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# CLOSE ENCOUNTERS WITH THE GREAT BLUE HERON

A Science and Nature Photo Book for Young People By Frank W. Baker

LUCKY RABBIT





## CLOSE ENCOUNTERS WITH **THE GREAT BLUE HERON**

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Frank dedicates this book to his grandchildren: Sadie, Ella, Charlie, Van and Lyla. May you too one day discover the love of nature.

Frank acknowledges the invaluable help of Spencer Whetstone whose expertise made this book possible.

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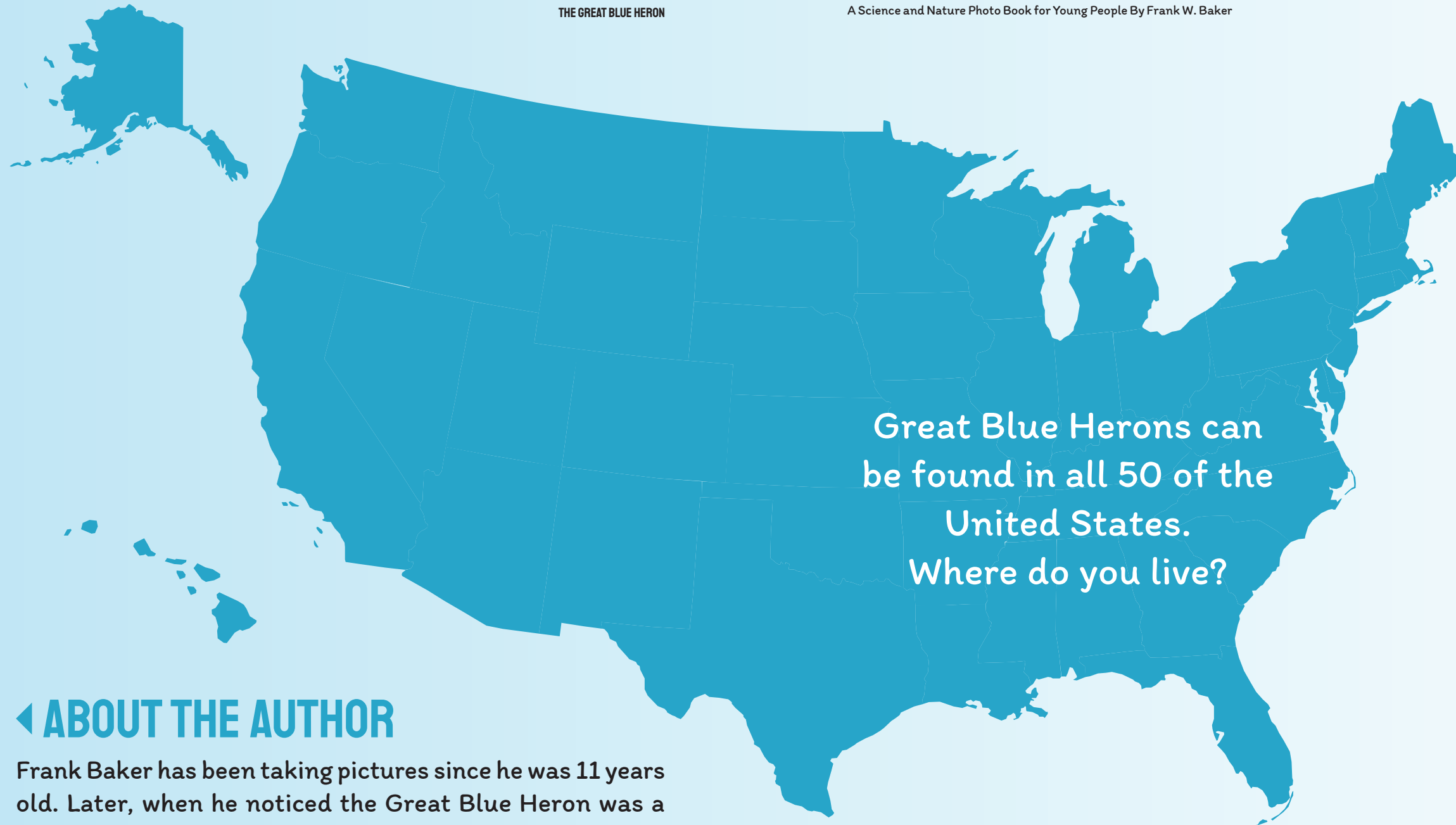
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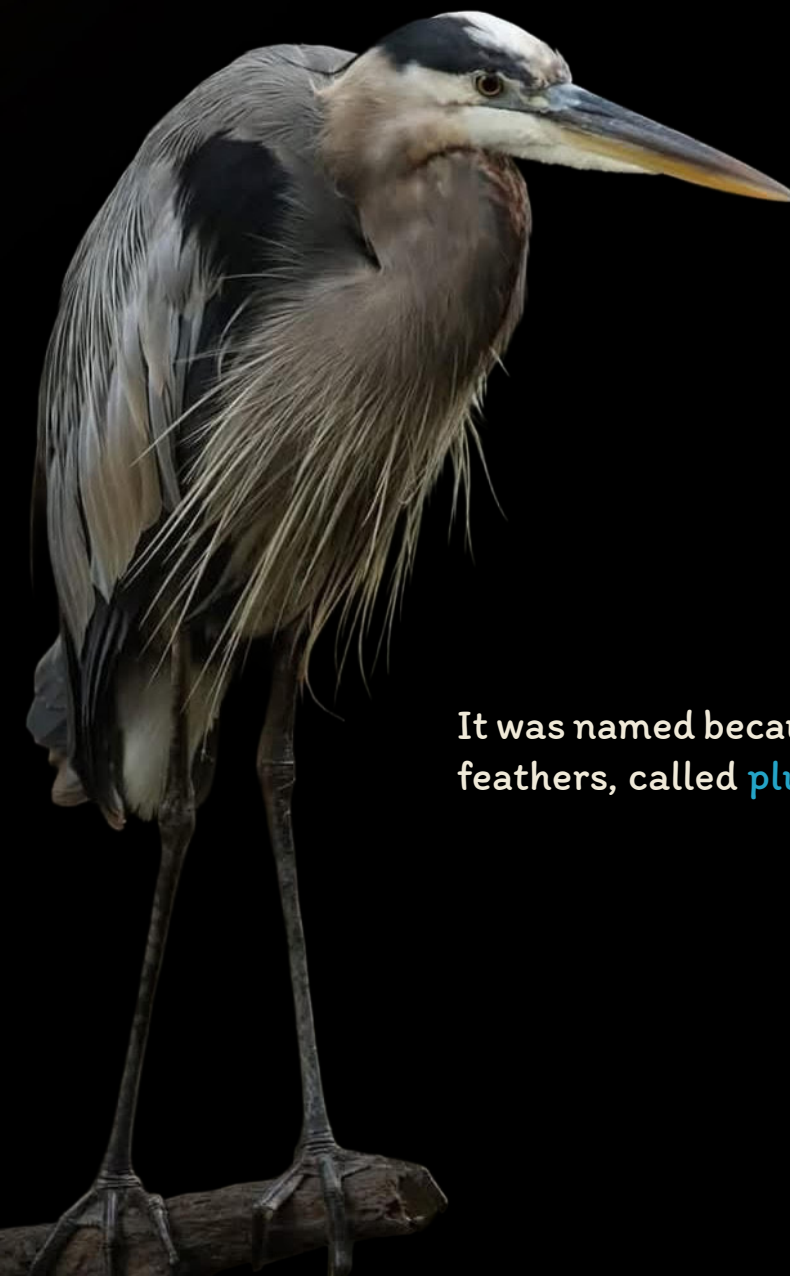
### ◀ ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Frank Baker has been taking pictures since he was 11 years old. Later, when he noticed the Great Blue Heron was a regular visitor at a lake near him, he started going to the lake with his camera. He soon discovered many interesting things about herons and other birds.



