

Easton's Great Adventure

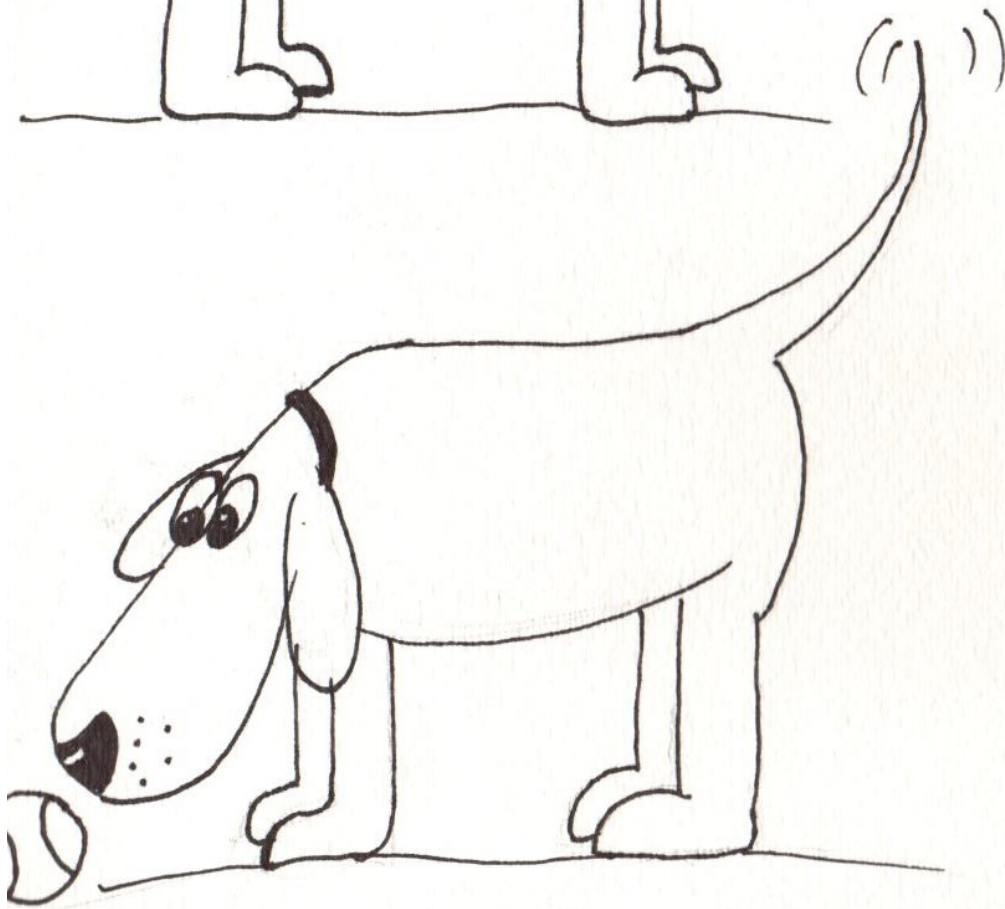
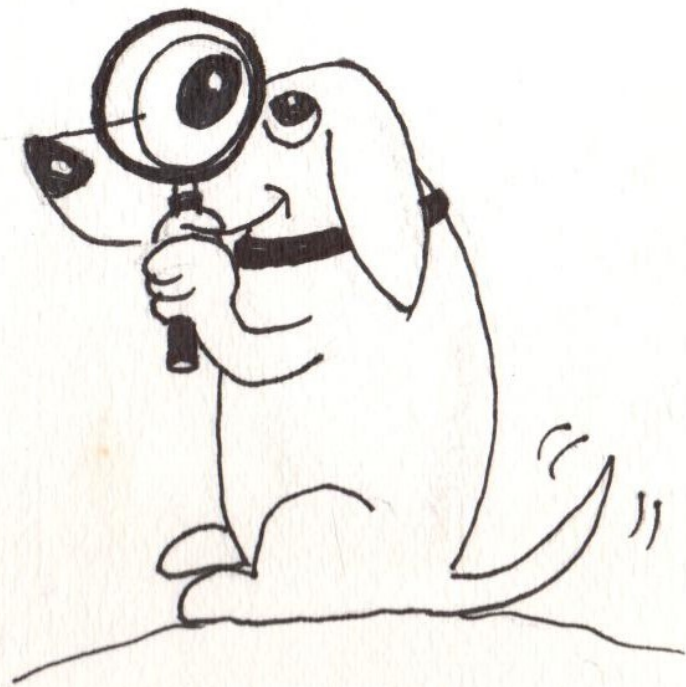
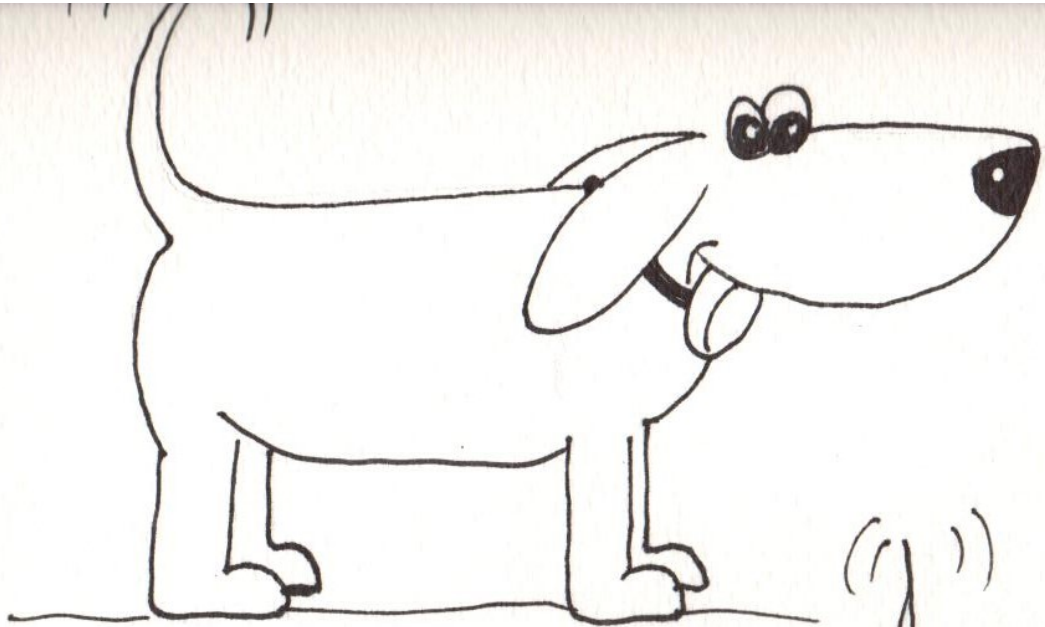
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Illustrated by Jennifer McCoy

