

Celia Godkin

Celia Godkin was born in England and lived in Brazil. "We lived in Rio de Janeiro, possibly the most spectacularly beautiful city in the world. The mountains come right down to the sea. I remember the carnival, everyone in fancy dress, throwing streamers and dancing in the streets." Celia found it hard to adjust when her family moved back to England. "At my school in England, everyone was English. My sister and I were different, even though we were English. No one seemed very interested in Brazil or in the things that made us different."

Celia has always loved art and biology. She took a job breeding endangered reptiles to save them from extinction. "My main job was to look after the rats and mice that were bred for feeding to the snakes. I worked there for two or three years, but didn't find the work very satisfying, as I was spending much of my time cleaning out dirty animal cages. That's when I decided to go back to art school to become a scientific illustrator."

As Celia worked at scientific illustration, she began writing and illustrating children's nature books. "Children's book illustration is much more creative than textbook illustration," she says. With children's books "I read the text through and come up with ideas for the illustrations myself. Often, I also determine the medium in which the illustrations will be rendered. With textbook illustration, the art director specifies the size and content of each illustration, and usually the medium as well."

Celia was inspired to write and illustrate her book *Wolf Island* after a friend asked her to write something nature-related. "My focus of interest at university had been ecology. The central idea of ecology is that everything is connected. I was interested in finding a story that demonstrated this, and looked through the scientific literature for examples of what we now call keystone species being removed from an environment. Keystone species are those that play a central role in maintaining the balance of their ecosystem. I wrote three stories based on this theme, the first of which was *Wolf Island*."

Celia has taught drawing, painting and scientific illustration at the University of Toronto. She now lives in a small farmhouse in Eastern Ontario.



Celia with her granddaughters

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