

# Eric Carle, Eric Carle, how do you illustrate?

By Gretchen Heber

AMERICAN-STATESMAN STAFF

The beauty and wonder of the natural world have made the work of Eric Carle wildly popular, so it seems only appropriate that his lone visit to Texas this year is to one of Austin's most beautiful spots.

The world-renowned children's picture-book author and illustrator will sign copies of his newest book, "Panda Bear, Panda Bear, What Do You See?" at the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center today. Carle has again collaborated with writer Bill Martin Jr. to produce the third in the "What Do You See?" series. It is the latest book in a career that began in 1967 and has produced more than 40 titles, including many that are standards on most every child's bookshelf: "The Very Hungry Caterpillar," "The Very Lonely Firefly" and "The Very Busy Spider."

"My kids love the books," said Austin mom Susie

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Children's book author and illustrator signs his works at the Wildflower Center today.



'Panda Bear, Panda Bear, What Do You See?' is the third book from Eric Carle and Bill Martin Jr.

Eric Carle book signing

**When:** 11 a.m. to noon today

**Where:** Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center, 4801 La Crosse Ave., 292-4200

**Tickets:** Admission to the center is free for this event; books are \$15.95. In addition to books purchased at the center, Carle will sign one book brought from home.

## CARLE: The very talented author comes to town

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Pulsifer. The colorful illustrations pull kids in, and the repetitive, simple language is great for little kids learning to talk, she said. "They can guess what's coming. It was the first time my daughter put two words together: 'brown bear.'"

Carle's colorful tissue-paper collage illustrations are bright and appealing. The elephants, roosters, chameleons, ladybugs, sloths and click beetles that tromp, romp and amble through the pages of his books have introduced all manner of creatures to the youngest of naturalists.

"My father was a nature lover and he used to take me on walks in the woods when I was just a little boy," Carle said via e-mail. "He'd lift up a rock and show me the small creatures who lived underneath it. I think in my books I honor my father by writing about small living

things. And in a way I recapture those happy times."

Carle creates his artwork by painting white tissue paper with acrylic paints and then making pattern and texture with pieces of carpet, sponge or his fingers. He then cuts and tears the paper and layers it. "I have a number of photography books on animals and insects in my studio which I refer to when creating my characters," he added.

Carle is especially proud of "Panda Bear," as it focuses specifically on endangered animals. "I hope that it will in some way help to encourage the protection of these beautiful creatures," he said. A bald eagle, water buffalo and spider monkey are among the species highlighted.

Carle was trained as a graphic designer and worked in New York for a number of years. As friend and mentor Leo Lionni grew successful with his own children's books illustrations, he

pushed Carle in a similar direction. "Even before I did, Leo Lionni saw the picture-book artist in me," Carle said.

Carle is also excited about The Eric Carle Museum of Picture Book Art in Amherst, Mass., which opened in 2002. "My wife, Barbara, and I wanted to create a place where original picture-book art could be enjoyed and appreciated and where the connection between verbal and visual literacy could be explored. It has been said that picture books are an introduction to literature for the very young reader. We wanted to help build a museum that would be the same thing for the first-time museum visitor: an introduction to the experience of looking at art."

Will there be more Martin-Carle bear books? "Another collaboration would be nice, when there is just the right story to tell," Carle said.

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