Easton the dog, like many dogs, was very curious. Easton loved other animals and wanted to know where and how they lived.

Easton decided to go on an adventure to discover different animals and their *habitats*. He also wanted to see how their *characteristics* helped them survive in their special homes.

He got into his jet so he could go fast and find *habitats* on every continent around the world.



Easton began his adventure in the African savanna, where it was very hot. This *habitat* was very dry and rains come from January to April.

While there, Easton noticed an animal with interesting *characteristics*. It had a very long, spotted neck, wrapping its dark, purple tongue around a leaf.

“What kind of animal are you?” Easton asked.

“I am a giraffe,” the animal responded.

The giraffe was very shy but kind and friendly to Easton.

**See question 1. A



All of a sudden, Easton saw a black and white animal galloping across the plain towards a water hole. The animal was a zebra, traveling in a group with other zebras.

“Why did you run so fast to the watering hole?” asked Easton.

“We need to get water before other animals drink it all up. It rarely rains and this may be our only water for many days,” the zebras responded, “Also, predators may be looking for water and we need to drink before they get here and chase us.”



Easton had seen many animals in Africa. He decided to leave and go to the Amazon rainforest in South America. This *habitat* has many plants, vines, and bushes. It also rains often and is hot and humid.

The first animal he met in the rainforest was a bright colored frog.

“Don’t touch me!” said the frog, “I am a poison dart frog and if you touch me you might die.”

Easton was shocked! The frog was tiny, but it could still kill something as big as a dog.



While he was talking to the frog, a jaguar snuck up on them. When the frog saw the jaguar, he used his sticky legs to quickly climb up a tree.

He yelled at Easton, “Run! The jaguar is coming! The jaguar is coming!”

Easton ran for his life. The jaguar’s orange fur with black spots covering its body and long white whiskers made it difficult to spot between the plants and trees.

Easton felt lucky the frog pointed it out so he could escape the dangerous jaguar.



Easton was safe from the jaguar, but now he was lost.

“Help!” he yelled, hoping someone would help him find his way back to his jet.

Easton climbed high into a tree and looked through the thick jungle, searching for it. After some time he found his jet in a clearing.



Easton made it to his jet and took off to the Rocky Mountains of North America where the habitat consists of high mountains and many pine trees.

