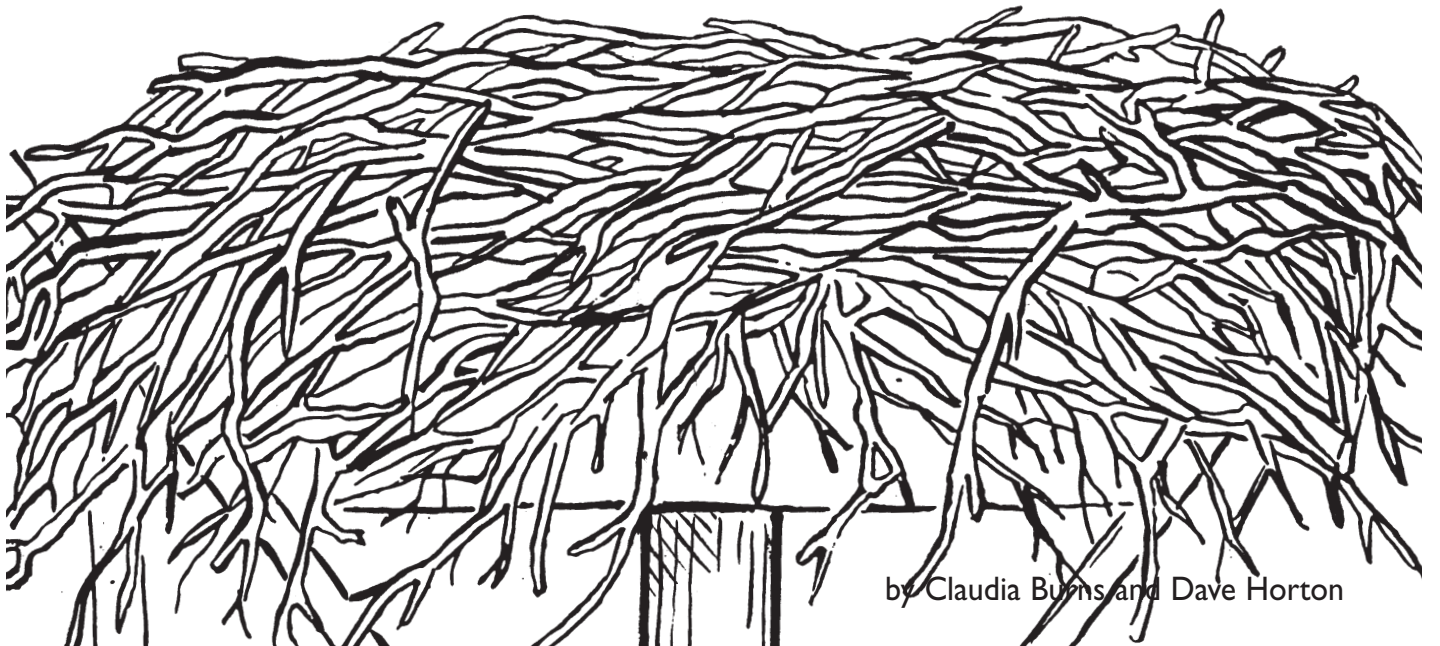


LOOK WHO'S FLYING!



by Claudia Burns and Dave Horton

What are those big brown and white birds that build huge stick nests on utility pole platforms?

Most likely, they are ospreys (*Pandion haliaetus*) - birds of prey (raptors) that are sometimes called fish hawks or sea eagles.

Because ospreys prefer to eat live fish, they build their nests near their food source and are an indicator species for the health of local waters. If ospreys are unable to raise babies, there may be a problem with water quality that humans should be concerned about.

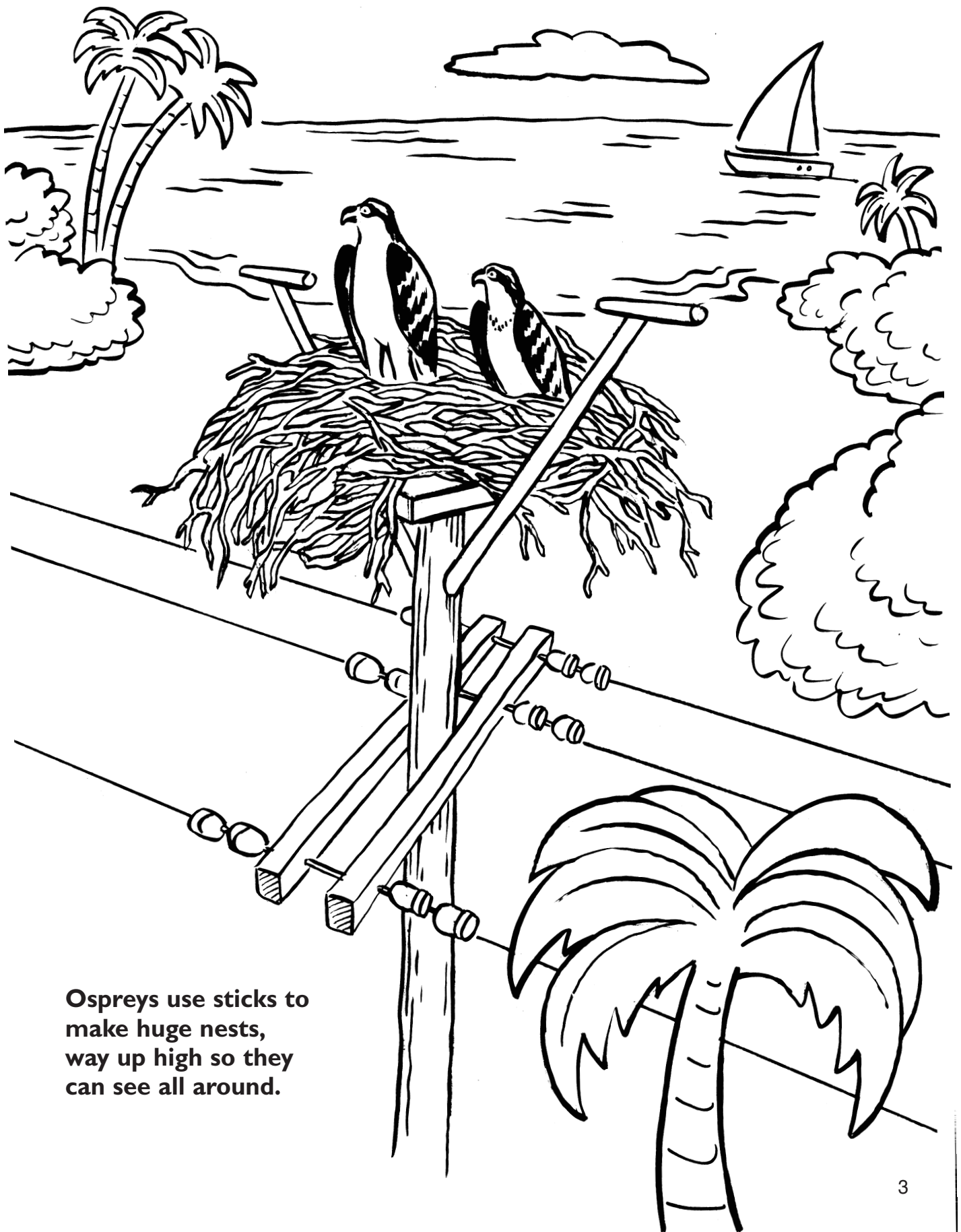
Unlike most birds, ospreys do not hide or camouflage their nests. On land, they build in plain view on lofty platforms, utility poles, the tops of broad-branched trees, or sometimes even on chimney tops. In water, they use channel markers. So, we humans are privileged to observe all facets of osprey behavior - nest building, courting, mating, incubating, hatching, feeding, shading, and, eventually, teaching their chicks how to fly.

