

Our Research Journey and Sources for *Supermoms!*

Kids and adults are often surprised to hear how much research goes into an informational picture book like *Supermoms!* So, we thought we'd share a little more about our long and fascinating journey researching these amazing animal heroes.

STEP 1: THE COLLABORATION BEGINS

First, we created a shared google sheet with columns to help organize our information and ideas. We created categories based on parenting behaviors and made connections to human traits.

	A	B	C	D	E	F	H
1	MOM	BABY	CLASS	FACT	CATEGORY**	Human Trait	ANALOGY/Makes me think of...
2	Wolf Spider	spiderling	invertebrates	The wolf spider mom can carry over one thousand spiderlings on her back from a few days to a few weeks. She takes them everywhere, even while she's hunting, and if one falls off, she will wait until it gets back on top.	Carrying	Energetic, multi-tasker, patient	The do-it-all mom, 100 balls in the air, old woman in the shoe

STEP 2: EARLY RESEARCH

We read books from the library and articles online from sources like *National Geographic*, *World Wildlife Fund*, *Scientific American*, *Zoos*, and animal conservation organizations.

We watched everything from YouTube videos made by nature enthusiasts to award-winning movies. Some of our favorites were from PBS and BBC. Seeing our supermoms in action helped bring our writing to life.

We attended an exhibit at the Museum of Science in Boston, where we collected TONS of cool facts about animal heroes. We began to think about other books we could write about animal heroes and realized we needed to keep that in mind as we identified our moms. Making *Supermoms!* was our primary focus, but we got excited thinking about the possibility of turning it into a series. We knew we'd probably prefer not to repeat our animals in future books.



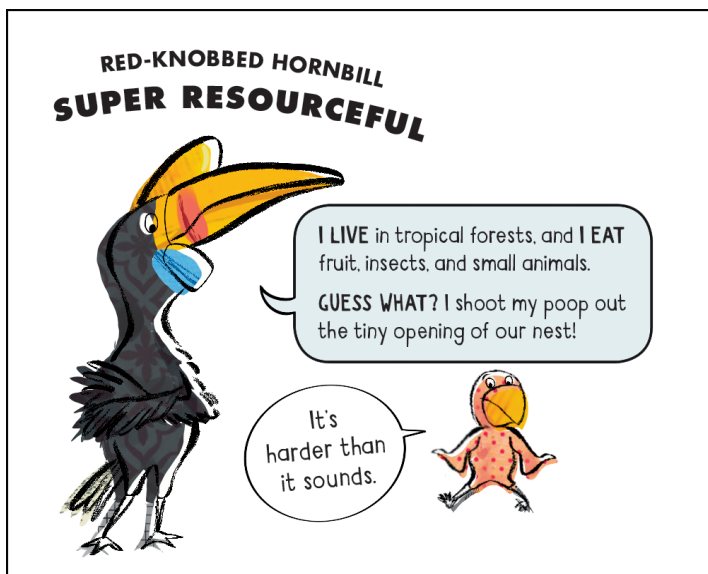
← Jamie 😊

The more we researched, the more we found new examples of supermoms, and not just mammals. There were fish, birds, frogs, a spider! Along the way we also discovered conflicting information about these animal mom “facts.” We saw time and time again that we couldn’t just rely on a Google search, even when the source seemed reputable.

STEP 3: FACT CHECKING

We verified facts by looking for scientific papers in places like google scholar. We reached out to scientists for many of the animals to confirm details and ask more questions. We are always amazed at how experts take time out of their busy work to answer questions and help. In the back of the book, you can find a list of the experts whose knowledge we relied on.

Of course, sometimes we learned that the “facts” we’d hoped to use weren’t actually true. We were sad to cut our mama kangaroo, who “trained her joey to box.” But so often our scientists shared rich details we could add to the text or use in our back matter—like how the hornbill mom removes poop from her nest!



Every time we met, we divided up the research tasks and set new goals so that we had answers to questions and relevant information when we reconvened.

STEP 4: MAKING CHOICES

Now came the tough part . . . which supermoms would make the final cut? And how many animals did we want to include in the book? We determined it was important to finalize the categories first and settled on five: homes, feeding, transportation, protection, and teaching. We decided eighteen animals allowed for enough breadth within each category (and sufficient space for creating the art).

Choosing the moms was challenging. There was a lot to consider. First, we wanted the facts to be sufficiently different, showing a variety of ecosystems and parenting strategies. It wouldn't be interesting to write about three animal moms that transported their babies on their backs. And we wanted to include different kinds of animals. We brainstormed which facts could lead to the funniest images and speech bubbles.

Meanwhile Jamie was also considering the art—the number of panels, the relative size of the animals and their colors, the habitats. She looked over the photos she'd collected for the different animals. What would *look* the best?

STEP 5: WRITING

Now that we'd decided on our supermoms and what order they would appear, it was time to focus on the text and speech bubbles. We met and Face Timed frequently. To write the main text, we divided up the animals and drafted sentences on our own. Then we edited and polished together. We discovered our best speech bubbles came through back-and-forth brainstorming.

Over a number of months and with feedback from our critique groups, we had a solid draft of the manuscript in a format that we thought was successful.

STEP 6: REVISING AND MORE RESEARCH

As we finetuned the text and back matter, and Jamie worked on her sketches, we sometimes identified new questions to research and ask our experts. Jamie had to do lots of additional research for the art, including research on each animal's anatomy and habitat. Our research journey really didn't end until the text and art were finalized.

We hope you'll explore our back matter and our websites to see some of the books and videos we used to learn about our moms. And don't miss our SUPER worksheets and activities!

