



All About Alligators

Los caimanes en la Florida

The American alligator

(Alligator mississippiensis)

- Is a powerful reptile descended from dinosaurs that lived more than 200 million years ago.
- Derives its name from the Spanish word for lizard, *el lagarto*.
- Is a species of special concern in Florida; listed federally as threatened due to its similarity in appearance to the American crocodile.
- Is a cold-blooded animal (ectotherm) like snakes, lizards and turtles, and may not eat for months when temperatures are below 73° F.
- Basks in the sun to warm its scaly body.
- Is darkly colored, with a broad snout and large ridges on its back and tail called scutes (pronounced scoots).
- Lives for 30 to 35 years in the wild; can live for more than 50 years in captivity.
- As a male, can weigh more than 1,000 pounds and grow as long as 19 feet.
- Creates 'gator holes that support fish and other wildlife during the dry season.
- Eats just about anything — fish, birds, turtles, crabs, raccoons, dogs, cats, snakes, dead animals and even other alligators.
- Stalks and drowns or crushes its prey quickly and silently.
- Has jaws strong enough to crush the shell of a turtle.
- Rips and swallows its food but cannot chew.
- Can stay below water for more than 2 hours during winter.
- Swims very fast and is capable of lunging on land.
- Moves on land by lifting its body and walking or running on its toes.
- Lives in fresh and brackish water, including golf course water hazards, canals, lakes, marshes, swamps, rivers, creeks, and ponds.
- Has 4 short legs, with 5 toes on its front feet and 4 webbed toes on its hind feet that assist with swimming.
- Becomes sexually mature at 6 feet in length. Males travel far, in water or on land, to find a mate.
- Constructs a nest of sticks, leaves and mud to incubate her eggs for about 65 days. The temperature of the nest determines the gender of the babies. Lower temperatures produce females; higher temperatures yield males.
- Unlike most female reptiles, guards her nest until her 20 to 50 eggs hatch, and protects her young fiercely.

© 2010, L. Lagarto

***All alligators, wherever
you may encounter them,
are potentially dangerous
and you should avoid them.***

A SPECIAL THANKS
TO OUR SPONSORS:



Sponsored in part by the
State of Florida,
Department of
State, Division of
Cultural Affairs
and the Florida
Council on Arts
and Culture.



Illustrations by
Dave Anderson

CAUTION \$500 FINE



DO NOT:

- Approach
- Feed
- Harass



Alligators live in fresh and brackish water — golf course water hazards, canals, lakes, marshes swamps, rivers, creeks, and ponds — all of which are prevalent in the State of Florida

*Caimánes viven en lagos, canales, ríos, pantanos, campos de golf
y en otros sitios con agua fresca o ligeramente salada*

THE AMAZING ALLIGATOR

How big can he get?

