

# Piper's Popped Surprise

*A Coastal Story about Balloons, Straws,  
and Saving the Shore*



Outer Banks, North Carolina



## Forward

This storybook was created by the Outer Banks Coastal Conservation (OBCC), a nonprofit organization whose mission is to foster environmental stewardship and a deeper connection to the Outer Banks of North Carolina through outreach, education, and conservation efforts.

We believe that small stories can spark big change. That is why we have made this book available as a free resource for parents, teachers, and community members.

All materials in this book may be freely downloaded, shared, printed and used for educational or nonprofit purposes.

To learn more, access additional resources at: [www.theobcc.org](http://www.theobcc.org).





It was a sunny morning on the Outer Banks, and Piper the Piping Plover was racing little waves along the shore.

“Catch me if you can!” she chirped to her crabby friend, Clawdia.





Something shiny was stuck in the sand. "Ooh! What's this?" Piper said, pecking at it.

Clawdia scuttled over and frowned. "That's a balloon string, Piper. Don't touch it!"





Just then, a breeze picked up the balloon. It whipped around wildly—**snap!**—and tangled around Piper's tiny leg!

"Ow! I can't move!" she cried,





Clawdia quickly pinched the string and tugged it free.

Piper shook her feathers. "That was scary! Why would someone leave a balloon here?"

Clawdia sighed. "Sometimes balloons float away during parties and end up in the ocean. Sea turtles think they're jellyfish and eat them. It can make them very sick... or worse."





Piper's eyes grew wide. "And what about this other thing?" she said, pointing to a plastic straw bobbing in a tidepool.

"That's even worse," said Clawdia. "Straws don't break down. They can hurt fish, get stuck in birds' beaks, or tangle in nests."





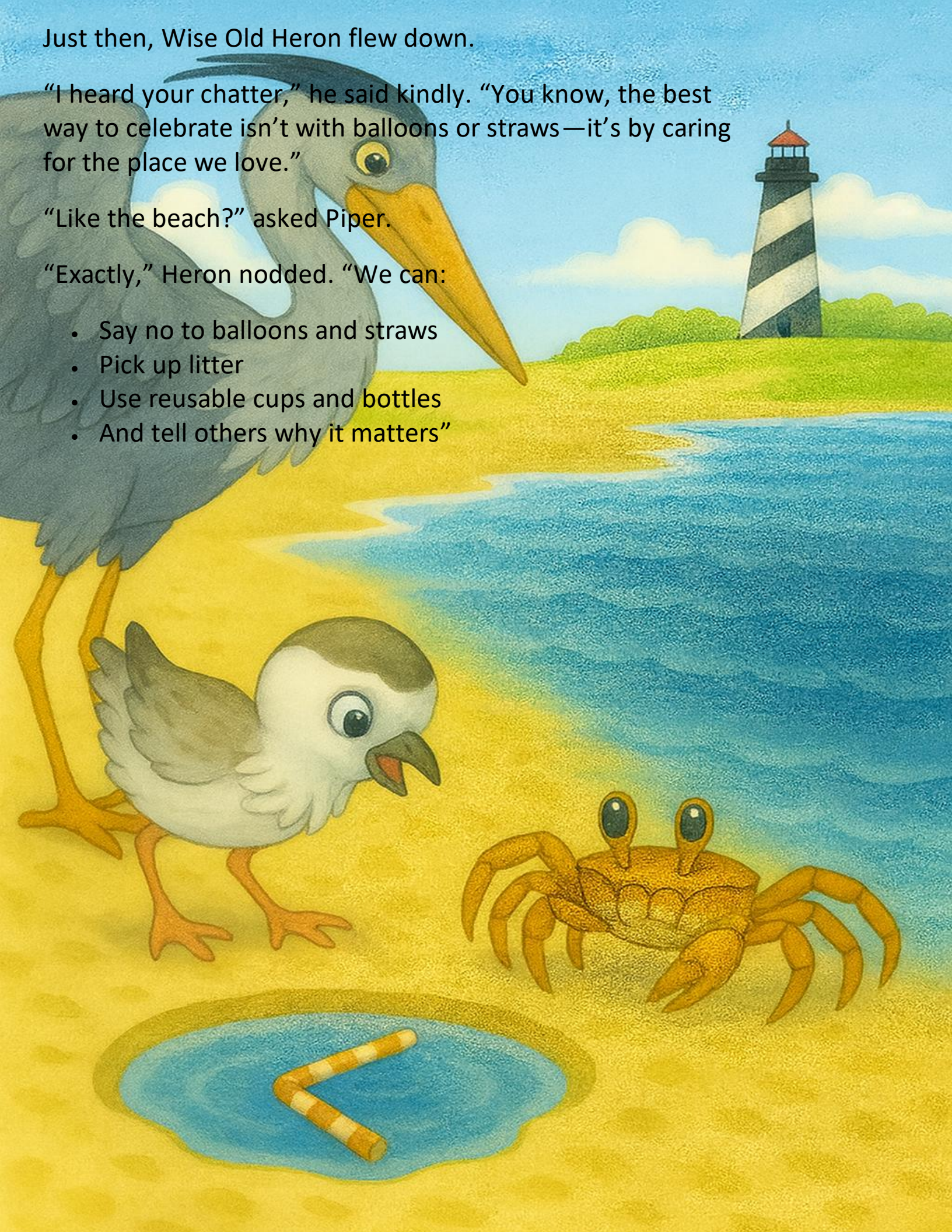
Just then, Wise Old Heron flew down.

“I heard your chatter,” he said kindly. “You know, the best way to celebrate isn’t with balloons or straws—it’s by caring for the place we love.”

“Like the beach?” asked Piper.

“Exactly,” Heron nodded. “We can:

- Say no to balloons and straws
- Pick up litter
- Use reusable cups and bottles
- And tell others why it matters”





Piper perked up. “We can still party—just in a safer way!”

That afternoon, the friends threw a “Coastal Celebration” with seaweed streamers, shell confetti, and a big sandy cake made by Clawdia.






And from then on, Piper always told every creature she met:

 "Skip the balloon. Save a loon."

 "Say 'no straw, hoorah!'"

 "Because a clean coast is the best party of all."





## Fun Fact

Balloons and plastic straws are some of the top pollutants on beaches. You can help protect sea life by using eco-friendly alternatives like paper decorations and reusable straws.