## INTRODUCTION ▶

Frank is a **photographer**, his favorite subject is a big blue bird, the Great Blue Heron.



It was named because of its blue-gray feathers, called **plumage**.



How tall is the Great Blue Heron?  
Almost 5 feet tall!  
Remember, 1 foot is 12 inches.

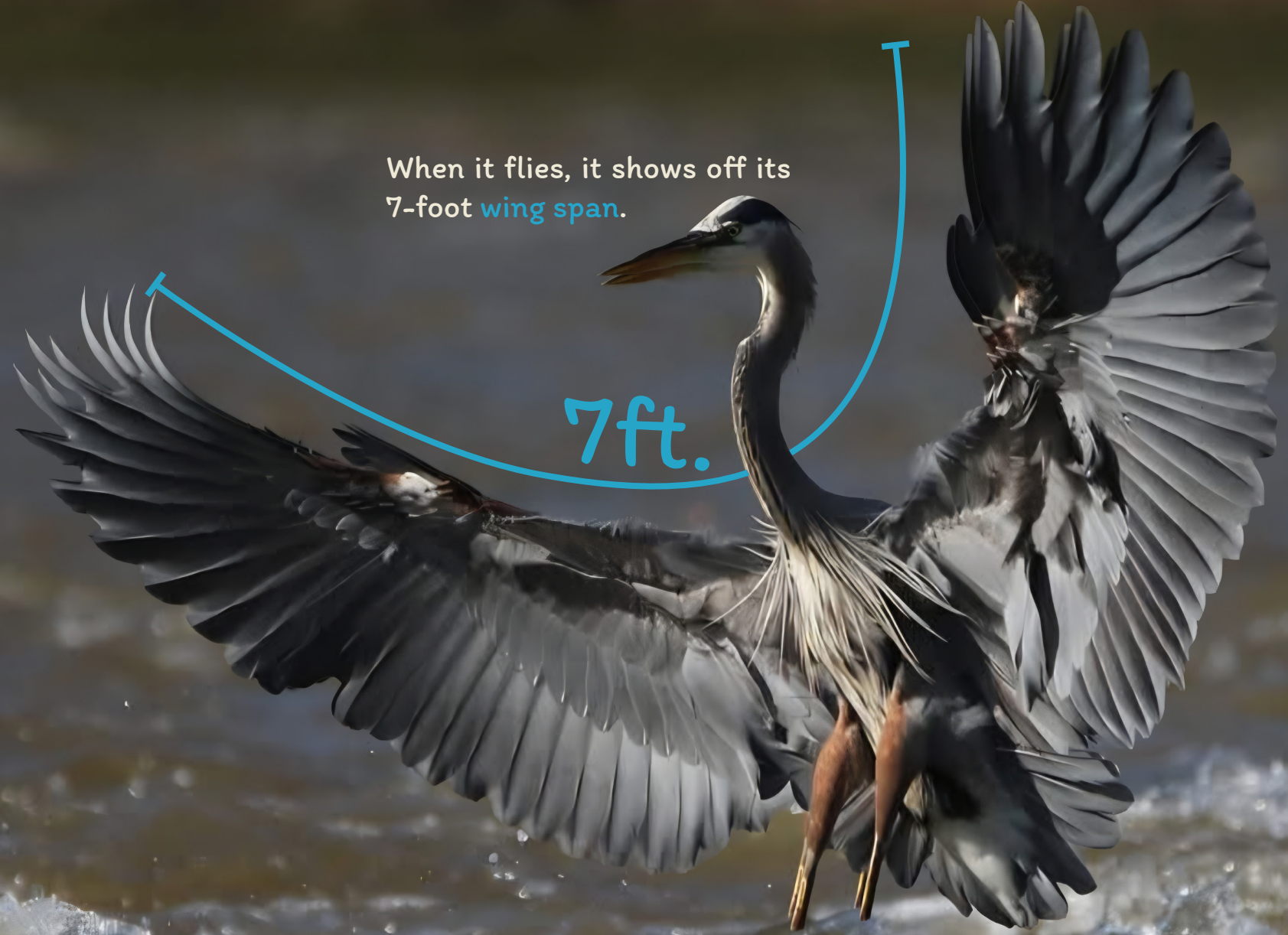


54 inches tall



Talking about feet...  
Heron's feet are called **Claws**, and they measure about 6 to 8 inches. So, a heron would be about 9 "claws" tall.