100 pounds

15 feet

250 pounds

19 feet

500 pounds

23 feet

750 pounds

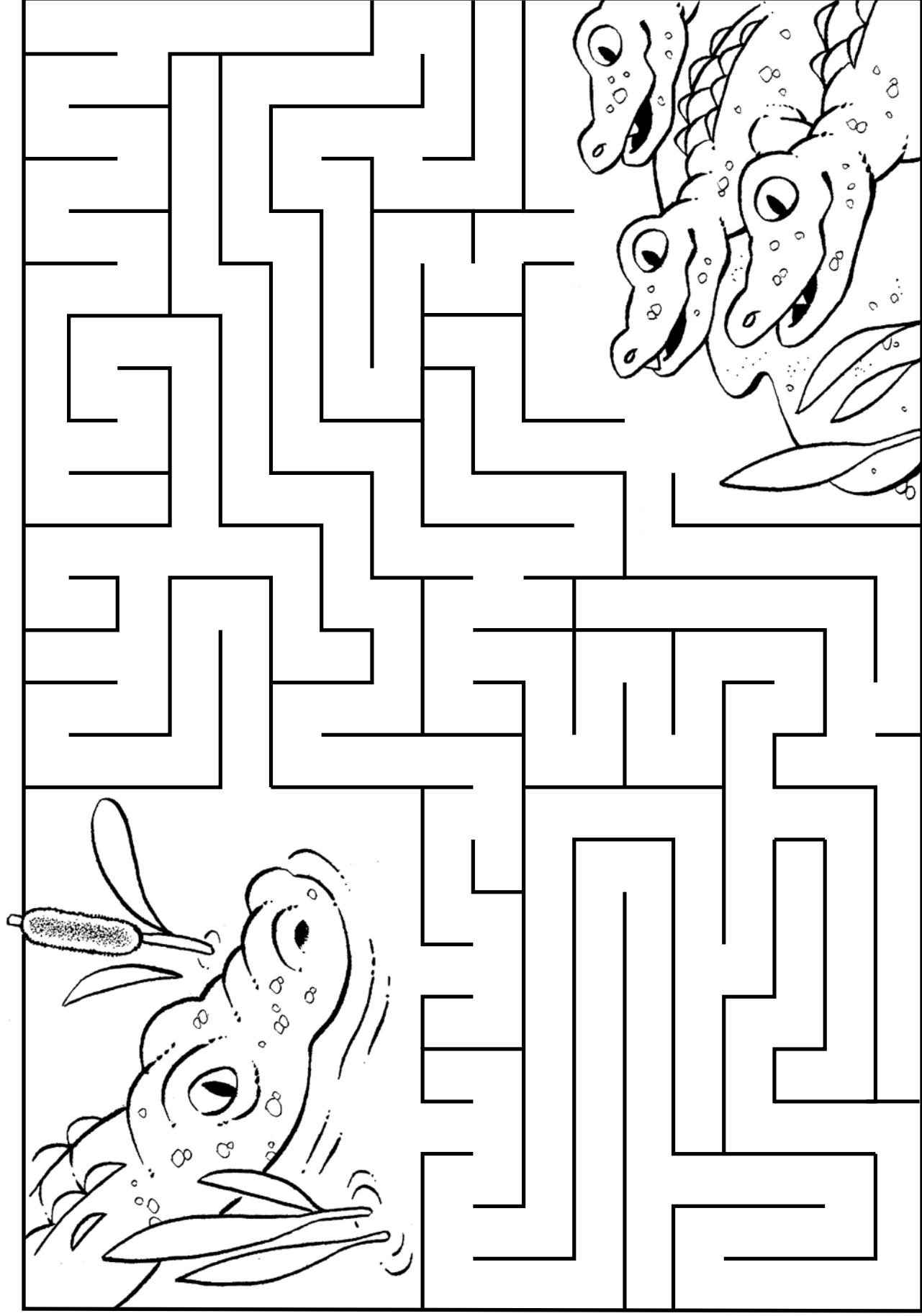
27 feet

1,000 pounds

31 feet

Answers on page 2





Female alligators protect their nests and young

