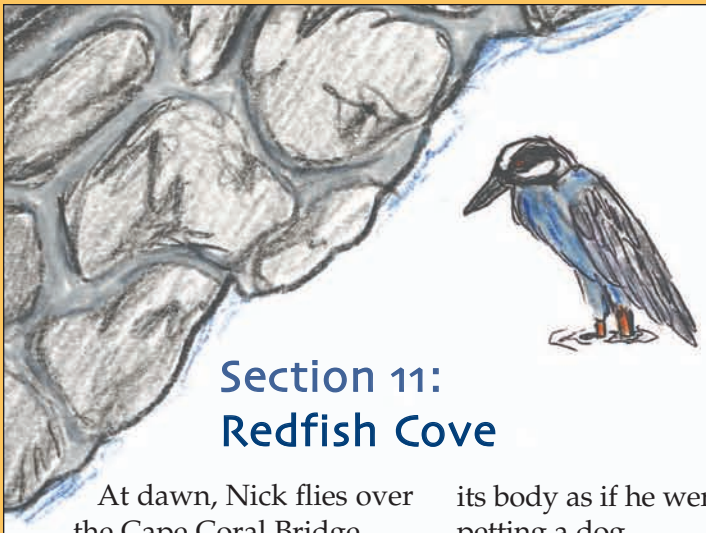


Section 11: Redfish Cove

At dawn, Nick flies over the Cape Coral Bridge. He passes the boat ramp at Peppertree Pointe and flies into the shadows beneath the fishing pier. He hears people walking and sees lines from fishing poles in the water.

A boy pulls up a fish on his hook. Nick hears people crowding around. The boy says, "Hey, Mom. What kind of fish is this?"

"I don't know, but it's beautiful," his mom says.

The boy persists, "I want to know what kind of fish it is."

The fish wiggles, and drops of water from the fish fall near Nick.

A man says, "That's a redfish. This stretch of water is full of them. It's called Redfish Cove."

The woman asks, "Is it good to eat?"

The man nods his head. "Yes, ma'am, but it's not big enough to keep."

The woman says, "Such a beautiful fish. Throw it back, son."

The boy slips the fish from the hook. He strokes its body as if he were petting a dog.

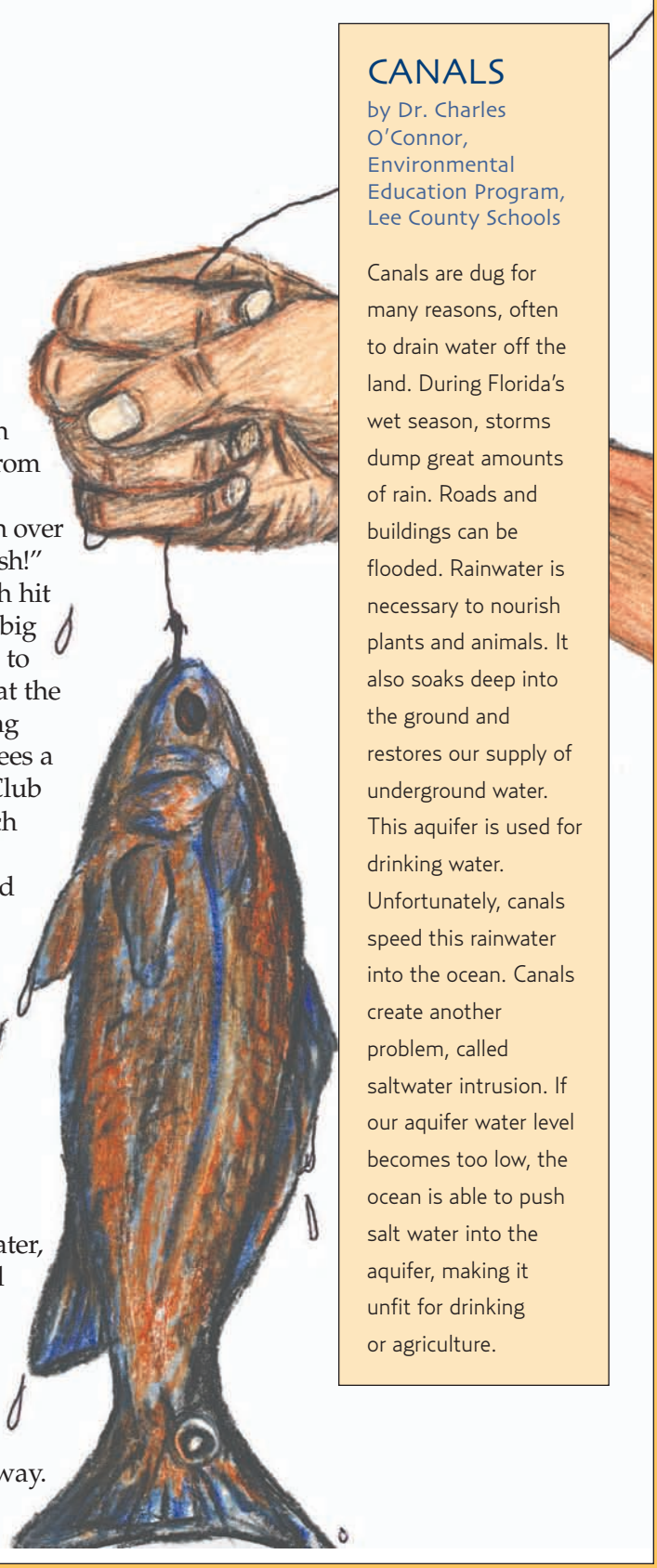
The man says, "You shouldn't rub a fish like that. It can hurt a special film on the skin that protects the fish from getting sick."

The boy flings the fish over the railing. "Bye, bye, fish!"

Nick watches the fish hit the water, but it is too big for him to eat. He flies to the roof of the shelter at the end of the pier. Looking toward the shore, he sees a restaurant, the Yacht Club Community Park beach and a playground. Children sound as loud as gulls as they play.

On either side of the beach are seawalls. They contain the lawns of houses and form the banks of Cape Coral's canals. Nick turns to the river. Large and small boats zoom inside the channel. Across the water, he sees big houses and buildings. The river seems as wide as a lake or bay.

When Nick hears footsteps walking toward him, he flies away.



CANALS

by Dr. Charles O'Connor, Environmental Education Program, Lee County Schools

Canals are dug for many reasons, often to drain water off the land. During Florida's wet season, storms dump great amounts of rain. Roads and buildings can be flooded. Rainwater is necessary to nourish plants and animals. It also soaks deep into the ground and restores our supply of underground water. This aquifer is used for drinking water. Unfortunately, canals speed this rainwater into the ocean. Canals create another problem, called saltwater intrusion. If our aquifer water level becomes too low, the ocean is able to push salt water into the aquifer, making it unfit for drinking or agriculture.