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Title: The Great Egret Family on Ruby Lake

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Story #1: Great Egret Fishes in the Lake

It is springtime on the lake.

Great egret wades in shallow water at the edge of the lake.

The lake is filled with big turtles, scaly snakes, plump frogs and juicy fish.

He stands still and hovers over the water searching back and forth for food.

A little snake slithers by three little fish.

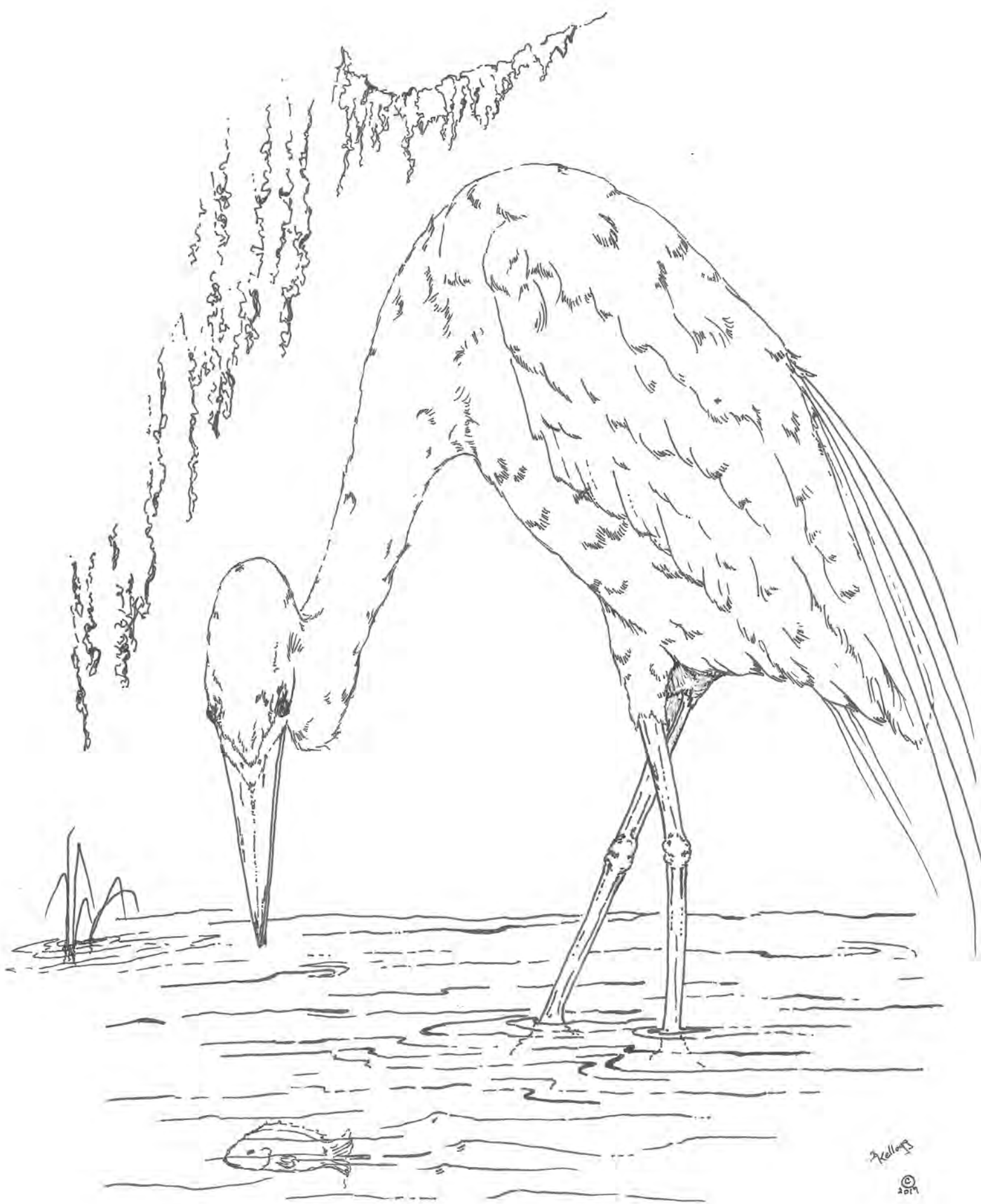
He dips his bill in the water.

