

# Bunny's BIG Surprise

## ➤ AUTHOR SPOTLIGHT ➤



Phyllis Limbacher Tildes  
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### WHOSE EGG IS THIS?

Easter is almost here—the perfect time for Bunny to find a mystery egg in the Georgia wetlands! It doesn't belong to Goose, Heron, or Osprey. So Bunny decorates it for Easter. But when the egg finally hatches, Bunny's in for an even bigger surprise . . .



### ABOUT THE AUTHOR-ILLUSTRATOR

Phyllis Limbacher Tildes received her BFA in illustration from Rhode Island School of Design. She is the illustrator of *Baby Animals: Day & Night*, *Baby Animals Take a Bath*, *Plant Secrets*, and *Eye Guess*. Phyllis lives with her family on Skidaway Island in Georgia, next door to the Wassaw National Wildlife Refuge.

**Where did the idea for *Bunny's Big Surprise* come from? Did you always know that you wanted your story to touch on Easter?**

My husband, Bill, and then our son, Jeff, both grew up reading the over-sized Easter book, *The Golden Egg Book*. I treasure our two copies of this classic story in which a bunny finds an egg and ultimately becomes friends with the duckling that hatches out. I thought it would be fun to have a bunny find an egg in a what might be an unfamiliar habitat to young readers. Would Bunny try to find out whose egg it was? Would he paint it for Easter?

**As author and illustrator, can you talk about your process of creating *Bunny's Big Surprise*?**

Although images come quickly to mind as I begin my story, I don't actually do any artwork until the manuscript has gone through many revisions. I belong to two writers' groups. Feedback from them is crucial to crafting the final manuscript before it is submitted to an editor. Once it is accepted and approved, I do thumbnail sketches, which are small pencil drawings that layout the entire picture book, which is usually thirty-two pages. At this stage I



also do research to make sure any animals or other details are accurate when I create my characters or backgrounds. When the art director and I have settled on any changes, I begin full-scale, refined drawings that will then be used to create the paintings for the book. I often work in watercolor or gouache, but two of my books were done in colored pencil.

***Bunny's Big Surprise* features a lot of different animals, including (spoiler alert!) alligators. Does living in Savannah, Georgia, inspire your storytelling and art?**

It certainly influenced this story. It was fun to include the heron, osprey, alligators, and marsh scenes. And aside from illustration work, I also enjoy doing fine-art paintings of the marshes and creeks and critters of the low country. Our home looks out at a lagoon where we see egrets, herons, osprey, and occasionally some playful otters. Raccoons, foxes, and deer frequent our garden, and our birdbath and feeder are always busy with a variety of birds. As a New Englander for much of my life, I was used to maple trees, stone walls, and chipmunks. Now I am inspired by live oaks, Spanish moss, palm trees, and dolphins.

**Do you have a favorite place in the Georgia wetlands? What should a young nature enthusiast know about the region when visiting?**

We live on Skidaway Island, just a few miles from historic Savannah. Skidaway State Park has many trails that wind through a maritime forest and along creeks and the intracoastal waterway. In summer you may be lucky to see a painted bunting, one of our very special multicolored birds. Also on the island is an oceanographic institute and aquarium exhibiting local sea life.

**You've always wanted to be a children's author and illustrator, and your first book was published in 1995. Now that you're an established author/illustrator of many children's books, what advice would you give to aspiring writers and illustrators?**

*Counting on Calico* was my first book for Charlesbridge. With my 24th book now released, I am amazed that I have been so very fortunate. It did not come easily, however. Getting that first book contract took about twenty years. I always tell aspiring writers and illustrators that it takes talent, persistence, and luck in equal measure. You make your own luck by learning all you can about children's book publishing. That means reading lots of wonderful books, taking writing or art courses, joining writers' groups, and going to conferences and workshops. And whatever you wish to create, be true to your heart.