Una mamá protégé su hábitat y sus crías



Alligators can't tell the difference between food and the hand that offers it

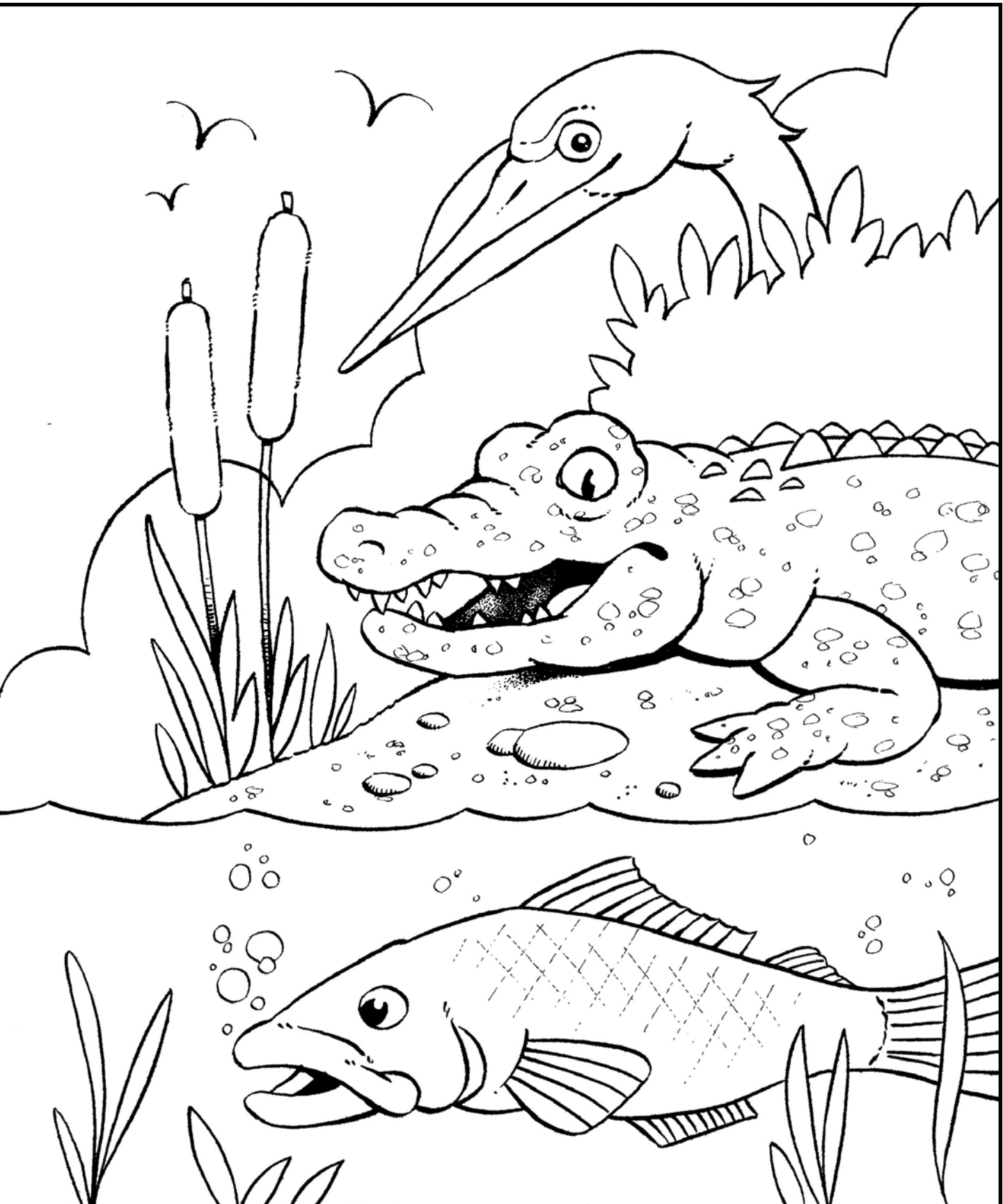
Caimánes no saben la diferencia entre comida y la mano que ofrece esa comida