The *habitat* can be very cold and receives a lot of snow in the winter. When he arrived, it was dark so he found a cave to sleep in. Halfway through the night, Easton heard a “Grumph” come from the back of the cave.

It was a six-foot tall brown grizzly bear hibernating for winter.

Easton quietly sneaked out so the bear wouldn't wake up and hurt him.

He would have to sleep in another cave.



As Easton scaled his way down the mountain he met a mountain goat who was much faster at climbing than him. The mountain goat had long creamy hair, a little white beard, and two black horns.

“How do you climb so fast?” Easton asked.

“I have tiny hooves that fit into tight places and I look two steps ahead to plan where I am going,” the mountain goat replied.

“Thank you,” said Easton, as he could now climb faster, but still not as well as the mountain goat because his feet were too big. Because

they were large, Easton's feet would not fit into as many places as the mountain goat's.



Easton decided to leave the cold mountains and fly to a warmer *habitat*, the outback of Australia. There, he met a tall kangaroo who had brown fur and could jump so high he could jump over Easton.

“Is that a pocket on your stomach?”* asked Easton.

“No, it is a pouch to carry my children in,” the kangaroo responded.

“What a clever place to put your child. I can see there are not a lot of hiding spots around here,” said Easton.

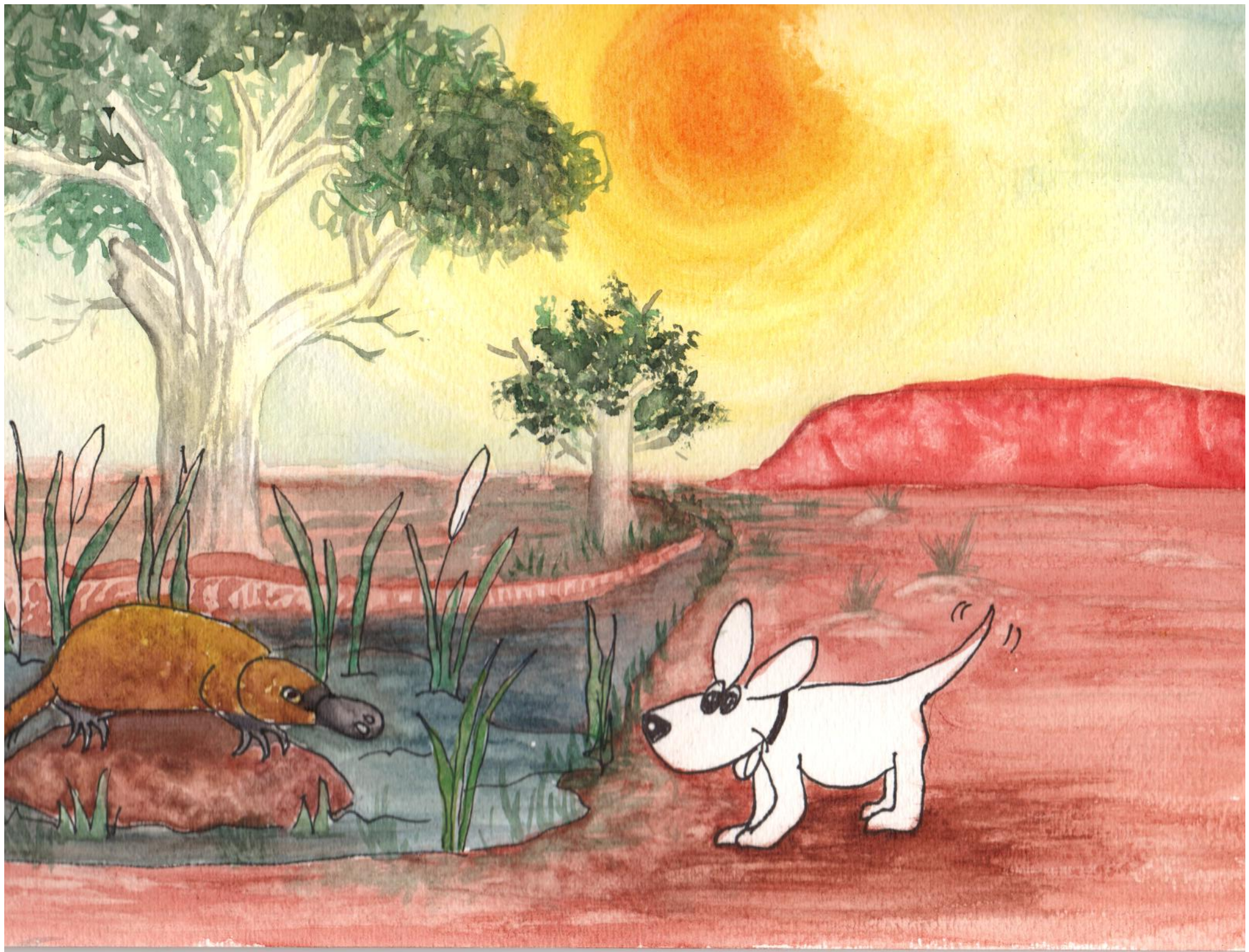
**See question 2



As Easton explored Australia he came upon a platypus in a marshy *habitat*. The platypus had brown fur, webbed feet, a beaver tail, and a great big bill like a duck.

“Since you are a very special animal you must be hunted. How do you protect yourself?” asked Easton.

“I have poison in the heel of my back legs that I can sting predators with,” responded the platypus.



Easton loved *Australia*, but he needed to continue his adventure, so he flew to the bamboo forests of central China. There, in a mountainous *habitat*, he found a white and black giant panda that weighed almost two hundred and fifty pounds. This panda is very rare, there are very few giant pandas left in the wild.

The panda was lying on the forest floor eating bamboo when Easton asked, “How do you eat something as big and hard as bamboo?”