When it flies, it shows off its 7-foot **wing span**.



7ft.

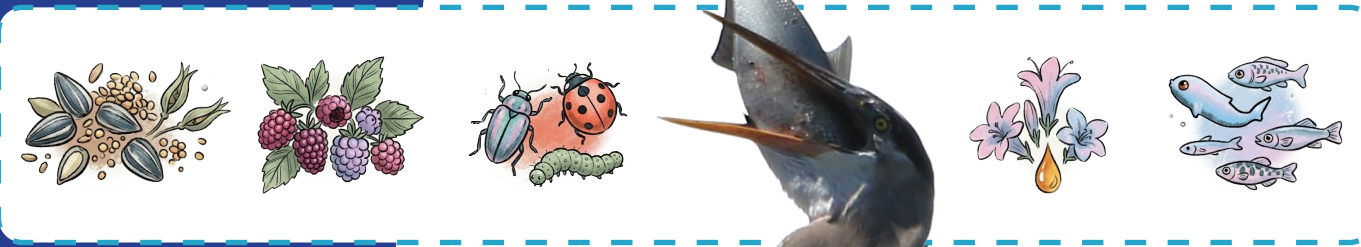
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## THE "BIG FOUR" NEEDS ▶

Every bird needs these four things in its habitat.

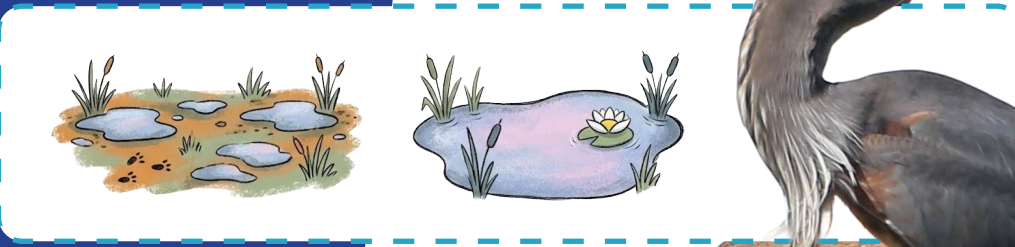
### FOOD

Seeds, berries, bugs, nectar, or even tiny fish!



### WATER

For drinking and bathing (ponds, puddles, birdbaths).



### SHELTER

Places to hide from predators and weather (trees, bushes, tall grass).