The female osprey lays two or three eggs and does most of the incubating (keeping eggs warm so they will hatch). The male osprey brings fish to his nest-confined mate, and periodically relieves her of nest-sitting duties.

If all goes well, the eggs hatch in about 35 days. Osprey nestlings reach adult size in just seven weeks, so parents work hard to feed their rapidly-growing, constantly-hungry hatchlings. Dad brings fish to his family, and Mom uses her beak to tear small strips from the fish and drop them into her babies' mouths. If a chick is slow to fledge (learn how to fly) Mom might take off and leave the rest of the upbringing to Dad.

Adult ospreys are 21 to 25 inches long and weigh 4 to 5 pounds. Males are usually a little smaller than females. When osprey chicks fledge they are the same size as adults, but their chocolate-brown upperpart feathers have white tips, as if they were dipped in marshmallow creme. Also, their eyes are orange, whereas an adult's eyes are yellow.

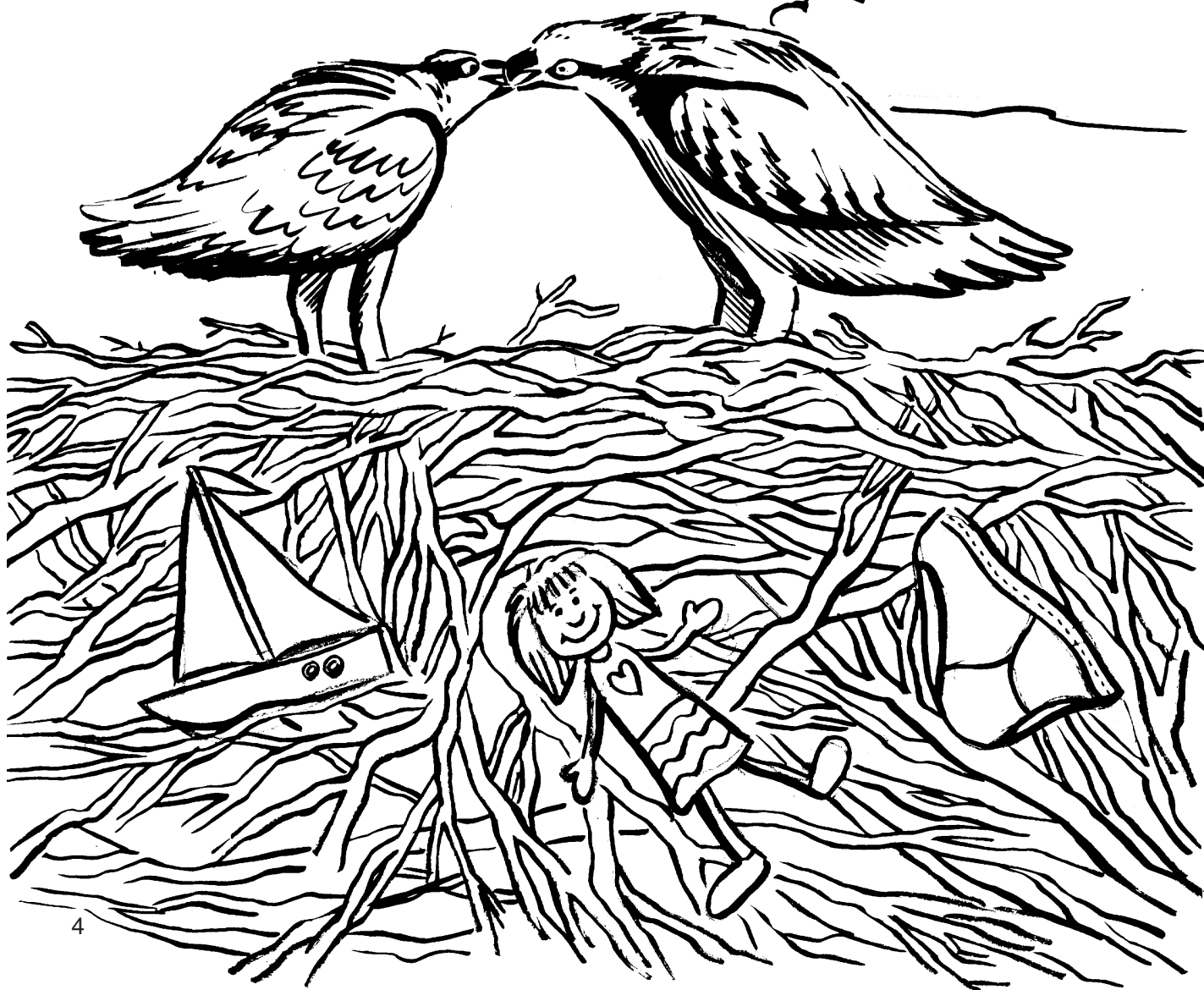
For more facts about ospreys, go to www.ospreys.com.