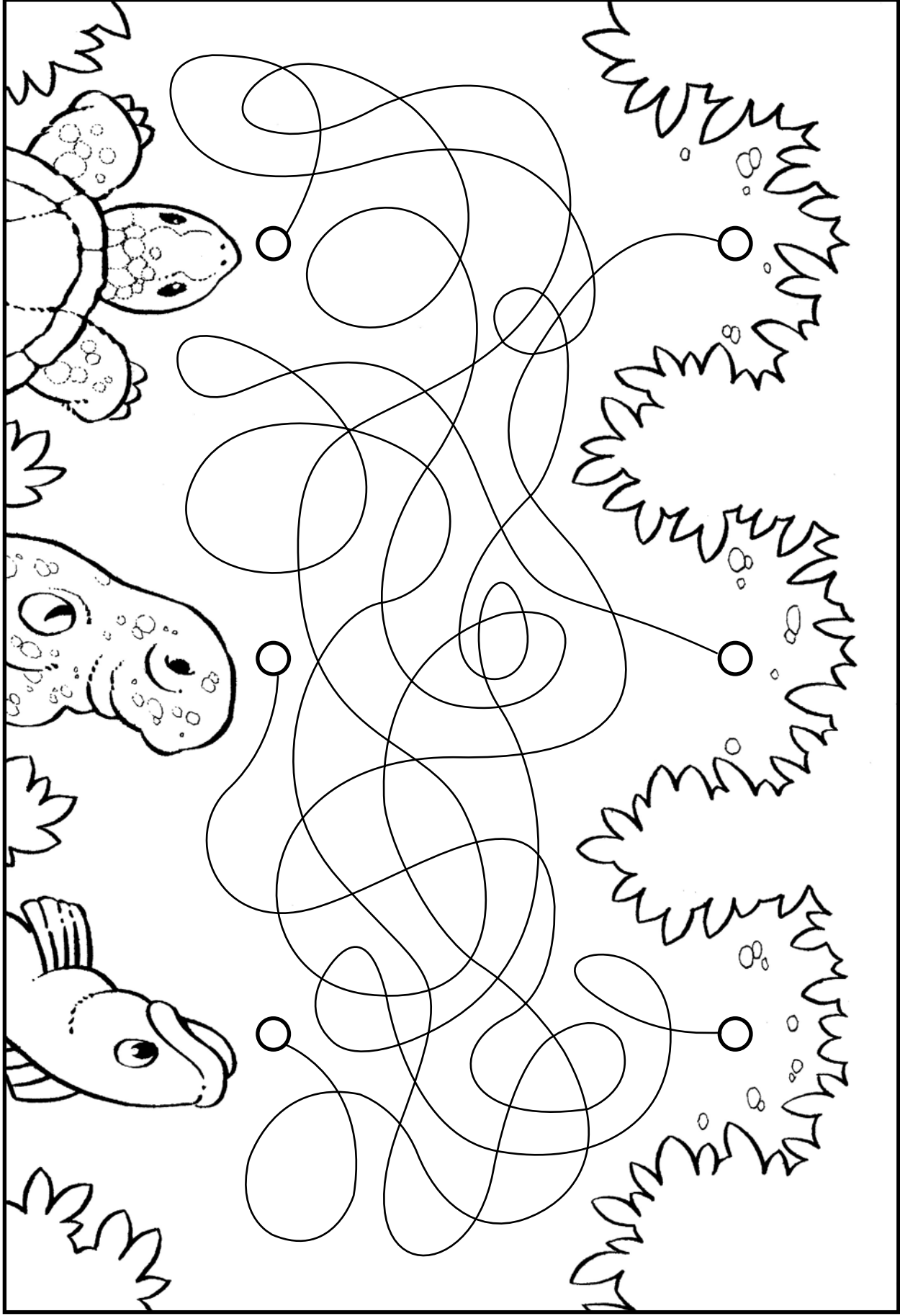
Hand-fed alligators lose their fear of humans

