



Inside *LOOK!*:
A Conversation with
Caldecott Honor winner
Ted Lewin

Q: How did you choose the animals in *LOOK!*?

A: I chose them for their different looks and behavior.

Q: Are all of the animals in the book animals you've actually seen?

A: Yes. I've seen them all in the wild.

Q: Where and when did you see them?

A: Tanzania in 1970. I also went to Botswana multiple times over the years between 1981 and 2007. We were on safari in an open-air vehicle to observe various animals in their natural habitats.

Q: Tell your readers what a safari is like.

A: There are two game drives, which, if you're not familiar with them, are expeditions designed to take you close to animals for appreciating and photographing them, and they take place in the cooler parts of the day—very early morning and late afternoon when the animals are the most active. In the hot part of the day we rest and catch up on our journals in our tent. There is a tradition of having a "sun downer" drink in the bush at the end of the afternoon game drive to enjoy the spectacular sunset.

Q: Have you had any dangerous encounters with an animal while you were on safari?
Humorous?

A: We've been bluff-charged by elephants and hippos. The most frightening was a real charge by a lion that narrowly missed leaping into our vehicle. These are rare and not the type of experience you look for. One of the most beautiful sights we've seen was a six-month-old leopard cub charming us all afternoon with her antics in a jackalberry tree.

Q: *The lighting in your compositions creates drama and enhances the majesty of the animals. Could you talk a little about how you use lighting in your compositions?*

A: When I'm photographing wildlife on safari, my guide always notes the source of light and maneuvers the vehicle to take advantage of it. Early morning and late afternoon light is very beautiful.

Q: *Could you tell us any secrets about your illustration process or technique?*

A: I use photographs as points of departure for my paintings. I transfer my sketch onto watercolor paper using a projector, then make the finished painting while looking at the image on my computer. I use liquid mask to protect certain area to reserve the white of the paper. I peel this off when the background is painted, then paint back into the areas of white. Any white that you see in my paintings is the white of the paper. I don't own white paint.

Q: *Why did you choose to illustrate the hippos on the spread, Look! Hippos splash?*

A: Hippos are fun to paint because of their big, round forms, especially when they're wet and glistening. Painting splashing water is very difficult. The splash in the hippo painting was masked out with liquid mask so I could paint over it.

Q: *When did you develop an interest in wildlife?*

A: As a child. I've always loved animals, and drawing and painting them.

Q: *Do you have a favorite animal?*

A: I'm partial to gorillas because we had such an intense experience with them in Uganda. Seeing them in the wild was a childhood dream come true.

Q: *Tell your readers about the boy in **LOOK!***

A: The boy is a neighbor's son. He came to my studio to pose for me. I set up my lights and the animal props, and photographed all the scenes I needed. I was careful to get the "catchlight" (highlight) in his eyes on the first page of the book.

Q: *What do you want kids to take away from your books?*

A: A love of animals and a desire to see them in their natural habitats.