Ospreys use sticks to make huge nests, way up high so they can see all around.

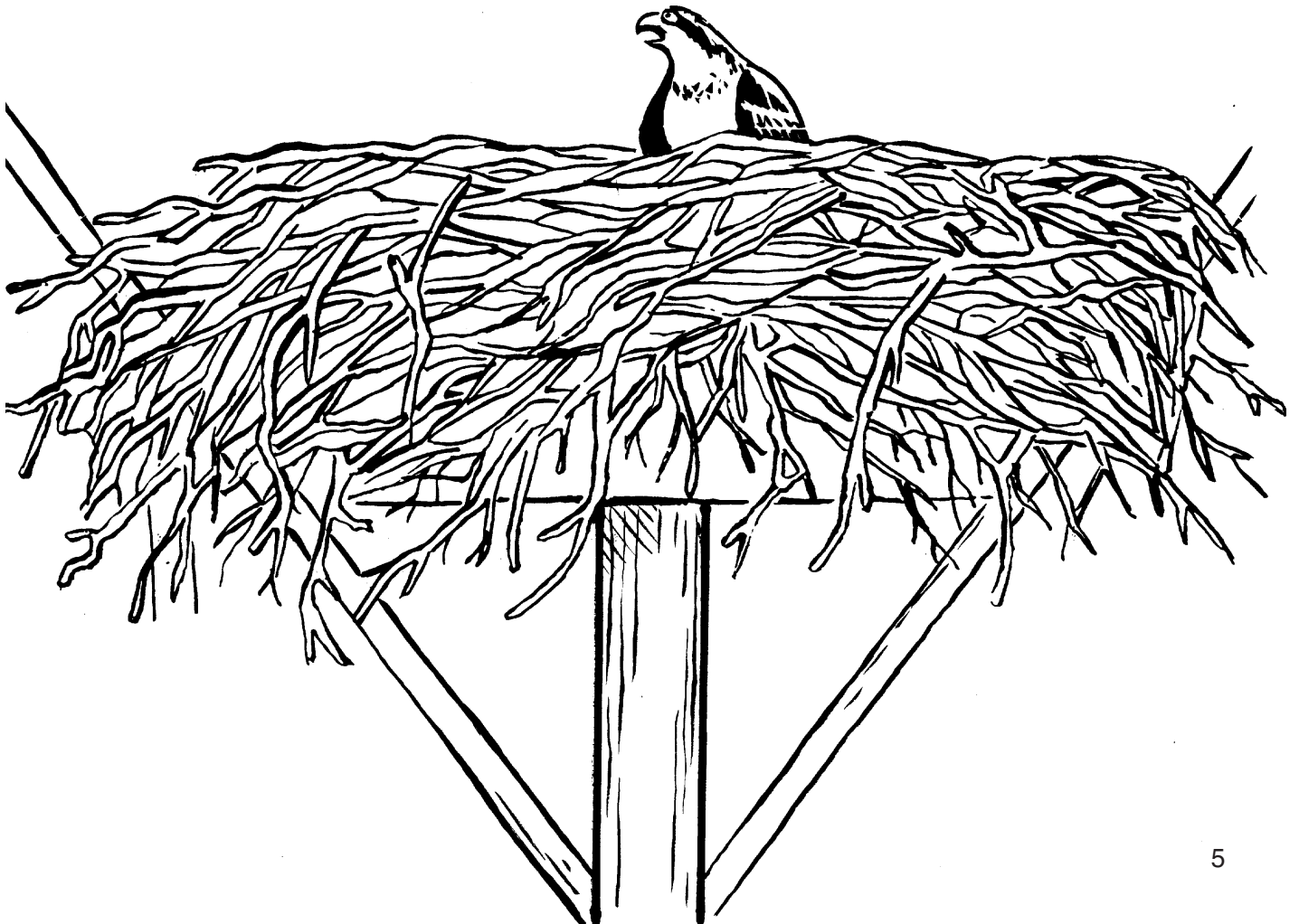
**These large hawks pick up things
their human neighbors throw away
and weave them into their nests.**

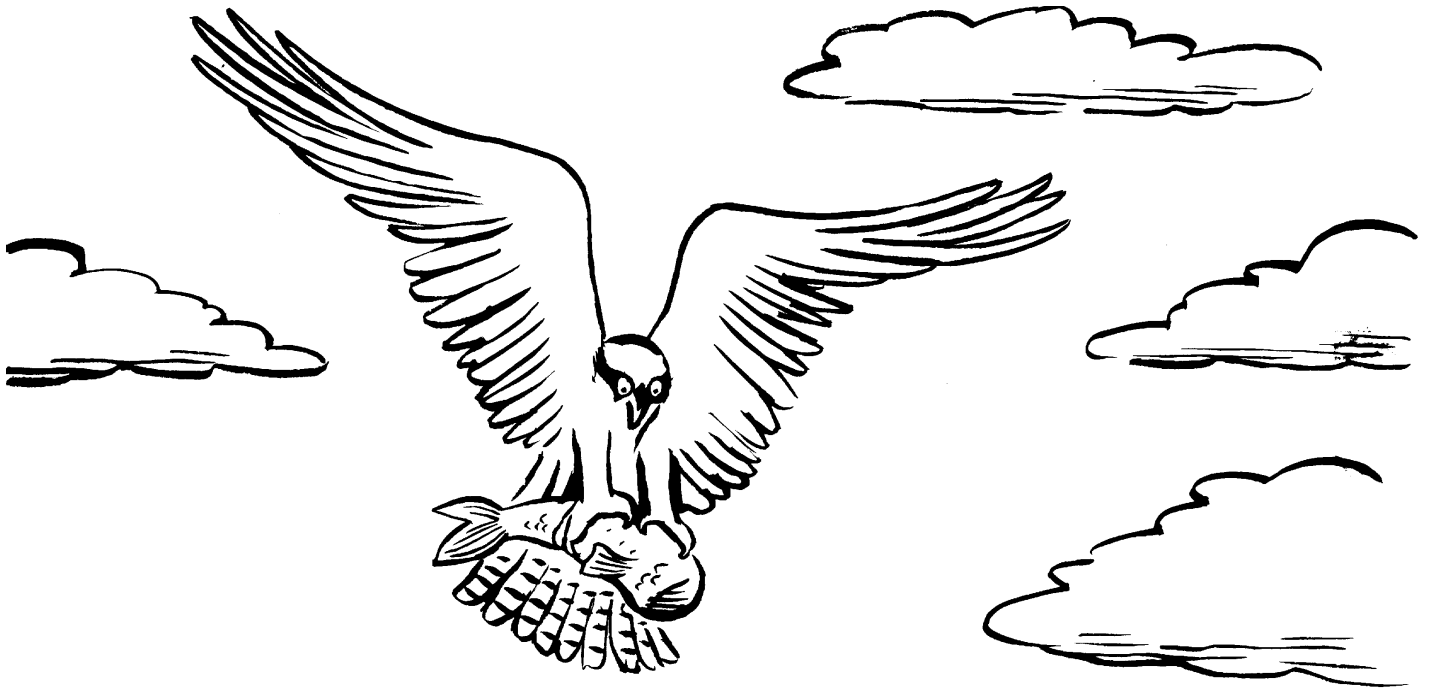
**At seven weeks, an osprey chick is as big as its
parents but not yet able to feed itself.**