Caimánes no tienen miedo a las personas quienes les dan comida

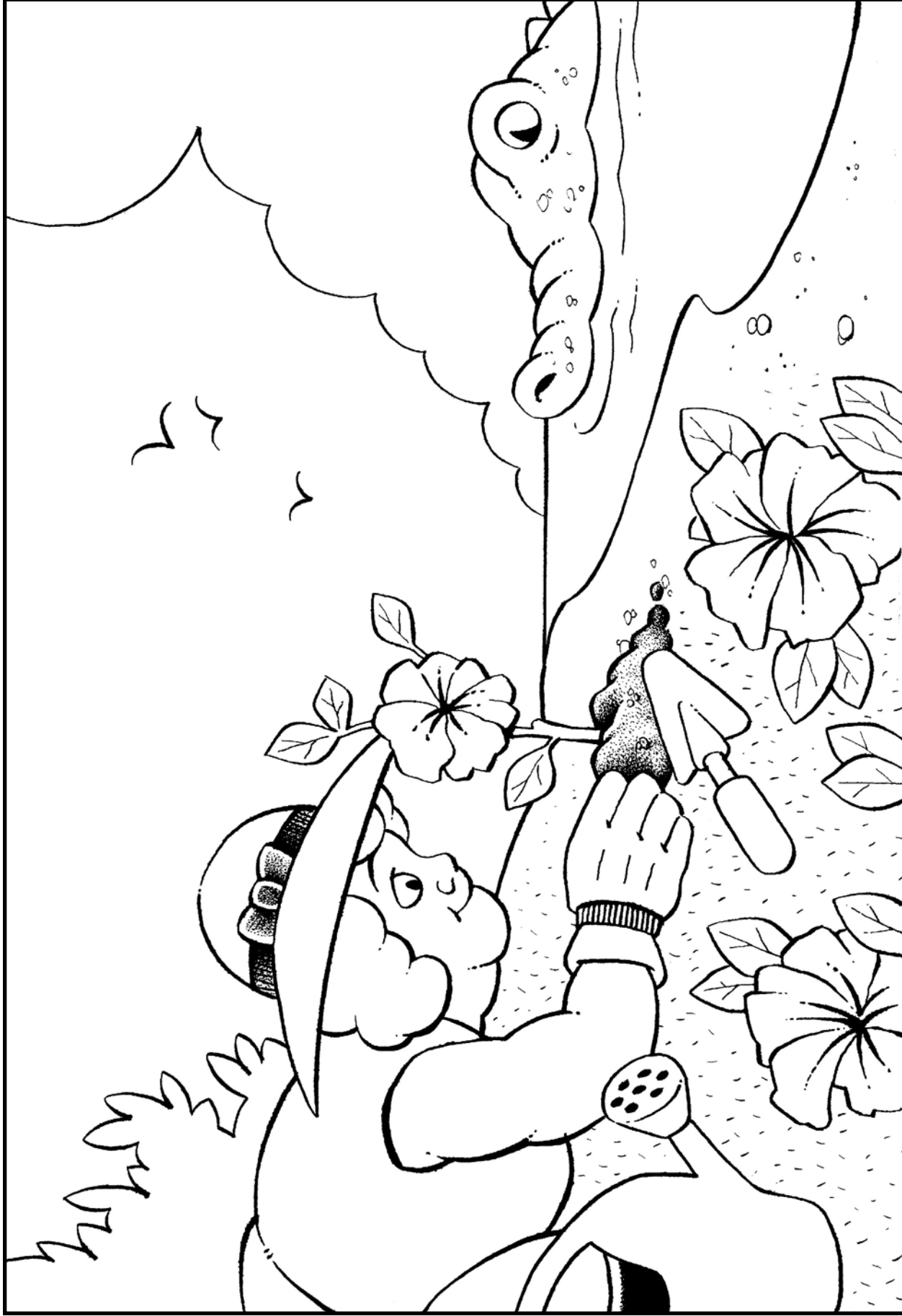




Como dueños del pantano, caimanes mantienen un equilibrio sobre especies. Ellos encuentran comida en sus hábitates y no necesitan que seres humanos les den comida.

