

Tips from the Illustrator

Once the author's manuscript is complete, and the identity of each animal is decided, I use it to create the pictures. Since this book is about real animals in their environment, I have to make sure that what I create is accurate.

First I research as much as possible to learn how the animals actually look—both the adults and the babies. If I'm lucky I might see the real animal near where I live, like a squirrel, opossum, or deer. I look for pictures in books. And I do lots of searches on the computer. I keep a file on my computer of each animal. I print out some of the best examples and tape them to my bookshelf. This way I can refer to them as I draw each one. I always refer to several different sources, not just one. You can see some of the photos I used as research for this book.

These illustrations are collages—artwork that consists of many little things put together. First I draw a detailed pencil sketch for each page.



As I plan out each page, I keep in mind the color of the animals, the background, and how it will all fit together as a whole book.

I select paper for both color and texture to show the fur and feathers of the animals and the foliage of their environment. Compare the different papers I used as tree trunks for the woodpeckers and the squirrels. The woodpeckers are on

birch trees that have white bark with a horizontal grain. The squirrels are on an oak tree with its brown bark with a vertical grain. It's fun to find just the right paper. I glue the animals together first, and then lay them out on the background, often trying differently textured and colored paper. The photo shows the mother skunk and all her babies as I plan their background.

When both the background and the animals seem right, I paste the animals on top of the background. I also may add details with colored pencils and pastels. This is the colored final art that gets printed in the book.

You'll get even more good ideas of how to do collage illustrations if you also read the tips I wrote in the books *Over in the Arctic* and *Over in Australia*. You can illustrate a forest, a garden, or even your own room! The possibilities are endless. Use your imagination, make it your own—and have fun.