Great egret grabs one tiny fish with his bill.

The fish wiggles back and forth.

Great egret puts his head back and swallows the fish headfirst.

GULP! Down it goes.



Story #2: Great Egret Builds a Nest

After eating the fish, great egret snatches a dragonfly into his bill.

He opens his wide wings, flaps, and flies up to the tree.

His long black legs are stretch under his body.

Now great egret must build a nest so he can attract a female egret.

He is looking for a tall cypress tree with sturdy branches high above the lake.

He finds a tall, cypress tree and wraps his claws around a sturdy branch.

Then he flies down to the lake water.

He wades into the water.

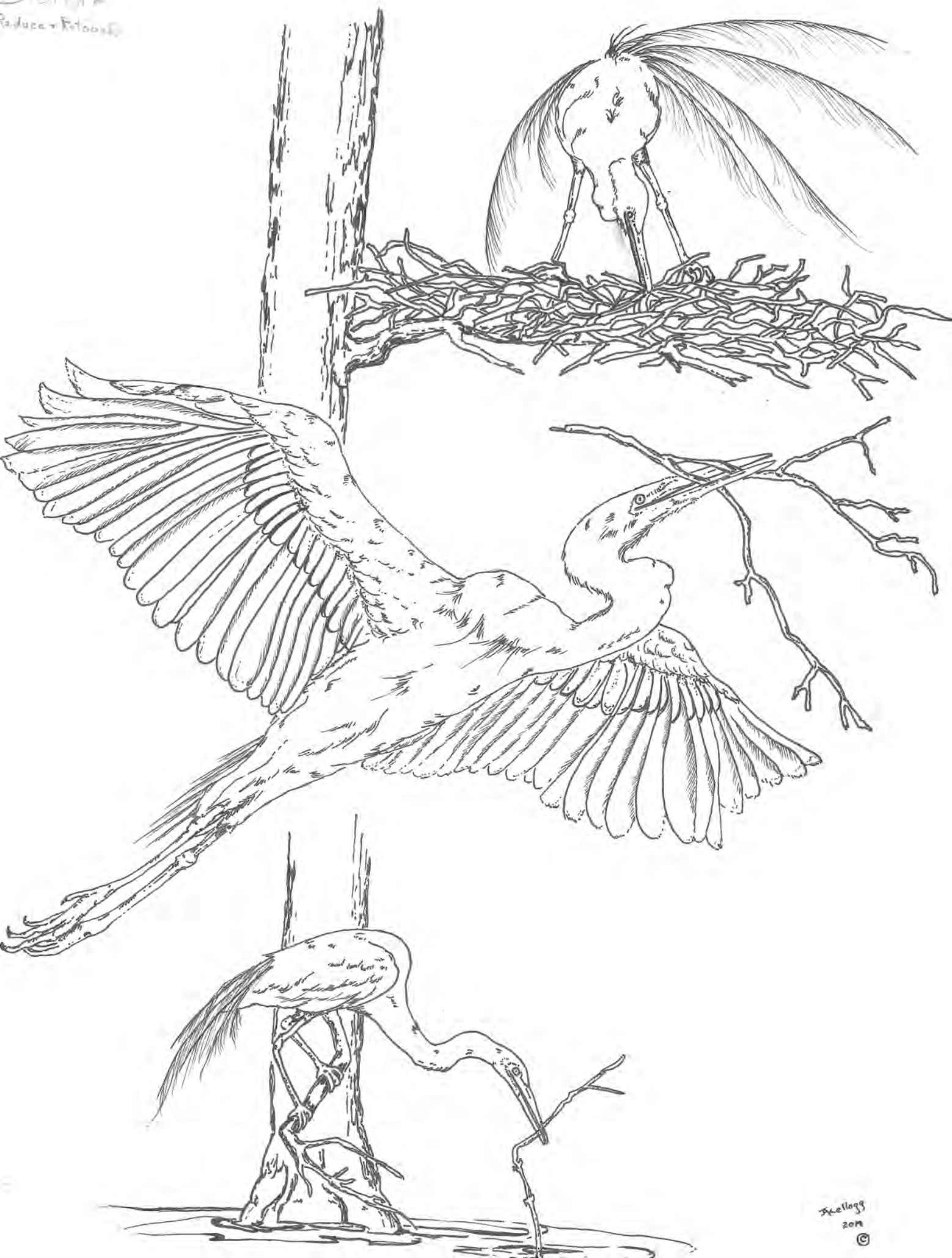
At the edge of the lake, he uses his long, orange-yellow bill to pick up sticks for his nest.