**This
male chick hatched at the
same time as his sister but learned
to fly sooner. The female chick looks a lot
like her brother, but she is bigger and
wears a necklace of
brown feathers.**



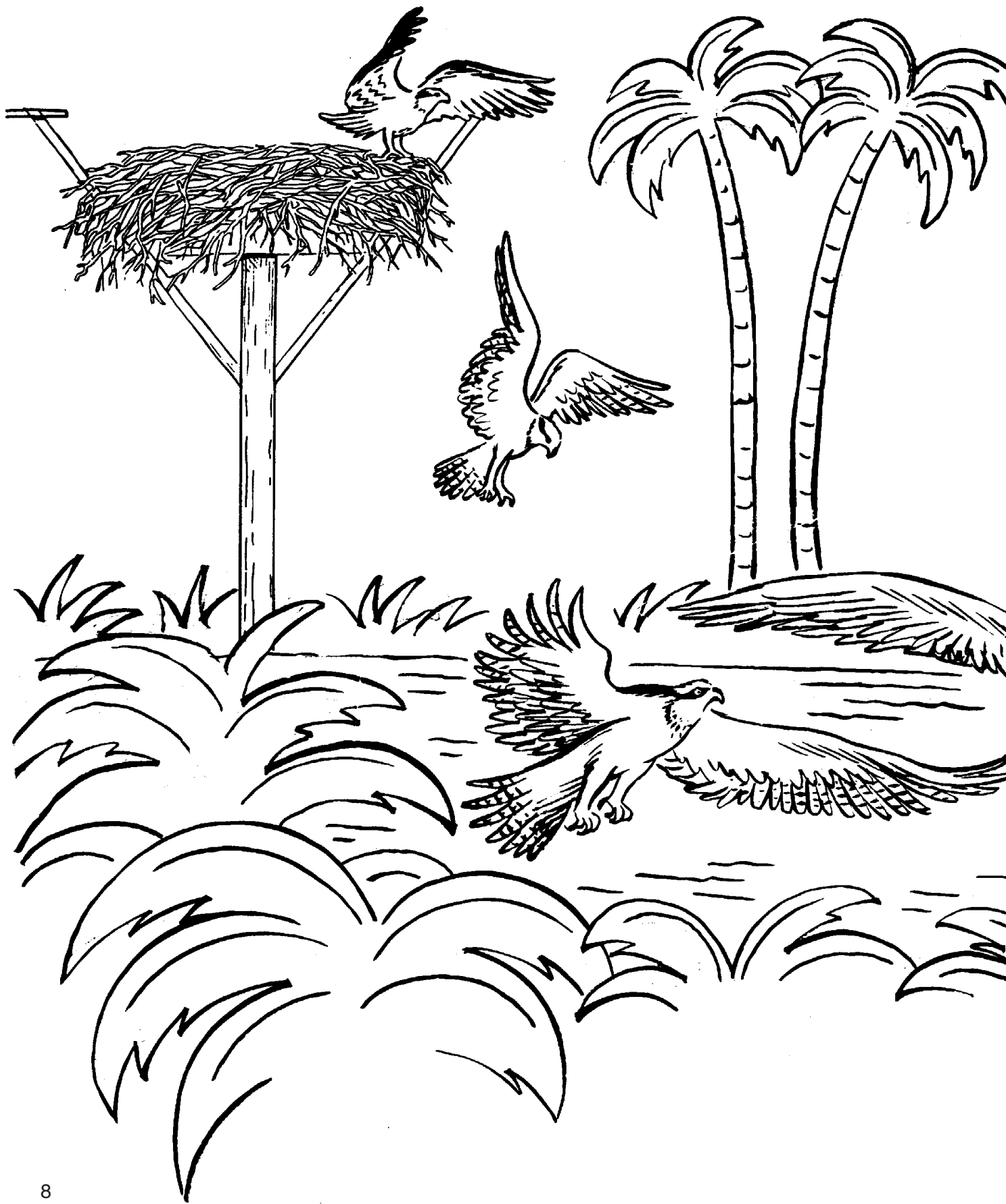


The hungry nestling squawks
as her father glides by with a
fish, but he doesn't bring the
food to her.