“I have larger molar teeth than any carnivore. I also have a stomach with a layer of mucus to protect me. These allow me to eat bamboo,” the panda replied.



Easton headed south to the Himalayan Mountains on the border of China and Nepal. The Himalayas are the largest mountains in the world and are very dangerous.* Easton tried to make his way over the mountains but they were far too cold and steep.

Just before he gave up crossing the mountains he met a yak with long white hair and two horns like a bull.

“Could you help me cross the mountains?” Easton asked.

“Yes I can, climb on my back. I help humans cross these mountains all the time and you are much lighter. My fur will warm you and my small hooves will help me stay balanced,” the yak replied.

“Thank you,” said Easton.

**See question 3.



Easton decided to visit Europe next. He arrived in the French Alps. This *habitat* has large mountains that are very jagged and covered in snow.

High in the mountains he came across a lynx. The lynx was grey with black spots on it and a very interesting *characteristic* was a beard with two points. Lynx are large cats that are very similar to bobcats and European lynx are usually larger than those in North America.

“Why do you have black fur coming out the tips of your ears?”

Easton asked.

“Those tufts of hair act as hearing aids and let me hear well for hunting,” the lynx replied.



Easton had been all around the world but there was one final continent and it was under the world, Antarctica.

Antarctica was an extremely cold *habitat*, but Easton still needed to find and meet animals of this final continent.

He first found a group of penguins, huddled together to get warm. The penguins were emperor penguins and were very tall. Their coats were black, white and very shiny. Each penguin had a child huddled underneath them.

“Where are all the male penguins?” Easton asked one penguin.

“We are the male penguins. The females went to the ocean to get food after giving birth,” the penguin replied.



Easton left the penguins and went back to the plane. When he got there, he found it was out of gas. He was stuck in Antarctica!

“Help!” Easton yelled. Just then a giant bird flew overhead and landed to see what the problem was. The bird was a beautiful white with black lines around its wings and a bright orange beak.

“What kind of bird are you?” asked Easton.