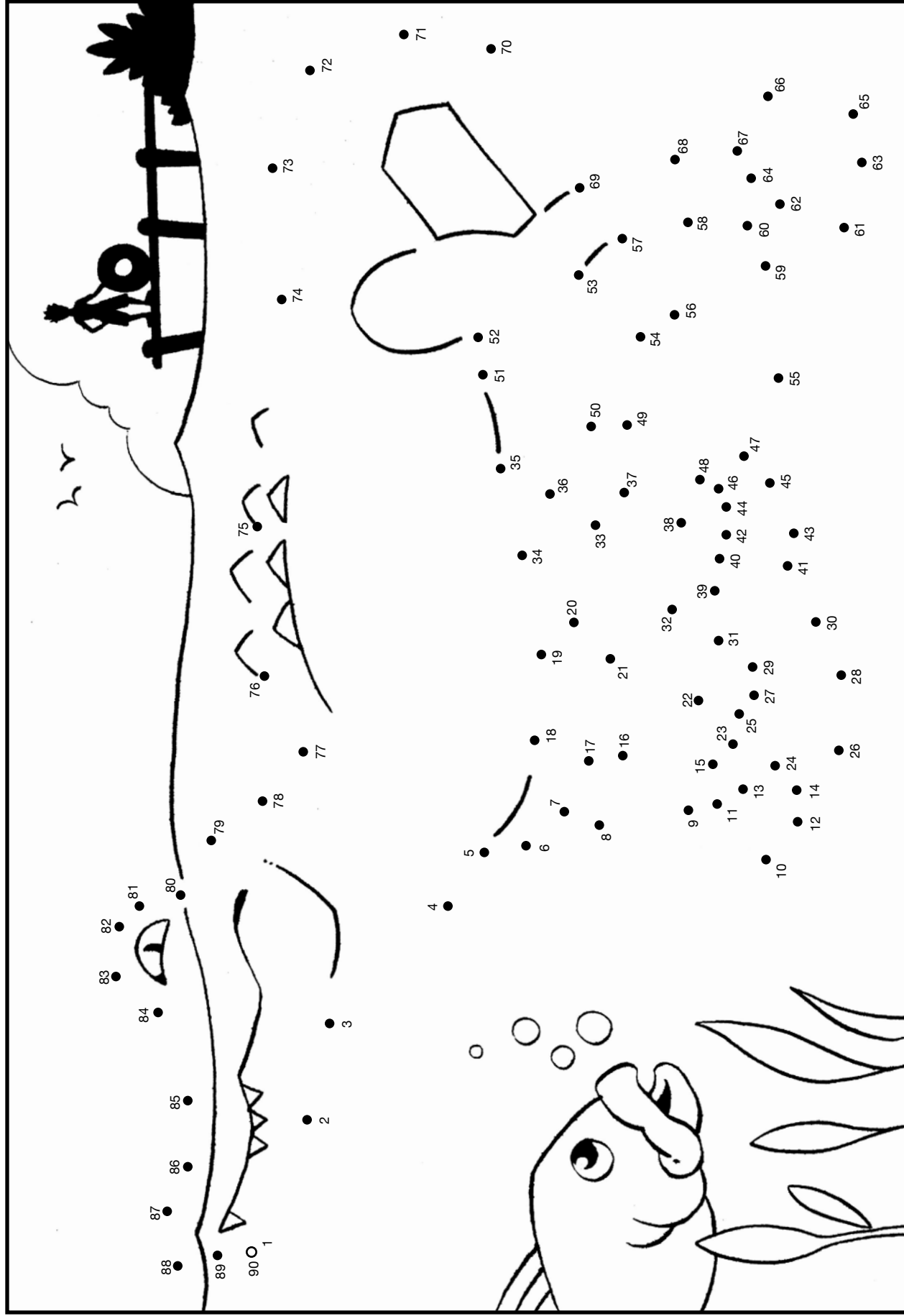


Many animals use 'gator holes during the dry season
Muchos animales usan hoyos donde viven caimanes cuando hay sequías