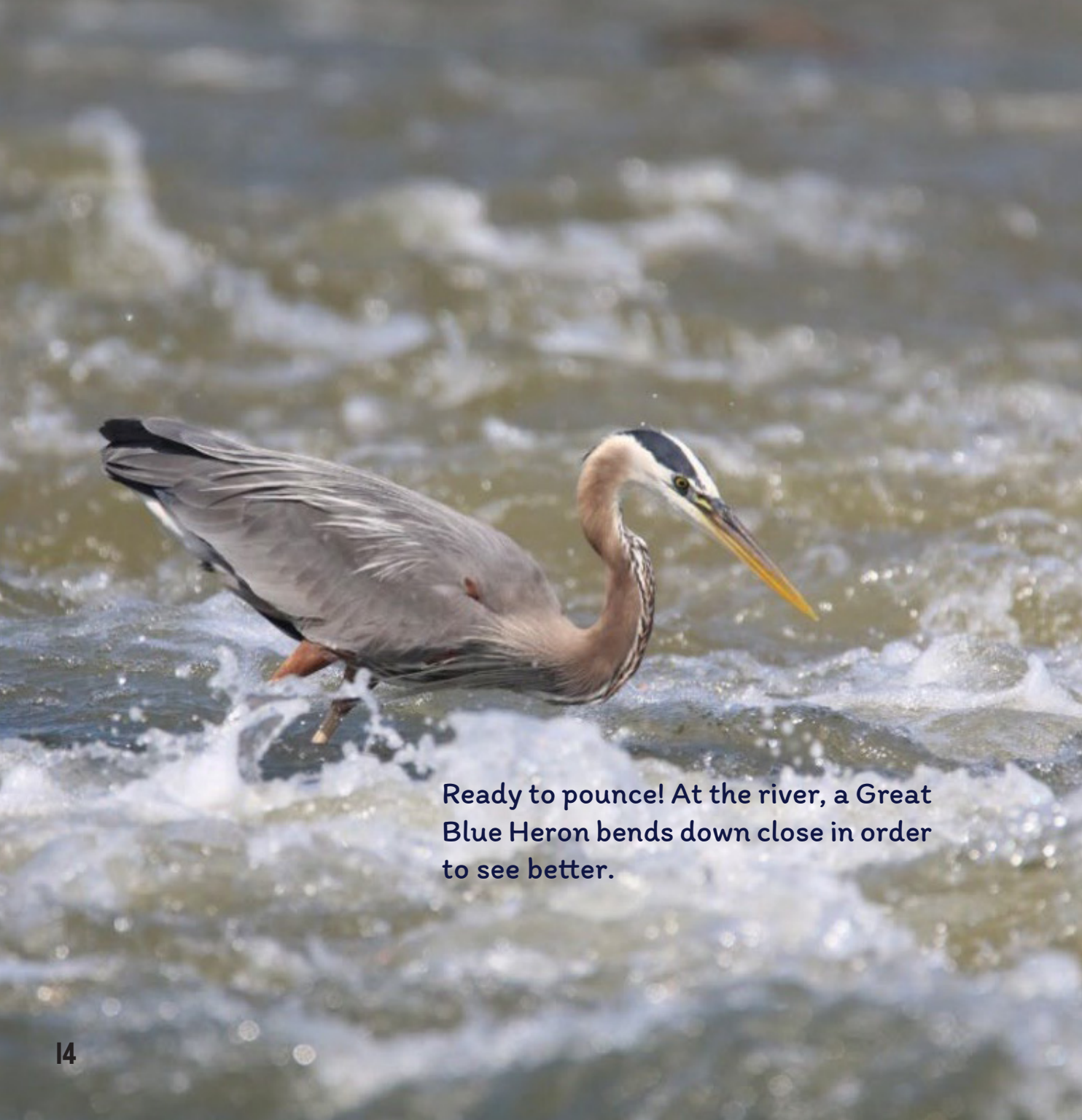
### NESTING SITES

Safe spots to lay eggs and raise chicks (tree holes, branches, reeds).



The Great Blue Heron lives near water which is a necessary part of its **habitat**. It is also considered a **wading bird**.

Do you live near water? If you do, you might see a Great Blue Heron.



Ready to pounce! At the river, a Great Blue Heron bends down close in order to see better.

## ◀ BREAKFAST

The Great Blue Heron must find food in order to survive.

## FAVORITE FOOD ▶

Since Great Blue Herons live near water, can you guess what their favorite food might be?

Great Blue Herons don't have teeth, so when they catch a fish, they will swallow the whole thing.



Yum!

## SWALLOWING THE BIG ONE

How is it possible that the heron, with a rather medium-sized beak, can consume large fish?