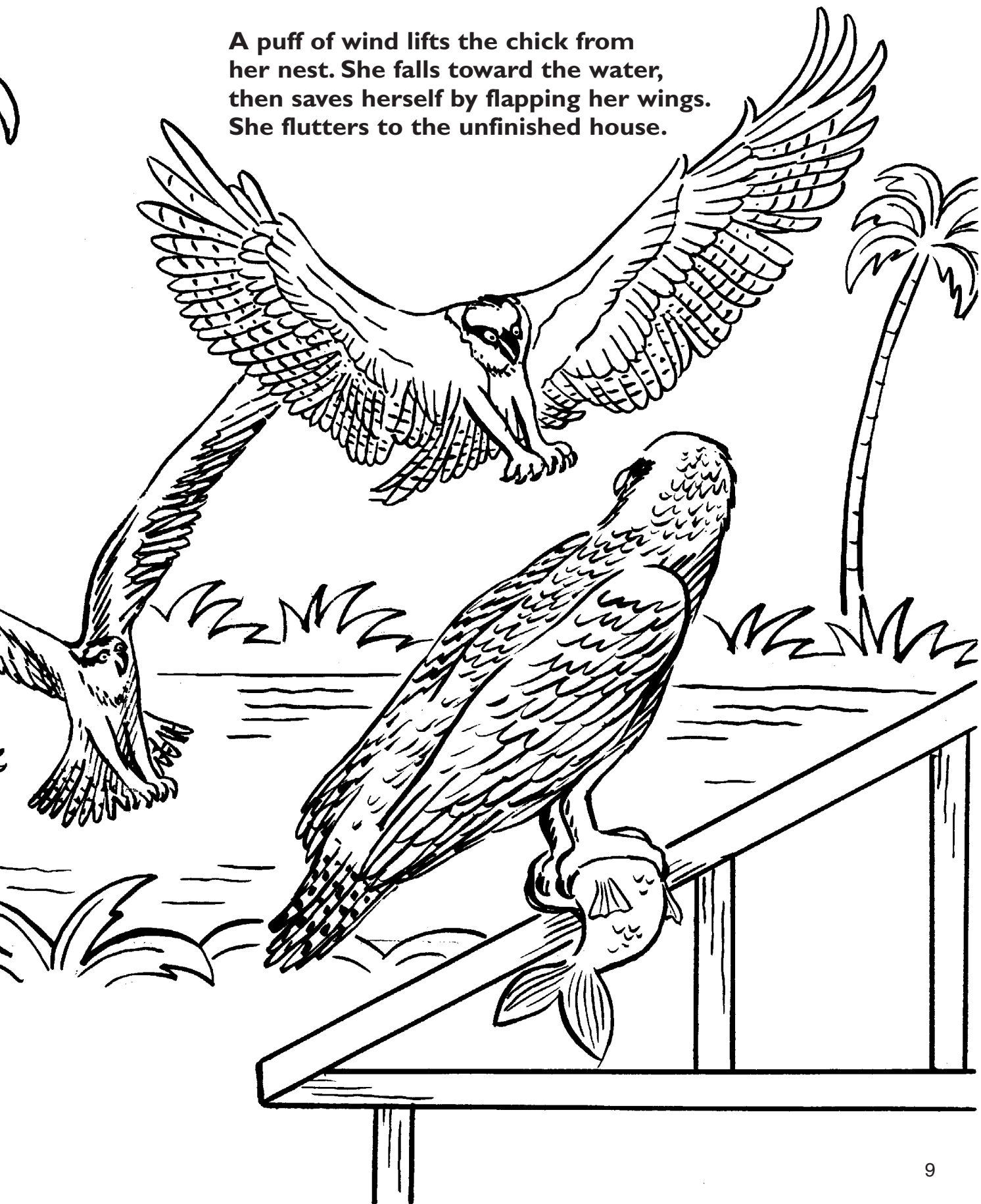


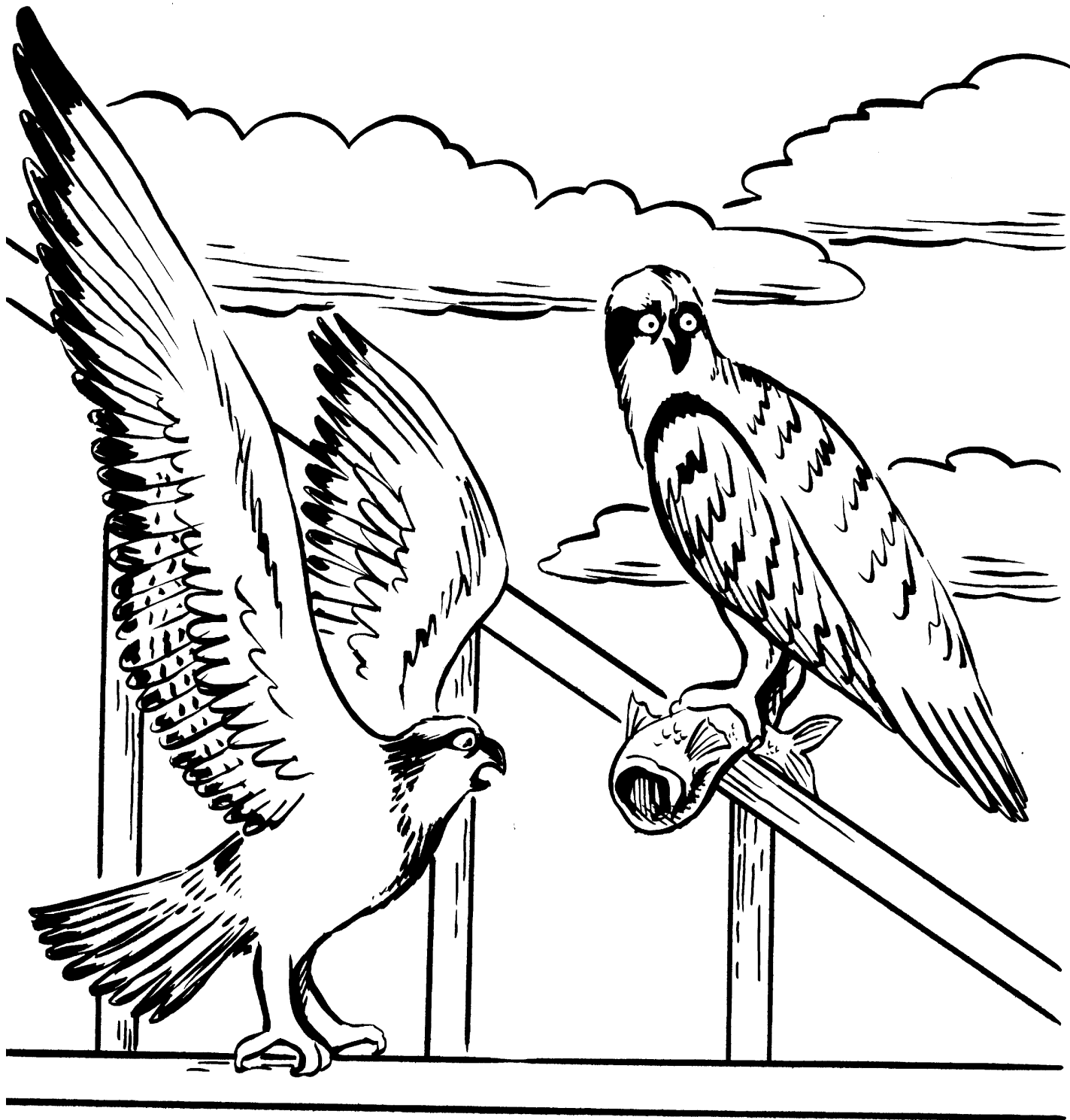
He settles on the frame of a house being built across the river. His baby screeches and hops up and down.