He flies back up and places each stick between two sturdy branches.

He flies up and down, with another stick and another stick and another.

Soon his nest is a large, flat, platform of hundreds of sticks.

STORY #2
Paruca + Kitoos



Skello99
2014
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Story #3 Great Egret Finds a Mate

Now that his nest is almost finished, great egret needs a female to lay eggs.

The next day he sees female great egret.

“Kraak! Kraak!” Great egret croaks from his nest.

“Kraak! Kraak! Kraak!” replies female great egret.

She sits on a nearby tree watching him.

From his twiggy nest, male great egret stands three feet tall.

To attract female great egret, he spreads out his back and tail lacey feathers.

He strokes his wing feathers with his bill and moves his head up and down.

Then he grabs a twig in his bill and shakes it.

He stretches his neck up and down while female great egret watches.

Great egret sticks his neck over the nest and spreads his back feathers into a fan.

Female great egret looks up and waves her lacey back feathers back to great egret.

What a show!



Story #4: The Great Egrets Dance

The male and female great egrets fly to each other in the air.

They flutter their bright white feathers.

They circle around and around each other.

They look at each other with yellow eyes circled in bright lime-green.

Dancing and fluttering in the air, they fly back to the nest.

They clack and cluck.

They hug and wrap their necks around each other.

They sway back and forth and wave their white lacy feathers like flags.

They perch on a nearby branch to roost for the night.

They stand like statues with great egrets and other waterbirds.

Stewart #4
L. 2012



Stewart
2012 ©

Story #5: The Great Egrets Finish Building the Nest

The next morning, the great egrets are busy making the nest bigger.

Great egret flies down to the edge of the lake.

He grabs a long stick floating on top of the water.

He brings the stick back up to the nest and gives it to female great egret.

She places a stick in the nest.

Then, male great egret pulls a long string of Spanish moss from an oak tree.

The moss hangs from his long bill as he flies to the nest.

Female great egret takes the moss and tucks it into the nest.

They put more and more moss on the nest until it is big enough to hold three babies.



Story #6: The Hungry Great Egrets

From their high nest, female great egret flies down to a cypress stump.

When she wades in the water, a big, brown frog jumps on a nearby log.

She snatches the frog with her bill, flips it and eats it.

Male great egret wades nearby in shallow water.

He scratches his claws across the muddy lake bottom.

He stirs the mud and stands quietly.

A big brown frog swims across his big claws.

