



Animal lover Brooke Bessesen, seen here with her gibbon friend Blacky, is the author of a new children's book, "Look Who Lives in the Desert."

'Look Who Lives in the Desert' Bessesen releases new book

When Brooke Bessesen was only 7 years old, she wrote a report about birds. With child-like block letters, she spelled out everything she knew about her feathered friends.

It went 15 pages.

Bessesen, who lives in North Scottsdale with her husband, Kevin Steiner, and their dog, Malki, is still writing about her animal friends.

One assumes her penmanship has improved over the years, but with the release of her new book "Look Who Lives in the Desert," Bessesen shows that her love of animals is as strong as ever.

Though she is not a real life version of Hugh Lofting's Dr. Dolittle, perhaps no one is better suited to tell the animals' tales than Bessesen. After all, her book perfectly combines the things she is most passionate about.

She has served as a wildlife rescue volunteer for nearly two decades. She is also a certified veterinary technician and worked several years on the Phoenix Zoo medical team.

In addition to her work with animals, Bessesen is an award-winning television writer, producer and host. She created a children's show, "Cool Critters," and wrote segments

for the Emmy-winning series "What's Up."

Publishing "Look Who Lives in the Desert," she said, is a dream come true.

"This has been an amazingly exciting time," she said. "I'm enjoying the ride."

The book is in rhyme and, with humor, tells the stories of 21 animals that inhabit the desert. Among the critters included are a gecko, hawk, kangaroo rat, tarantula and cougar.

Bessesen illustrated each story and also includes photos and real "fascinating facts" about the critters - such as bats are the only mammals that fly and are not blind, and kangaroo rats get their name because they have long, strong back legs and can use their tails for balance.

Bessesen is enjoying a book tour now that has taken her to Chicago, San Diego, Minnesota, Los Angeles, Denver and all around Arizona.

The tour stops at Gridleys in Fountain Hills Wednesday, Sept. 8. She will sign copies of "Look Who Lives in the Desert" from 1:30 to 4 p.m.

The book is published by Arizona Highways and is now in its second printing. It's available in both hardcover (\$16.95) and soft cover (\$9.95).