Avoid approaching alligators or crouching near fresh/brackish water

No te acercas a los caimanes o a los lugares donde ellos viven



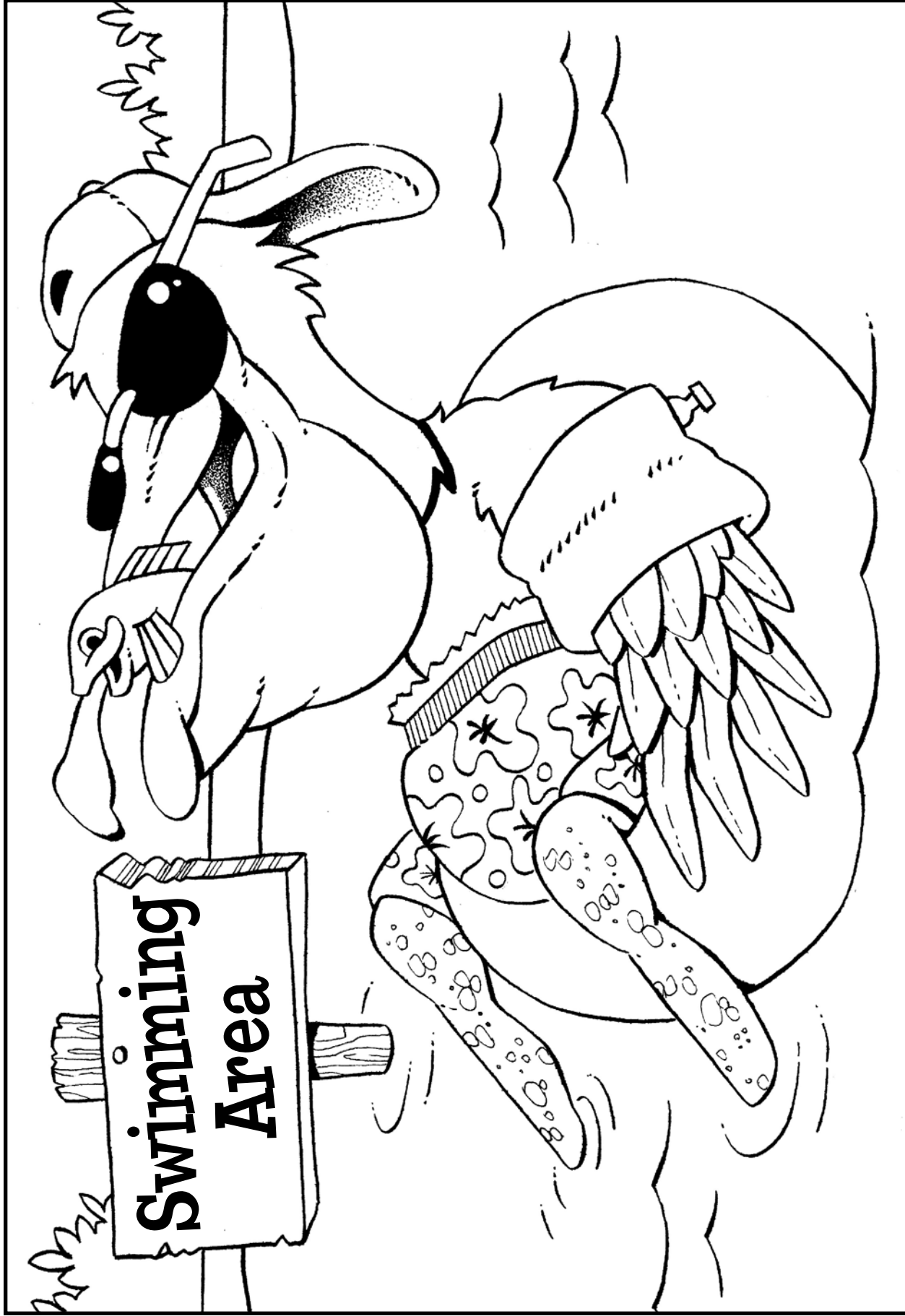
Children should never play near or in brackish/fresh water

