

Author Janell Cannon

Self-taught artist and writer Janell Cannon has always admired animals, especially creatures that have been misunderstood or neglected. Her love of bats, spiders, Komodo dragons, and snakes inspired her work at a public library, where she developed award-winning summer reading programs about these unusual animals. While conducting research for a program about bats, Janell found only two books on the subject, both out of print. She decided it was time to make her own story about these wonderful creatures.

Janell Cannon created [\*Stellaluna\*](#) (1994) in hopes that she would transform young people's fear of bats into informed affection. "Fruit bats don't drink blood and won't get caught in your hair. I hope to show them in a positive light so that they might be given more respect," she says. Janell points out in the book that fruit bats benefit our environment as they pollinate plants while foraging for nectar and distribute, through their droppings, seeds from fruit eaten whole. The artist and writer also wanted to touch readers with a story about a friendship shared by two different kinds of creatures, a bat and three baby birds. Cannon likens the book to "a mirror, so that anyone who looks into it will see their own story their own way." She never suspected her book would become a runaway bestseller.

After the success of [\*Stellaluna\*](#), Janell left her job at the library in order to devote more time to writing and illustrating books. She was happy finally to have the opportunity to tell the adventures of one of the mysterious, gentle creatures who entered her imagination more than ten years ago. Before [\*Stellaluna\*](#) was even a thought, Janell was creating series of elaborate, detailed drawings of what she calls Fuzzheads. In [\*Trupp: A Fuzzhead Tale\*](#) (Harcourt Brace, April, 1995), she has created the first of many stories about these intelligent animals as they explore the world of humans.

Janell Cannon has ideas for many more books about Fuzzheads and "animals that make people uncomfortable." She works from her home/studio in southern California, which she shares with a cat and a parrot.

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