

Christmas Eve Blizzard



By Andrea Vlahakis Illustrated by Emanuel Schongut

Christmas Eve Blizzard

Join Nicholas and his grandfather as they push aside the thoughts of decorating the Christmas tree to lovingly care for a cardinal trapped in a snow blizzard on Christmas Eve. Christmas morning finds Nicholas more concerned about the bird than opening his gifts. This tender story with a beautiful Christmas-morning miracle is guaranteed to touch your heart.

It's so much more than a picture book . . . this book is specifically designed to be both a fun-to-read story and a launch pad for discussions and learning. Whether read at home or in a classroom, we encourage adults to do the activities with the young children in their lives. Free online resources and support at www.ArbordalePublishing.com include:

- For Creative Minds as seen in the book (in English & Spanish):
 - Spanish/English Glossary
 - Cardinal (and Bird) Fun Facts
 - Making a Bird-Happy Backyard Habitat
 - Bird Feeder Crafts
 - What To Do If You Find An Injured or Orphaned Bird
 - Cardinal Numbers and Math Games
- Teaching Activities:
 - Reading Questions
 - Mathematics
 - Language Arts
 - Geography
 - Science
 - Coloring Pages
- Interactive Quizzes: Reading Comprehension, For Creative Minds, and Math Word Problems
- English and Spanish Audiobooks
- Related Websites
- Aligned to State Standards (searchable database)
- Accelerated Reader and Reading Counts! Quizzes
- Lexile and Fountas & Pinnell Reading Levels

eBooks with Auto-Flip, Auto-Read, and selectable English and Spanish text and audio available for purchase online.

Thanks to Ann Shahid, Education Director, Audubon Center at Beidler Forest (SC) for reviewing the "For Creative Minds" section for accuracy.

Andrea Vlahakis is an author, poet, and writing instructor at the Institute of Children's Literature. Although she has a long list of magazine articles to her name, *Christmas Eve Blizzard* is her first picture book. A large portion of Andrea's work revolves around nature and birds. The inspiration for this book comes from her childhood home—when she was eight, her father hung a cardinal-red birdfeeder from their old apple tree and her love of bird watching was born. It also comes from her own bird rescue during a blizzard a few years ago, with the help of an equally snowbound wildlife rescue person on the other end of the phone. Andrea lives in Connecticut, surrounded by woods, streams, and lots of birds to watch.

Emanuel (Manny) Schongut is a prolific, multi-faceted freelance illustrator who works in children's books, book covers, textbook illustration, editorial art, posters, and advertising art—essentially he does it all! In addition to illustrating *Christmas Eve Blizzard* and *Turtles In My Sandbox*, he has illustrated for Masterpiece and Mystery Theater, Public Television, New York Magazine, and New York Times Sunday Magazine. In addition to his own artwork, Manny taught reportorial art and figure drawing at Pratt Institute in New York for several years. He now illustrates and teaches in the San Francisco Bay area.