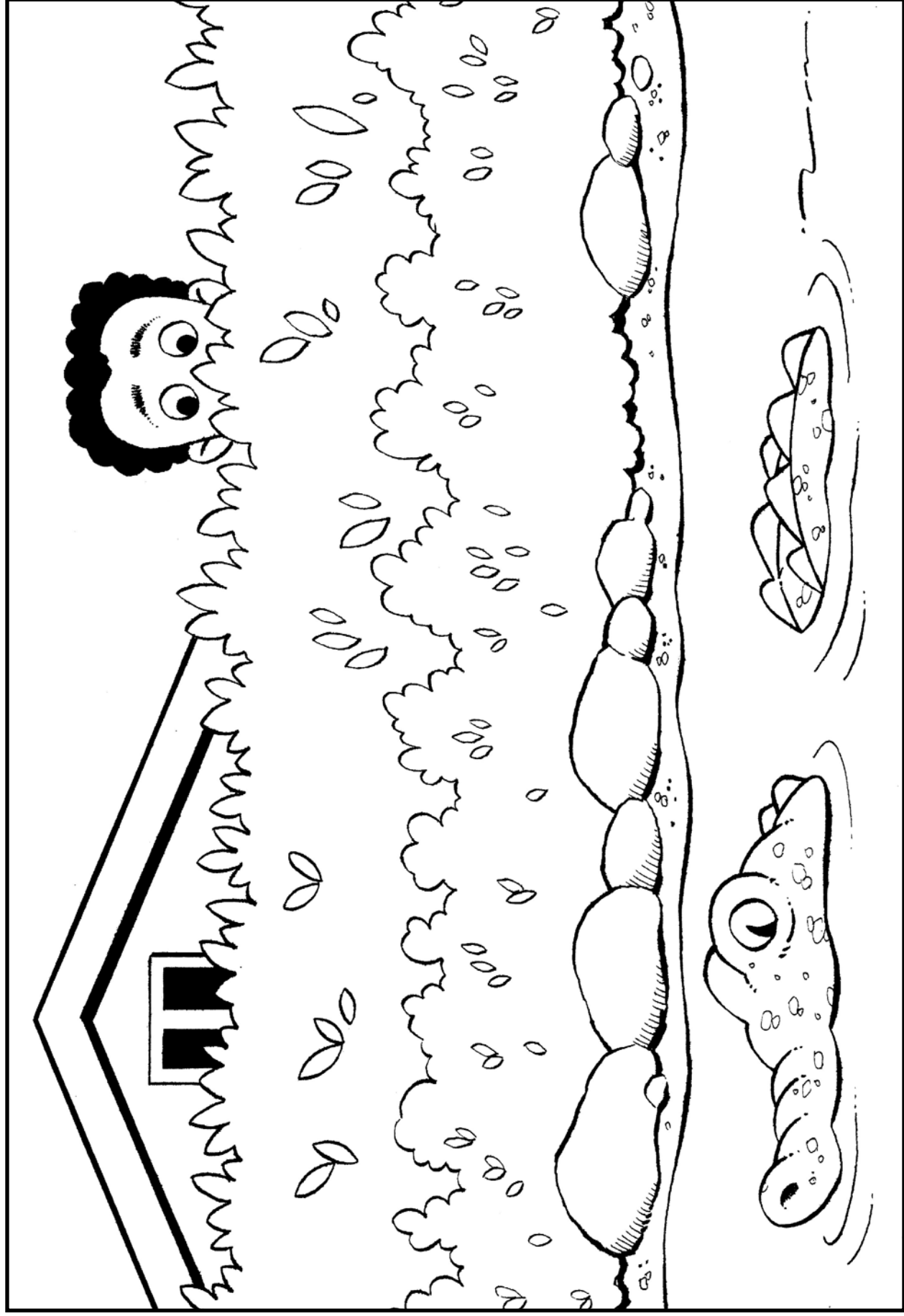
Niños nunca deben de jugar en agua fresca o ligeramente salada. No deben de jugar cerca de estos sitios tampoco.



Pets should be leashed and kept away from fresh/brackish water

No dejas que tu perro o animal doméstico se acerque a agua fresca o ligeramente salada





Dense vegetation along fresh/brackish water discourages alligators from entering your yard

Vegetación tupida a lo largo de agua fresca o ligeramente salada puede impedir a los caimanes de entrar a tu patio



A hand-fed alligator...cannot tell the difference between a piece of food and the hand that offers it...loses its fear of humans...becomes a nuisance...will be trapped and destroyed. This powerful reptile may attack anything or anybody that enters its territory, so pets and humans of all ages must stay away from fresh and brackish water everywhere in Florida.

For more information, visit www.MyFWC.com/gators

The End

Contrary to popular belief, a human cannot elude an alligator by running in a zig-zag pattern.