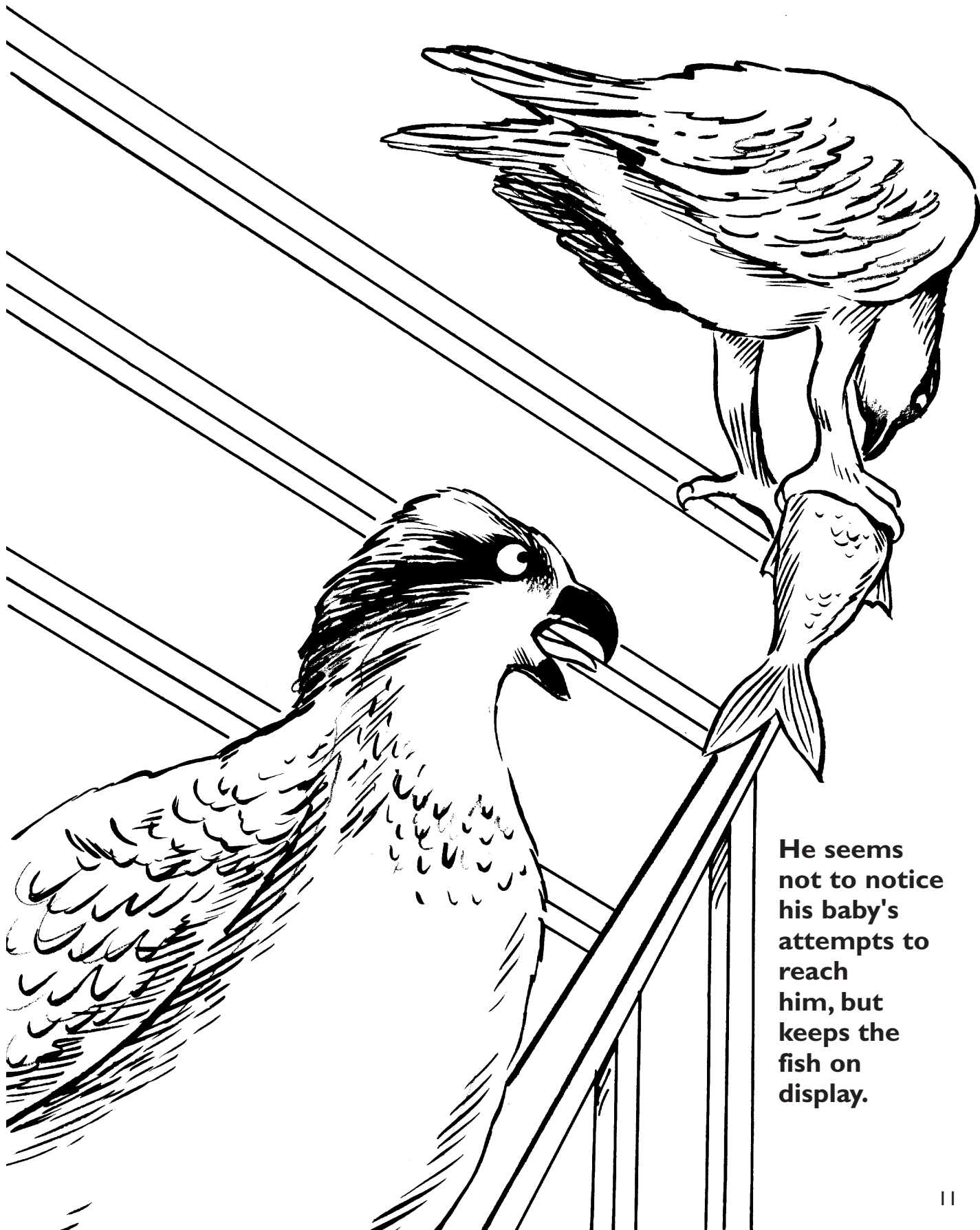


A puff of wind lifts the chick from her nest. She falls toward the water, then saves herself by flapping her wings. She flutters to the unfinished house.