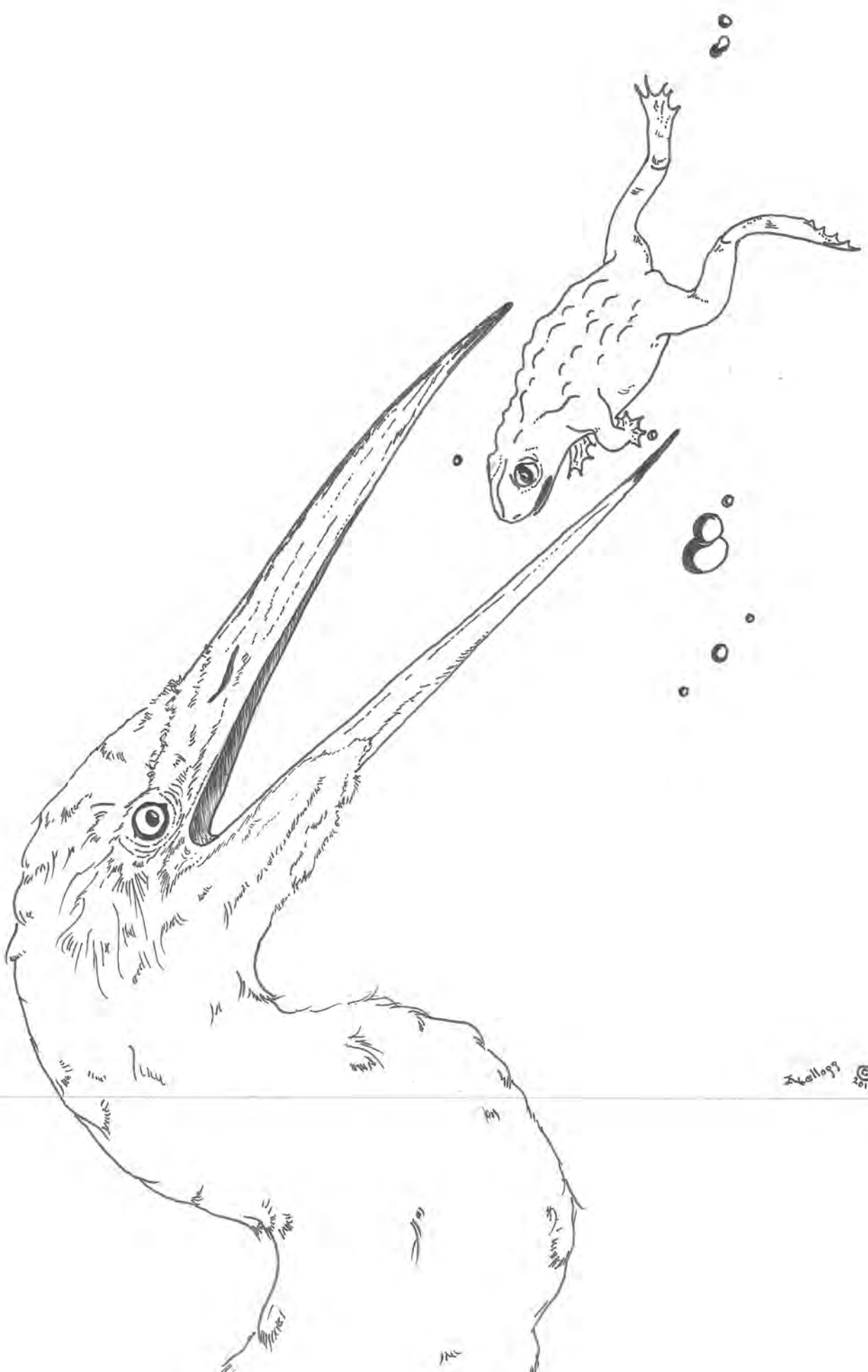
He grabs the frog with his bill.

He flips the frog and it almost disappears.

Then he taps his bill against a low branch.

Now frog slithers down his throat.

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Ecology 2012

Story #7: Female Great Egret Lays Three Eggs

Soon after the nest is built, female great egret lays a light blue egg.

Two days later, she lays a second light blue egg.

And three days later, she lays a third light blue egg.

Now they need to keep the three eggs warm.

Every day for the next month, they take turns sitting on the eggs to keep them warm.

Every day they take turns turning the eggs with their bills.

After thirty days, then one...two...three eggs begin to wiggle.

A crack shows in one egg then one fuzzy-headed baby bird pops out.

A crack shows in the second egg and another fuzzy-headed baby bird pops out.

After three days, a crack shows in the third egg and the last fuzzy-headed baby bird pops out.

Now three fuzzy-headed baby birds with spikey head feathers are sitting in the nest.



