

Great Blue Herons

Great blue herons are large water birds. Some may stand as much as four feet tall. They are blue-gray with long legs, long neck, and a spear-like bill. When the adults are ready to breed, they grow a plume of black feathers on the back on their heads. Great blue herons usually breed in colonies containing a few to several hundred pairs. Nest building begins in February. The male chooses a nesting territory high up in a tree and displays to attract a female. The male gathers sticks for the female. She makes them into a platform nest lined with small twigs, bark strips, and pine needles. She will lay three to five eggs that both of them will incubate for 25–29 days. When the chicks hatch, both parents care for them. They both regurgitate food for the young. The young can first fly at about 60 days old. Great blue herons choose new mates each year.

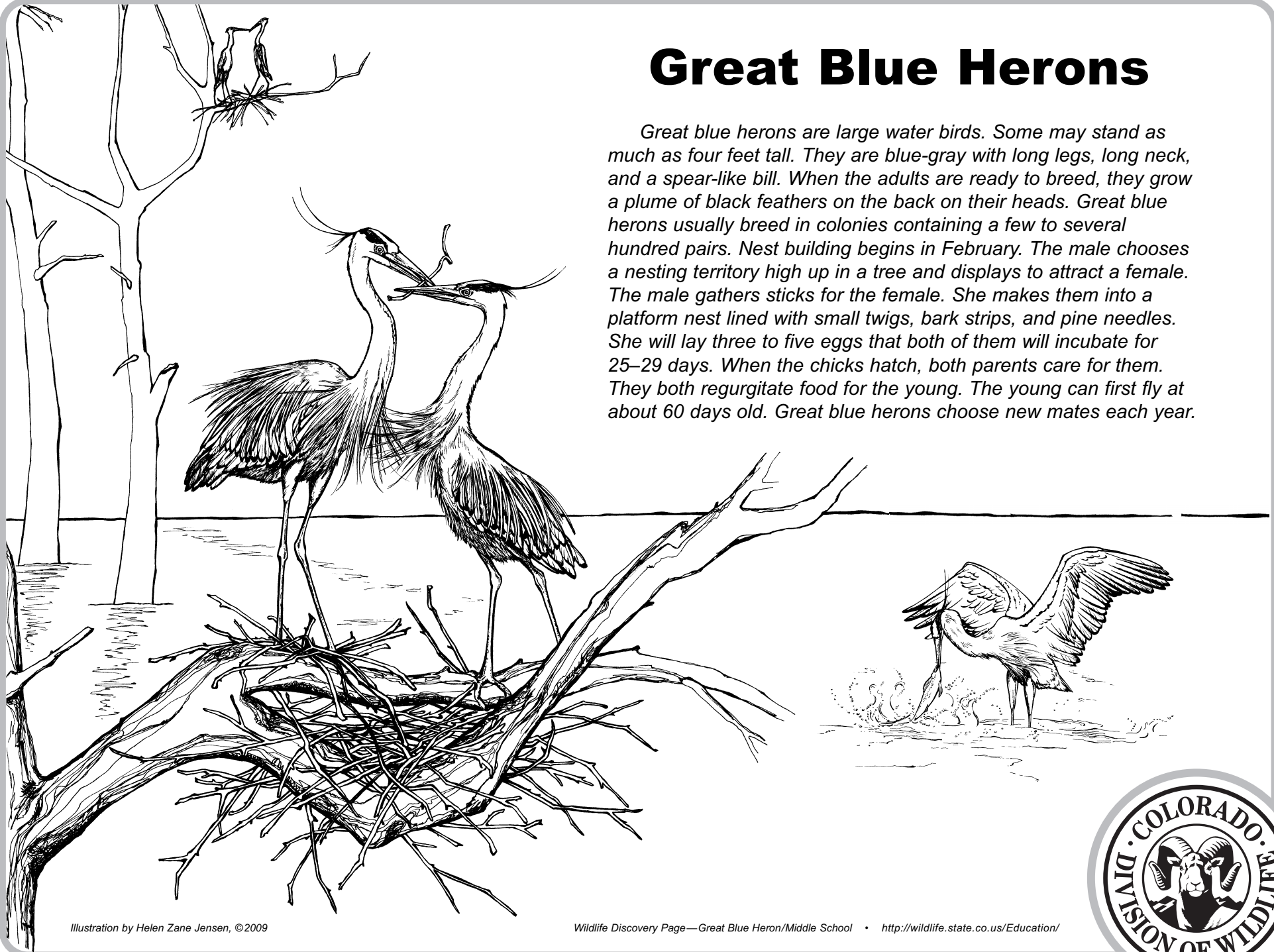


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