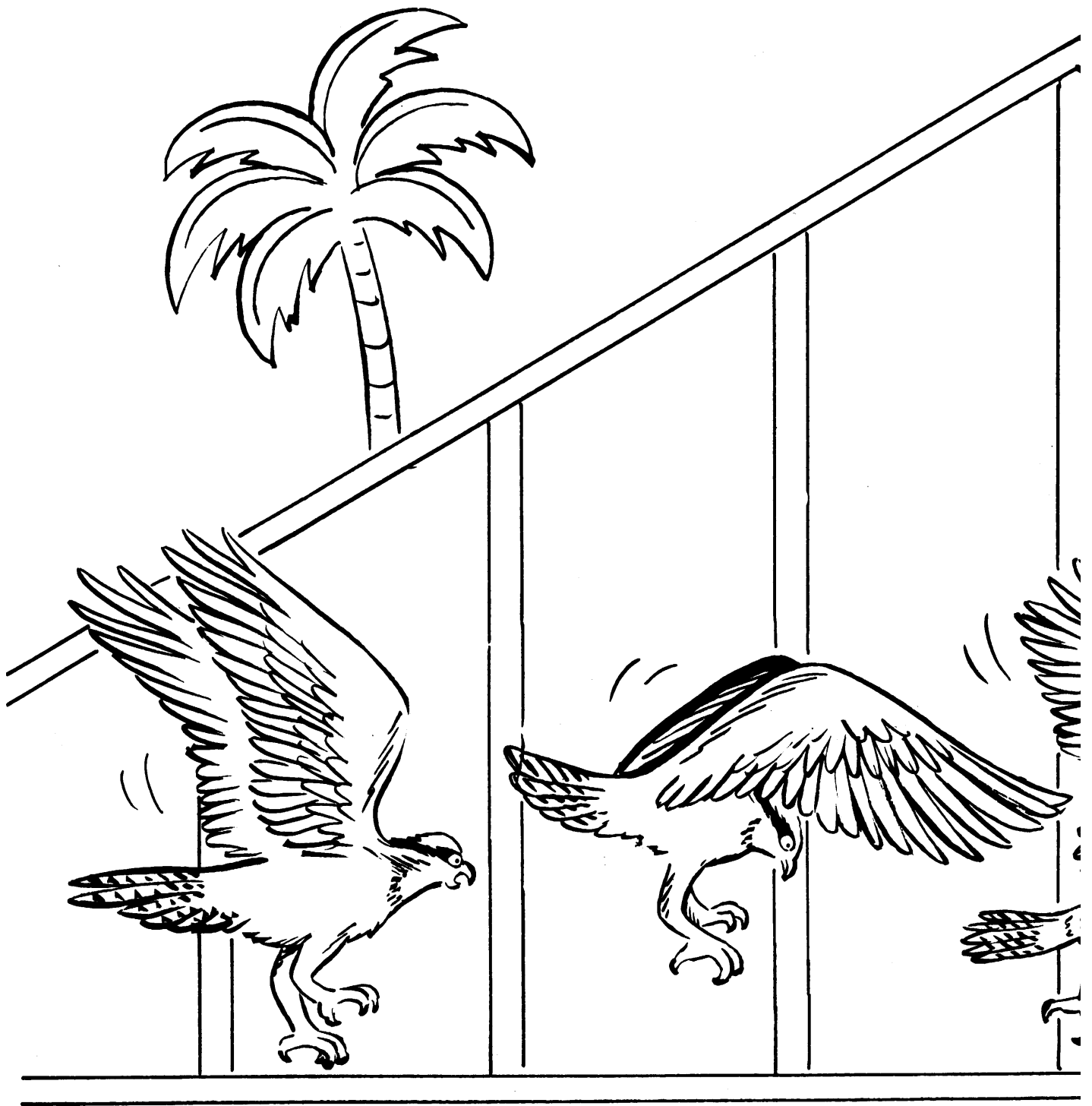




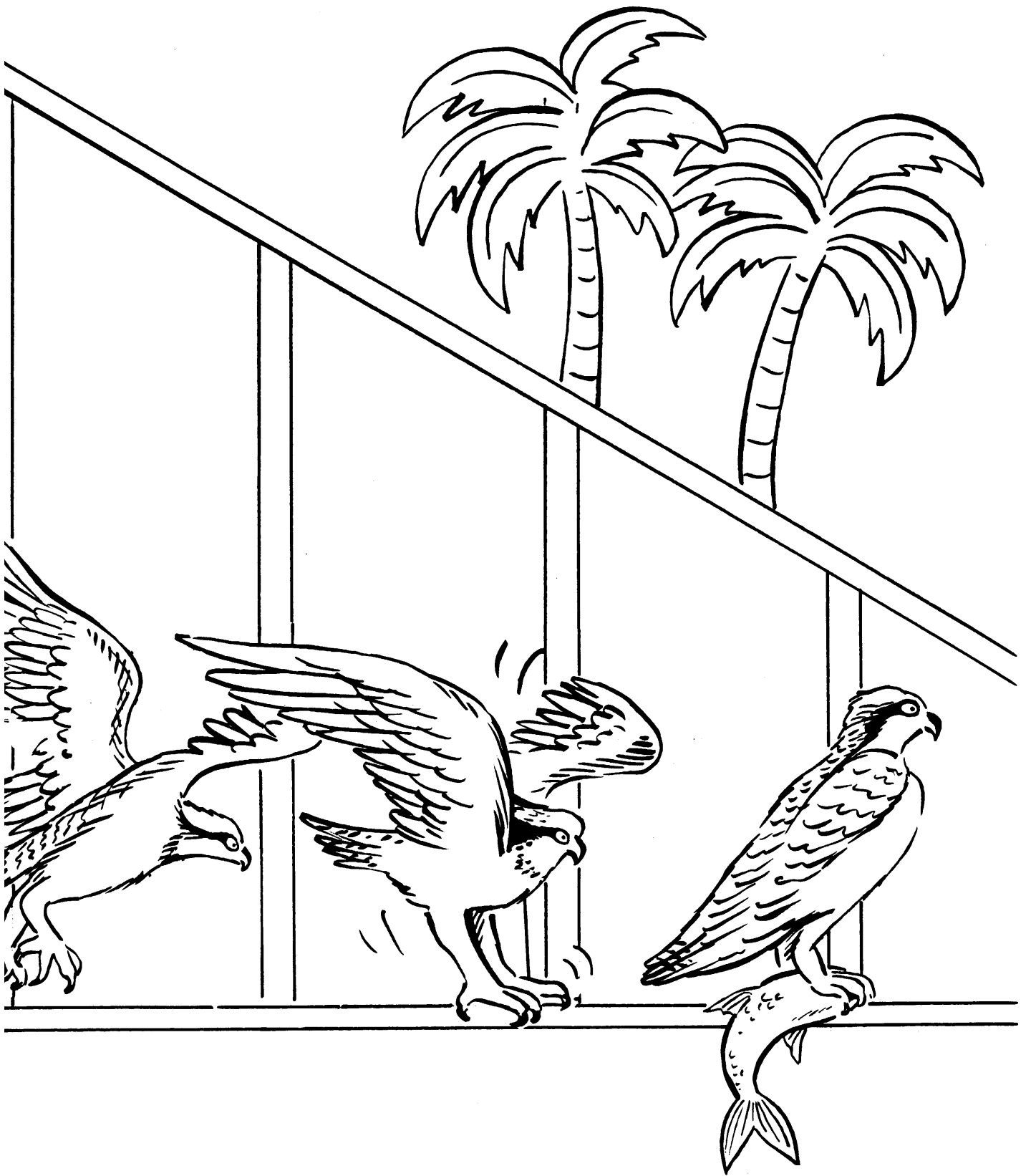
The young hawk lands on a naked beam, then teeters on talon-toes toward her father and the fish.