Story #8: Mother and Father Great Egret Feed Their Little Chicks

The chicks are hungry and they cry as they poke and push each other.

The chicks cry, “Acz! Acz! Acz!”

Mother and father egret need to feed the hungry chicks.

Mother and father egret take turns flying down to the lake and nearby bayou to catch fish.

They fly back up to the nest.

Mother egret opens her bill wide and one baby chick snatches a fish with its tiny bill.

Father egret opens his bill wide and another baby chick grabs the fish with its tiny bill.

A third baby chick tries to push away the other chicks to get its fish.

The chicks spend their nights and days eating and sleeping.

The chicks grow bigger and their wings grow longer.

They push and poke and jab each other.

At night, they sleep and snuggle together in the nest.



Story #9: Danger in the Lake

After a month, the baby chicks are able to hop to a nearby branch.

They hop in and out of the nest, flapping their little wings.

But they cannot fly.

The baby chicks grow bigger and bigger but still they cannot fly.

And the lake is not a safe place.

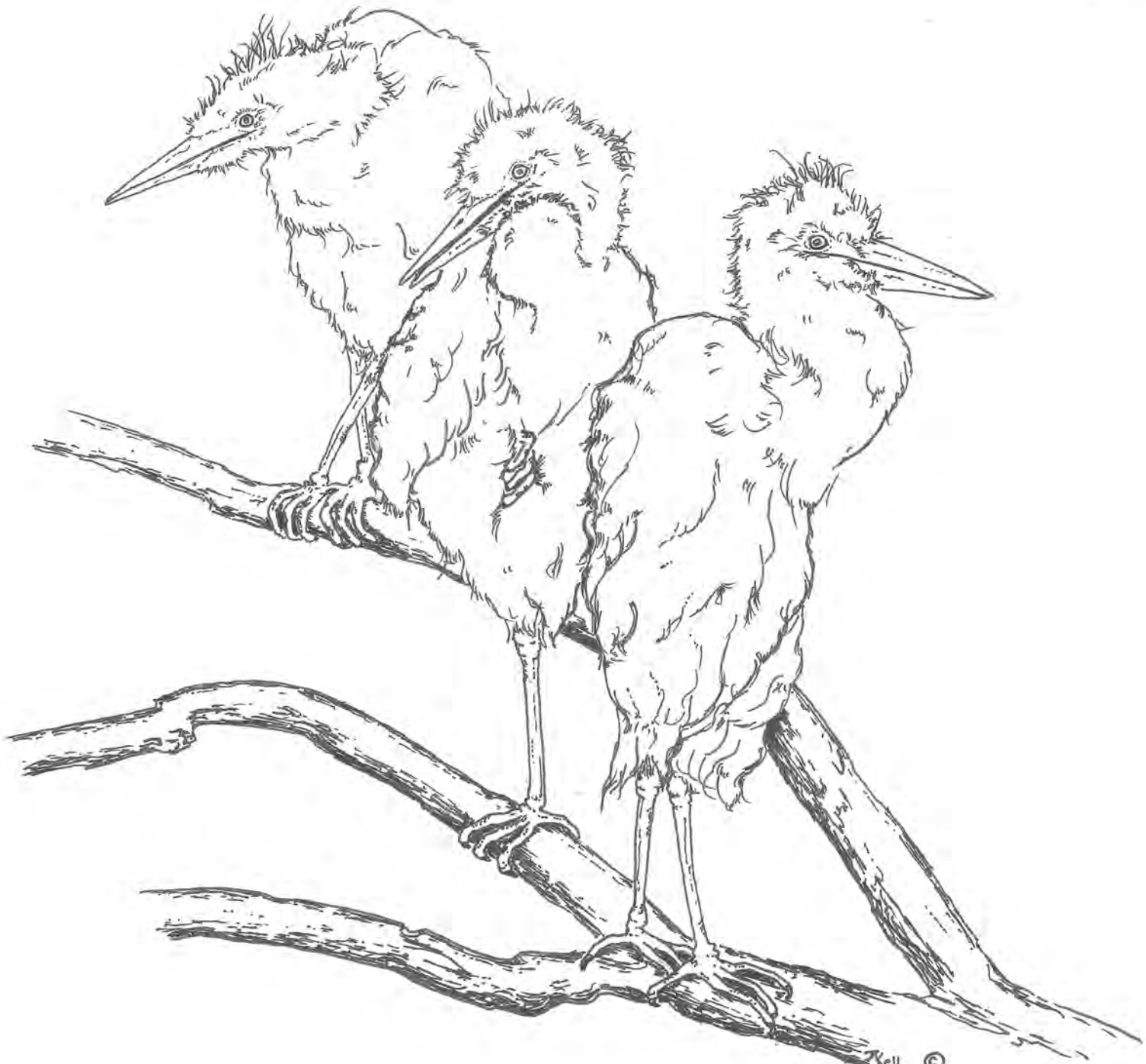
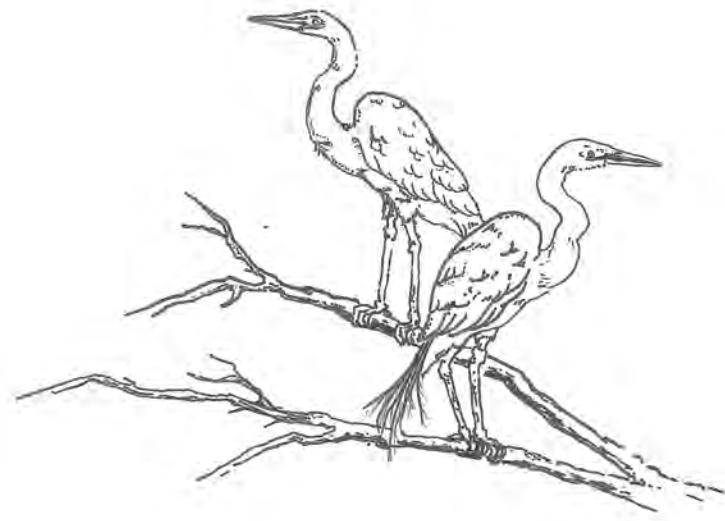
Down below there are alligators with sharp teeth looking for baby birds to eat.

