestry of life, and trying to explain it to my young niece, that *Fun in the Mud - a Wetlands Tale* came to be.

### **What is the message you would like to share in this book?**

If I had to choose a single message, it would be that the natural world is filled with magic. I know no better definition of magic than "things that fill you with wonder," and what the different plants, animals, fish, and birds do to live in the changing conditions of the wetlands – adjusting from wet to dry, salt to sweet water, etc. – is completely wondrous to me. I think it is astonishing that young salmon, who are born as fresh water fish in streams far from the sea, go through a complete physiological transformation during their time in wetlands and then swim out into the ocean for the majority of their life cycle. I think it is magical that plants have found ways to survive the daily inundation of salt water tides by expelling the salt onto their leaves, and that red legged frogs sing underwater.

### **Why is this an important book for kids (and parents) to read?**

One of the things I love about this book is that it is kind of like a Pixar movie. It intrigues and educates kids and parents alike. That is because the book originated in my own fascination about wetlands. I felt like a kid sitting at that table with all the very adult experts as they explained why we needed to create brackish backwaters that the salmon needed to transform from freshwater to saltwater fish, or that we had to calculate how long certain areas of the wetlands were inundated by high tide because each plant had a different tolerance for salt, or where we should create hills high enough that the birds could take refuge during high tides and not drown.

### **What are you hoping to accomplish with this book?**

Fun in the Mud is an invitation to curiosity, and through creating curiosity, it opens the door to wonder. I hope it inspires kids and parents to take a minute to be “quiet enough and still enough, long enough” to notice the natural world around them, and wonder “why”? Why does that plant thrive in just that particular mix of dampness and sunlight? Or why does that songbird stop singing when the hawk flies overhead? The intelligence of the natural world surrounds us, and if we take time to notice, we begin to want to know more. Then we learn, and the more we learn, the more we appreciate the magic of this beautiful planet we call home.

### **Is this your first book release? How was the experience?**

Yes, this is my first book, and it has been an incredible experience. Honestly, it is a dream come true, something that part of me never really believed would happen. The first draft of the book was written years ago, then I polished it into its final form during my writing residency at the Mesa Refuge in Point Reyes. The manuscript had been turned down by a couple publishers, but then Cameron & Company in Petaluma was interested, and working with them, their team of book designers, editors, and the illustrator Regina Shklovsky has been amazing. This is Regina’s first book for children too, and she is local as well. You can see the love she put into the project in every illustration. The book is more beautiful than I could ever have imagined. One of the signature things that Cameron and Company does for all their books is to make the hard cover different from the paper, removable cover. *Fun in the Mud*’s hard cover has beautiful, naturalist line drawings of some of the birds, plants, fish, and animals that live in the wetlands.

### **Are you writing another project?**

In the past few years. I have had the opportunity to be involved in conservation projects around the world, and I am just beginning to write a book on my adventures. I have learned so much! Not only about the different parts of the world but also about the indigenous peoples who are working so hard to protect their places and their ways of life. My personal experiences with the original peoples of the Arctic, Amazon, and Andes have led me to share their worldview: that the planet is a living, breathing being with whom we should be in daily reciprocal, loving relationship.

### **What gives you hope?**

The Giacomini Wetlands in Point Reyes, which are the inspiration for *Fun in the Mud*, just celebrated their 10-year anniversary. The recovery of the wetlands is astonishing – the wetlands and the species are returning more quickly and in greater numbers than any of us had dared to hope. It is a story of environmental success that needs to be shared in these times that seem so bereft of positive news.

Very rarely do projects like this have scientific data to substantiate the impact. The Giacomini Wetlands now have more than 10 years of monitoring data to share. And because we have the data, I feel an additional responsibility to share the story. Because of the data, we are able to say “Yes, this project was years in the making; it took millions of dollars; it took the sacrifice of a ranching family’s way of life; there was conflict in the community; it took passion, and leadership, and courage and an awful lot of hard work. But you know what? It was worth it.”

The Giacomini Wetlands recovery is ultimately a story of hope. Hope in a time where often we lose a little more hope with each news article we read. The Giacomini Wetlands let us know that things can get better, that if you do things right, Mother Nature will reward you. She will recover if we give her a chance.