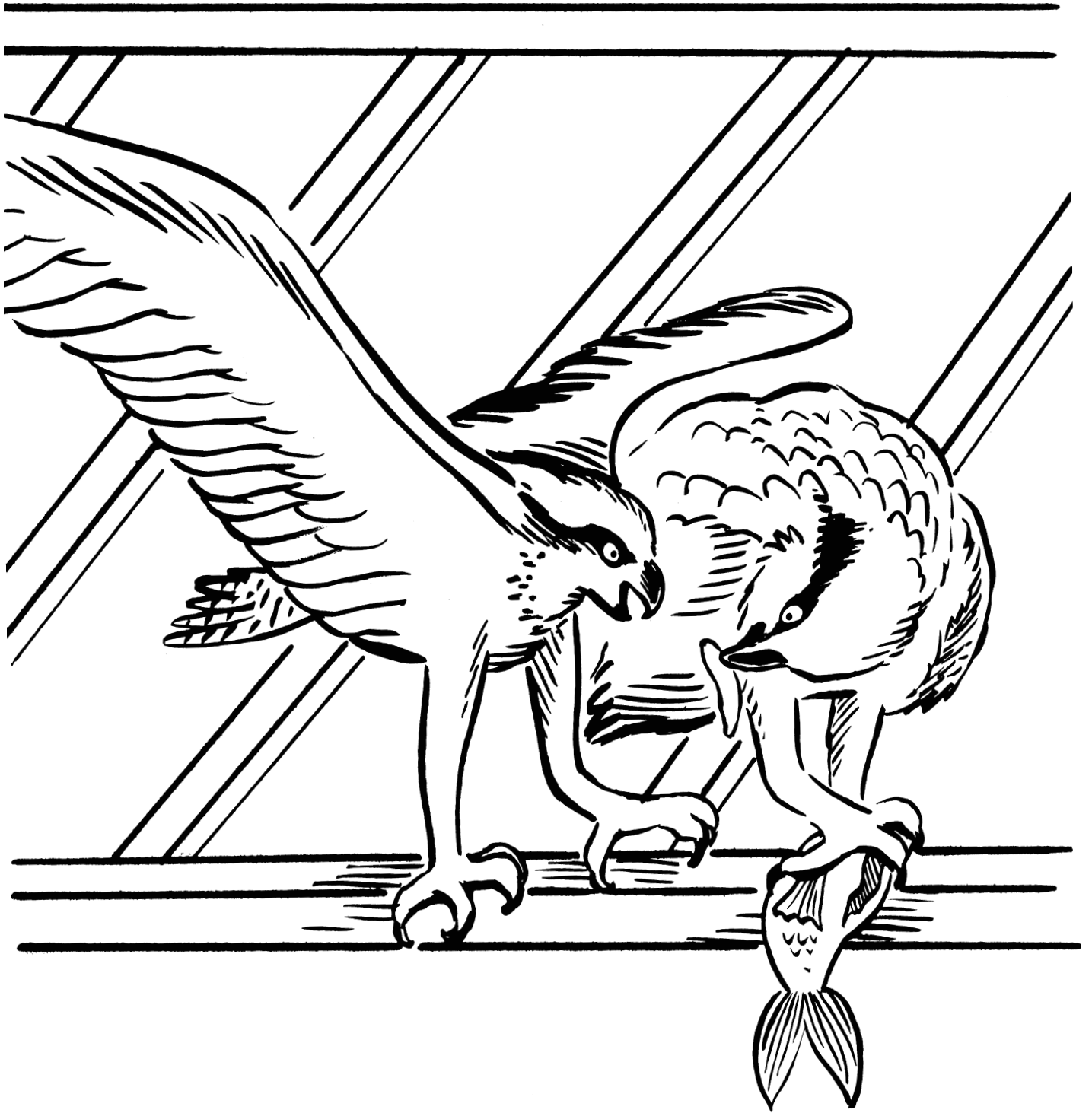


**He seems
not to notice
his baby's
attempts to
reach
him, but
keeps the
fish on
display.**



**She struggles to reach her father
by spreading and folding her wings,
flapping and hopping ever closer to her goal.**





The osprey chick has taken her first flight, and is now a fledgling. When she totters to her father's side, he tears small strips from the fish and places them in her open beak.

What did you learn about ospreys from this book?

The scientific name for the osprey is _____ (page 2).
Ospreys are sometimes called _____ or _____ (page 2).
Ospreys prefer to eat _____ (page 2).
Ospreys are an _____ for the health of local waters (page 2).
Ospreys use _____ to make _____ nests (page 3)
on _____

_____ (page 2).

In the water, they use _____ (page 2).

An osprey chick is as big as its parents at _____ (page 4).

Ospreys weave human objects into their nests, such as _____
_____ (page 4).

Female ospreys lay _____ eggs, which hatch in about _____ days (page 2).

A female osprey is _____ than a male, and often wears a
_____ on her white chest (page 5).

The _____ osprey does most of the incubating (page 2).

Adult ospreys are _____ to _____ inches long and weigh _____ to _____ pounds (page 2).

When osprey chicks fledge, they are _____ as adults, but their
_____ upperpart feathers have _____

and their eyes are _____ (page 2).

Why do you think the osprey chick finally fledged (started to fly)?

After learning about ospreys, do you like them? _____

What is your favorite thing about ospreys? _____

Look Who's Flying is funded by the "Ding" Darling Wildlife Society.

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www.fws.gov/dingdarling

For more information on Ospreys, go to www.ospreys.com



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