Great Blue Herons also eat snakes. This one found a snake hiding in the river's marsh grasses.



Opening its beak, it slowly maneuvers the fish into its throat. With a flexible **vertebrae** and a lengthy **esophagus**, it uses powerful neck muscles to swallow the fish whole.

## HERE COMES A NEW CHALLENGER

Sometimes, Great Blue Herons get too close to each other, this may lead to a **territorial dispute**.



They get upset when another bird gets too close. They might show off their feathers or even raise their heads as a warning to stay away.

Great Blue Heron

Great Blue Heron

## SOMETIMES THEY EVEN FIGHT.

VS



## SLOWING DOWN TO LAND

When an airplane prepares to land, it lowers its **flaps**, which creates **resistance**, and allows the plane to slow down. Similarly, Great Blue Herons open their wide wings, thus allowing them to slow down too.



ILLO PENDING

## WINTER IS COMING

When Winter time comes, Great Blue Herons begin to look for a place to build their **nests**.

Often their nests can be found very high in trees, protected from **predators**.



Once they've found a place for the nest, they will need to find many **twigs and branches** to build a large nest.

Why a large nest?  
Well, they ARE large birds.



It picks up the branch with its **beak** and flies to the new nest.



A Great Blue Heron delivers a branch to the ever-growing nest.



## LOVE IS IN THE AIR

After a Great Blue Heron builds a nest, **courtship** can start, it will try to find a mate. Often, the male will stretch its neck high and make a sound. That's an invitation to the female. As part of their courtship, Herons often clap their beaks together, indicating a strong bond.



During mating season, Great Blue Herons often undergo certain changes. Among them, they grow long feathers in order to attract a mate.

After finding a mate, and mating, they will stay together watching closely over the nest. After about 10 days, eggs will be laid. The eggs of the Great Blue Heron are light blue in color. This photo was taken with a camera mounted close to the bird's nest.



Photo courtesy of:  
The Cornell Lab  
of Ornithology

A Great Blue Heron will sit on the eggs for a long time to keep them warm.



**To-do list:**  
Sit on eggs for one month until they hatch.

## A BIRD'S EYE VIEW

A drone has flown to the top of a group of Pine trees in order to look down on a nest that contains a group of Great Blue Heron eggs.



## HAPPY BIRTHDAY

The newborn chick looks funny with spiky head feathers.

Now, one parent will stay at the nest while the other looks for food. Since the newborns can't yet fly and can't find food they depend on their parents. The adults catch fish, bring it to the nest and **regurgitate** it in order to feed the chicks.



Can you spot the food that the parent is delivering to the chick?



The newborn chick will grow quickly and when Mom or Dad bring food, it will quickly grab at the parent's beak to beg,

"I'm hungry, give me some food!"



When Great Blue Herons build their nests in the same place every year, it's called a **rookery**.

How many herons can you spot in this rookery?



After being in the nest for 7 weeks, the growing chick will start to flap its wings. It's almost ready to fly and leave the nest. When it leaves, it's called **fledged**.

Now it's off on its own to find food and eventually make a home.

## A MOST UNUSUAL POSE

The Great Blue Heron is standing on a tree branch with its wings open. Herons do this to warm their body in the Sun.



## WORDS USED IN THIS BOOK INCLUDE:

### Photographer

Ipsaniae sum quo eostia consequos  
ipiditis di dolupta quas et mos acea

### Plumage

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ipiditis di dolupta quas et mos acea

### Wing Span

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### Drone

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### Pounce

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### Twigs and Branches

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### Rookery

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### Beaks

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### Flaps

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### Territorial

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### Dispute

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### Nests

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### Predators

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### Fledged

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### Courtship

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### Mating

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### Regurgitate

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ipiditis di dolupta quas et mos acea



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An extraordinary visual journey into the world of the Great Blue Heron. Perfect for young scientists, bird lovers, and curious minds.