Up above there are eagles with sharp eyes looking for baby birds to eat.

And all around the lake and bayou, bobcats hide behind cypress trees waiting to snatch baby birds.

But the chicks cannot fly away from danger, so Mother and Father egret stand guard near the nest.

Sketch # 7



Story #10: Baby Chicks Grow Bigger and Bigger

The baby chicks' legs are longer and stronger.

Their wings grow longer and stronger.

The baby chicks are now fledglings.

But the nest is too small for the fledglings.

So they leap up and down and push each other in the bouncing nest.

They are so strong they can fly-hop to nearby branches.

Mother and father egret bring food to the fledglings.

One by one, they snatch the fish from mother and father.

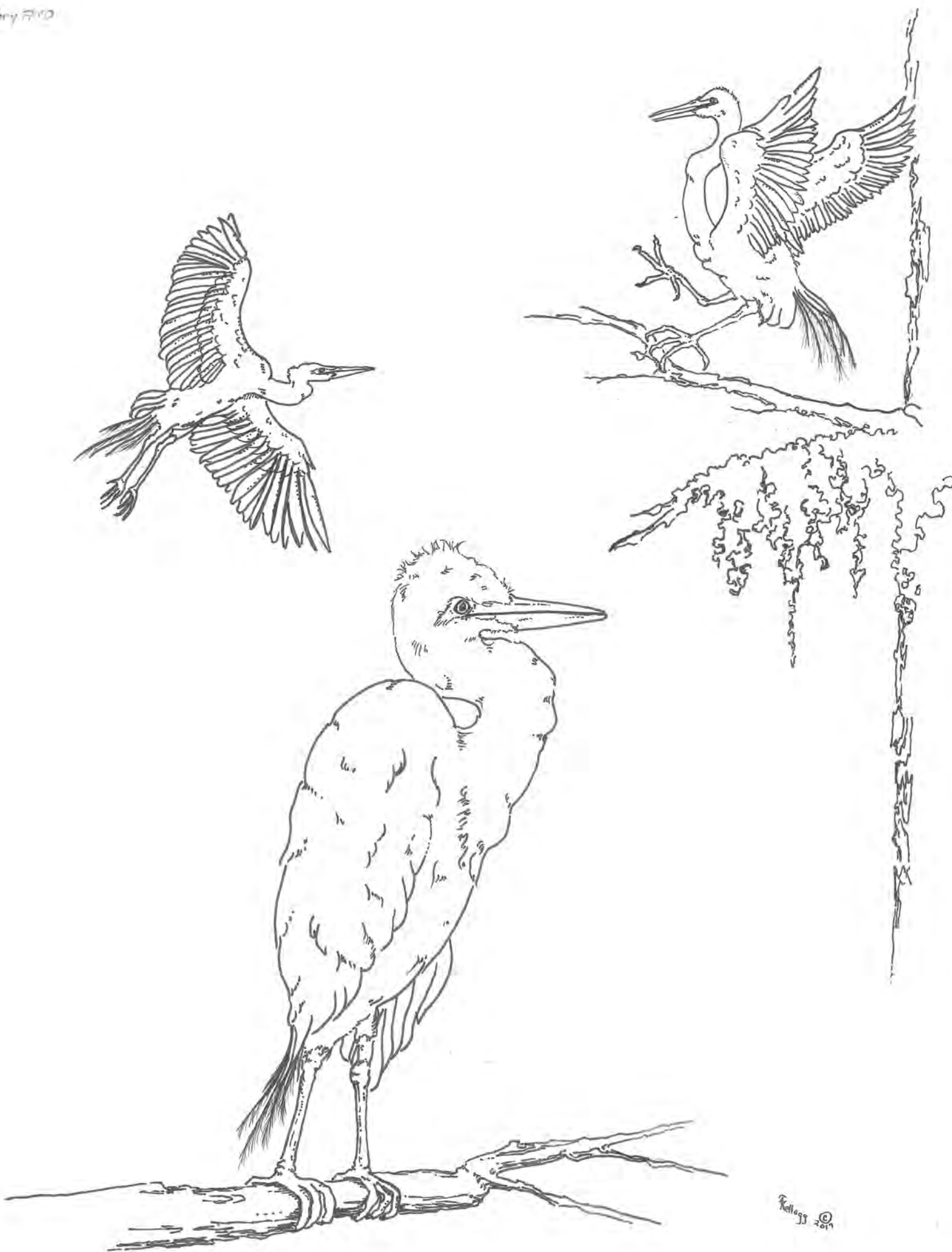
Then One fledgling flaps his wings and flies to a nearby branch.

Another fledgling follows and perches on another branch.

The third fledgling flies to a nearby tree.

Then they fly back to the nest.

They flap their wings and cry, "KRAAK! KRAAK! KRAAK!"



Story #11: The Three Fledglings Go Fishing

The three fledglings fly to the edge of the lake.

They stand still in the water looking for fish to catch.

A long dark shadow swims towards the fledglings.

Closer and closer comes hungry alligator.

The hungry alligator has big jaws with sharp teeth.

