

The Boy and the Pelican



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Leo was a curious boy with light-brown skin and short curly black hair. He wore a bright yellow t-shirt, blue shorts, and a red baseball cap. On Saturday, he packed a small green backpack with a notebook and pencil. Today, he and his mom were going to visit the wetlands. Leo loved birds and couldn't wait to see them up close.



The wetlands were full of sounds and colors. Tall green reeds swayed in the breeze, and dragonflies zipped over the water. Leo's mom wore a light green blouse and a straw sun hat, and she carried a camera around her neck. She smiled as Leo opened his notebook. "Look at all the birds!" Leo said, his big round brown eyes wide with wonder.



A tall park ranger in a khaki uniform and wide-brimmed hat greeted them. He had deep brown skin and a kind, wrinkled smile. "Welcome to the wetlands!" he said. "I'm Ranger Joe. Would you like to see our pelicans?" Leo nodded eagerly, and they followed the ranger along a wooden boardwalk. Leo held his pencil tight, ready to draw.



Ranger Joe pointed to a large white bird gliding over the water. It had a long orange beak with a big throat pouch. "That's a pelican," he said. "It scoops up fish with its pouch." Leo watched the pelican land gracefully on the water. He quickly sketched the bird in his notebook, writing "pelican" in big letters.



Ranger Joe explained that pelicans need healthy wetlands to find food and build nests. "Wetlands are like a busy city for birds," he said. "Hérons, ducks, and frogs live here too. All these different living things make up biodiversity." Leo wrote "biodiversity" in his notebook. He liked the word. It sounded important and big, like the wetlands themselves.



Leo's mom took a photo of the pelican as it swam calmly. "Why is biodiversity important?" Leo asked. Ranger Joe smiled. "Each animal and plant has a job. They help each other. If one goes away, others might struggle." Leo thought about how the pelican needed fish, and fish needed clean water. It all connected like a puzzle.



Leo saw a blue heron standing still in the shallow water. It had long thin legs and a sharp beak. Nearby, a duck paddled with her ducklings in a row. Leo drew them all in his notebook. "There are so many kinds of birds here!" he said. His mom nodded. "That's because the wetlands are healthy," she said.



Ranger Joe showed Leo a poster on the boardwalk. It had pictures of birds and words about protecting nature. "Posters help people learn," he said. Leo's eyes lit up. "I could make a poster about pelicans!" he said. "And show how wetlands help all kinds of life." Ranger Joe grinned. "That's a wonderful idea!"



Leo sat on a bench and started planning his poster. He drew a big pelican in the middle, with its pouch full of fish. Around it, he drew herons, ducks, frogs, and fish. He wrote "Wetlands are home" at the top. His mom looked over his shoulder. "You're a real scientist," she said. Leo felt proud.



On the way home, Leo talked nonstop about pelicans and biodiversity. "Did you know a pelican's pouch can hold more than its belly can?" he asked. His mom laughed. "I didn't know that!" she said. Leo hugged his notebook. He couldn't wait to finish his poster and share it with his class.



At home, Leo spread his drawings on the table. He used big letters to write "Protect Our Wetlands!" and added facts about pelicans. He drew arrows showing how clean water helps fish, and fish help pelicans. His mom helped him glue everything neatly. The poster was bright and full of life.



The next day, Leo brought his poster to school. His teacher hung it on the wall. "This is fantastic, Leo!" she said. "You've taught us all something important." Leo's classmates gathered around, pointing at the pelican and the other birds. Leo explained how wetlands support biodiversity. "We should keep them clean," he said.



That afternoon, Leo's class talked about ways to help wetlands. They decided to pick up litter near the pond in the park. Leo felt happy. His poster had started something good. His mom came to pick him up. "I heard your poster was a hit," she said. Leo grinned. "Everyone wants to protect the wetlands now!"



Weeks later, Leo and his mom visited the wetlands again. Ranger Joe waved from the boardwalk. "Your poster is still hanging in the visitor center!" he said. Leo beamed. They watched a pelican glide over the water. It scooped a fish and swallowed it. Leo felt proud that he had helped others care about this special place.



Leo sat on the bench and opened his notebook. He drew another pelican, this time with a smile. "I want to learn about more birds," he told his mom. She put her arm around him. "You can be a voice for nature," she said. Leo looked at the pelican and smiled back. He knew he would keep exploring and sharing.



As the sun set, the wetlands glowed golden. Leo thought about all the birds and animals that called this place home. He knew that healthy wetlands support biodiversity, and that even one curious boy could make a difference. He hugged his notebook and waved good-bye to the pelican. "See you soon," he whispered.