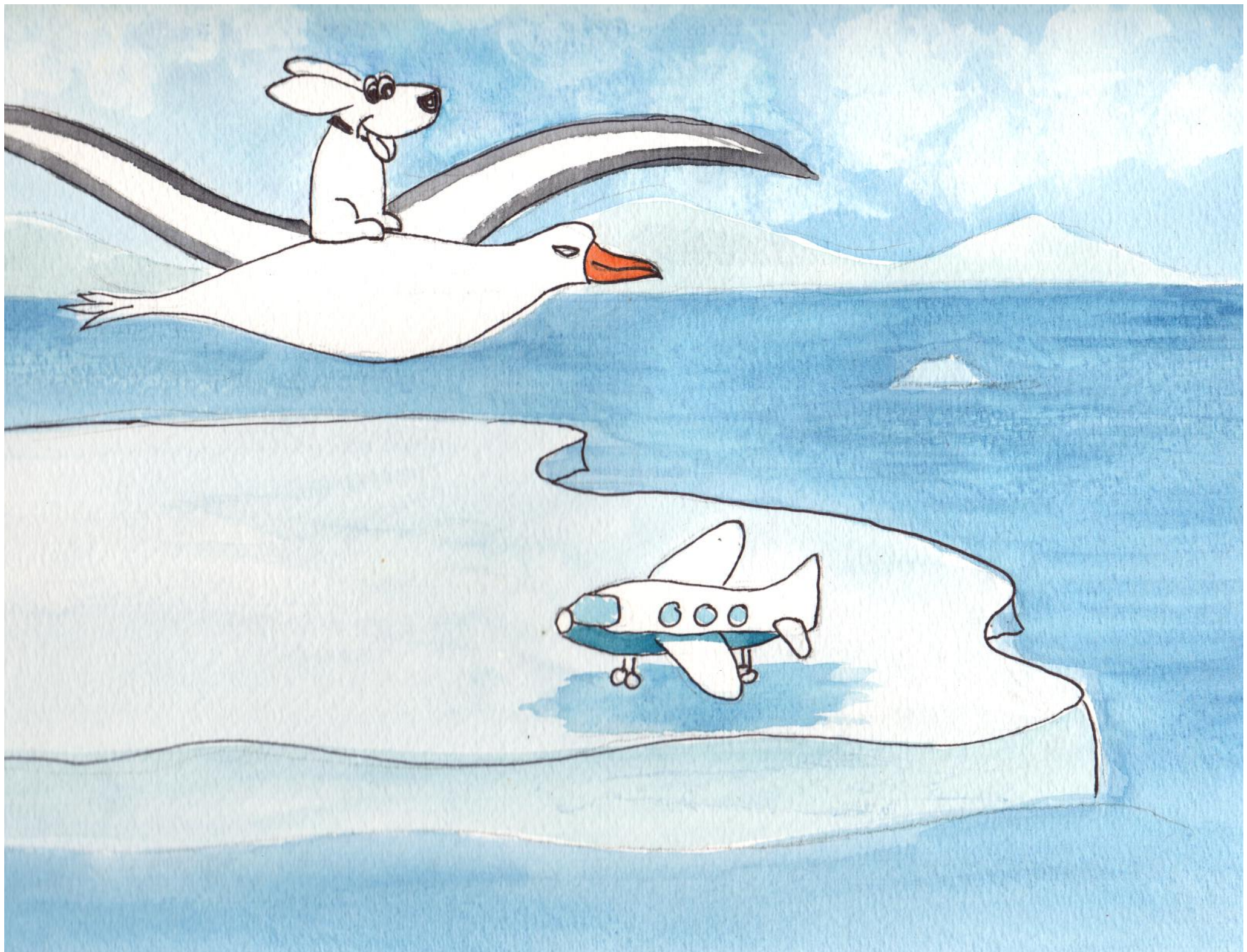
“I am an albatross,” the bird replied. “Can I help you in any way?”

“No, not unless you happen to have fuel for a plane on you,” Easton said sadly.

“I don’t have fuel, but I could fly you wherever you need,” the albatross said.

“Really! That would be fantastic,” Easton said joyfully.

As the two took off and started home, Easton thought of how nice it would be to sleep in his own bed.



Easton returned home to his doghouse and remembered all the fantastic animals he had met on his journey around the world.

Easton had learned about many *habitats*, and *characteristics* that help animals survive in them on his epic adventure.

Easton's adventure had been a lot of fun, but he was glad to be home in his warm doghouse under the tree in the backyard.



Glossary (from wordsmyth.net)

Habitat - the natural environment of an animal or plant.

Characteristic - something that makes a person or thing different from others.

Herbivore - an animal that only feeds on plants.

Carnivore - an animal that eats the flesh of other animals.

Continent - one of the earth's seven largest areas of land.

Outback - remote, rural areas, esp. in Australia and New Zealand

Savanna - a flat plain covered with grass and few trees.

Predator - an animal that hunts other animals for food.

Marsh - a low, wet area, often thick with tall grasses

Himalayan Mountains - a mountain range between India and Tibet that includes the world's highest mountain peaks.

Bamboo - a tropical grass plant that has hard, woody, hollow stems.

Mucus - a slimy, slightly sticky material that coats and protects certain parts of the body, such as the inside of the nose and throat.

Rainforest - a dense evergreen forest, mostly found in tropical areas, that receives a large amount of rain all year long.

Interactive Questions:

Question 1: How does having a long neck help a giraffe survive in its natural habitat?

Answer: Having a long neck helps giraffes eat leaves high in trees.

Question 2: How is a pouch a useful characteristic for kangaroos?

Answer: It carries, nurtures, and protects young kangaroo from predators

Question 3: Do you know the highest mountain in the world?

Answer: Mt. Everest in the Himalayas.