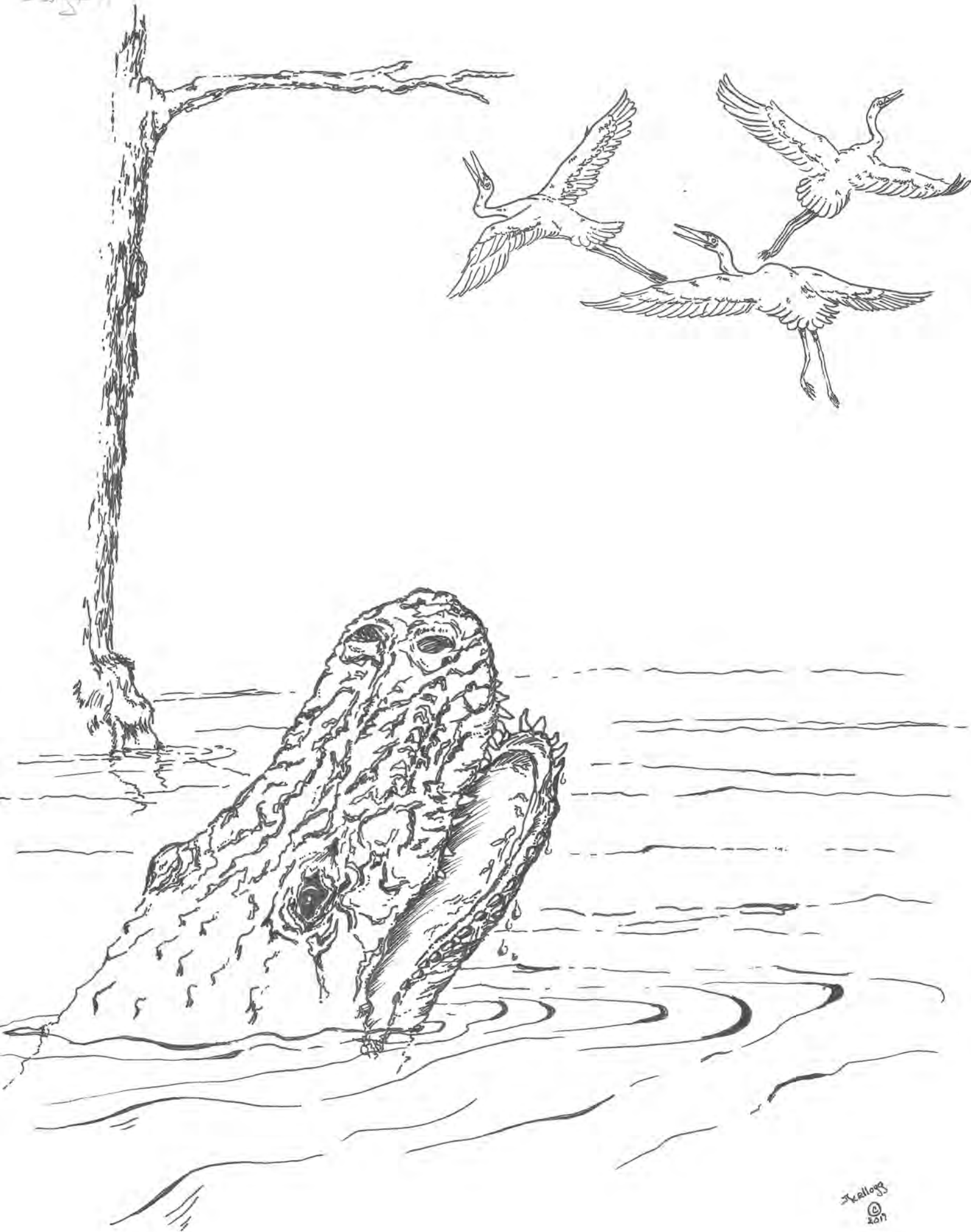
His strong tail moves back and forth in the water.

Flap, flap flap, the young fledglings fly to a cypress branch.

No young egrets are here NOW for Alligator to eat!!

Hungry alligator swims away.

Story # 11



Kallogg
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Story #12: The Great Egrets Find a New Bayou

Now the three great egrets begin to explore the new bayou.

One great egret flies to bayou to catch a big, brown frog.

Another great egret lands on a stump and sees a big black snake.

The third egret catches a fish in the nearby salt marsh.

That night they find each other.

They roost together in a tall tree.

When the cold winds start blowing through the trees the two male egrets fly to a warmer bayou.

The female goes back to her old nesting ground.

She finds a mate and they have a family of three baby egret chicks.

The chicks look just like she did when she was a little chick.



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