Andrea Vlahakis

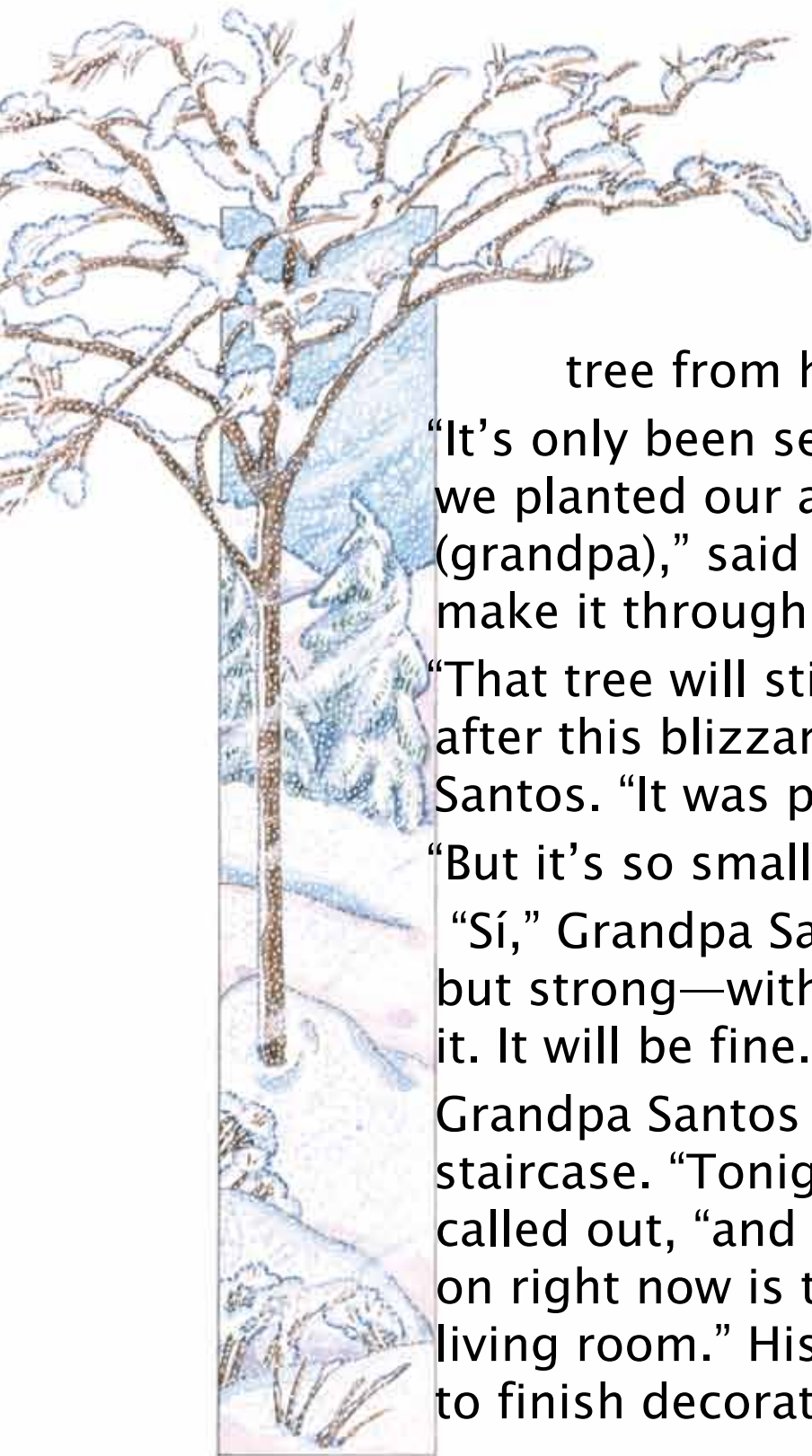


Emanuel Schongut

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Snow fell all through the night and into the morning. Yet, Nicholas could still see the young apple tree from his window.

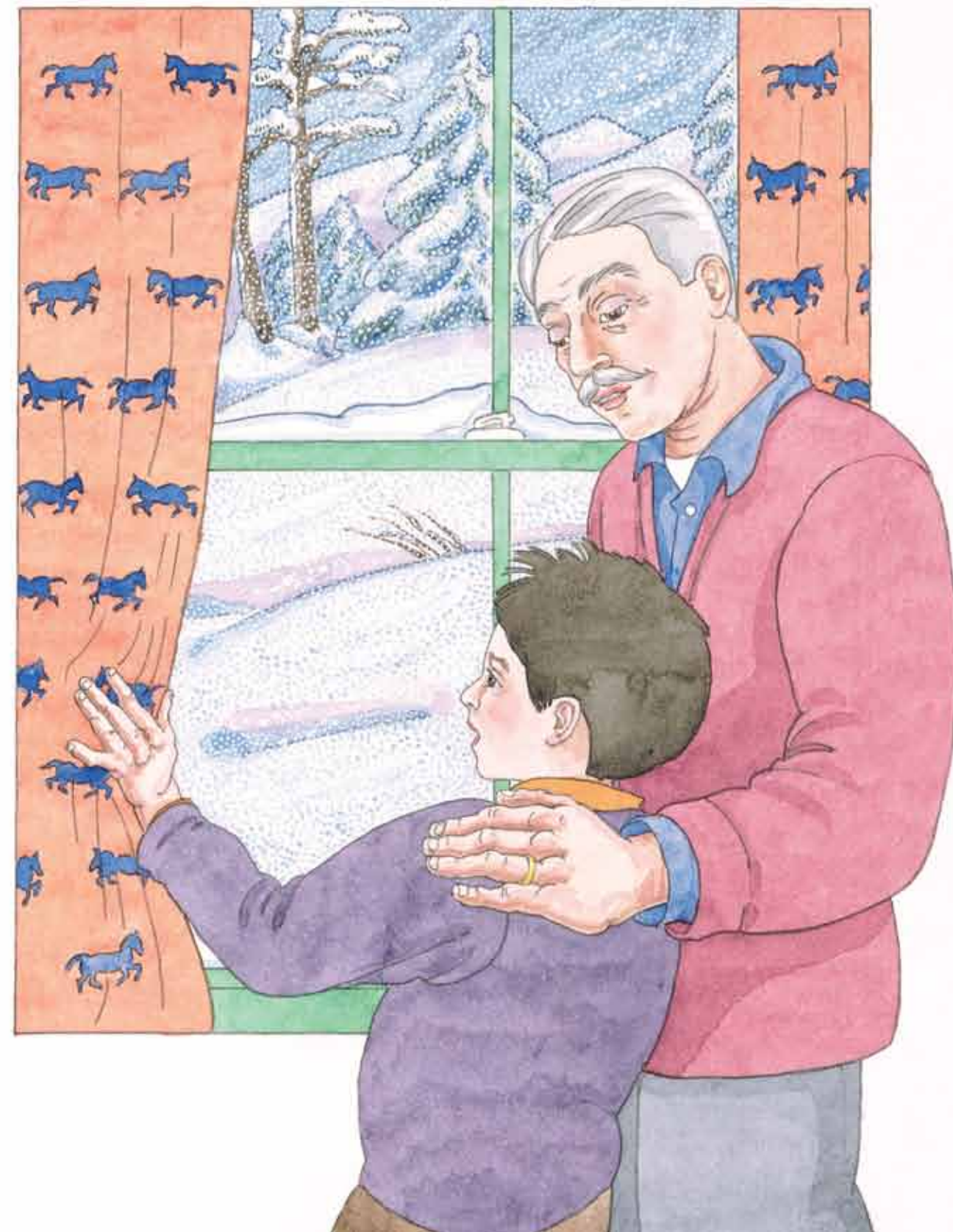
“It’s only been seven months since we planted our apple tree, Abuelo (grandpa),” said Nicholas. “How will it make it through the storm?”

“That tree will still be standing long after this blizzard,” said Grandpa Santos. “It was planted well.”

“But it’s so small,” said Nicholas.

“Sí,” Grandpa Santos agreed. “It’s small but strong—with good roots to steady it. It will be fine.”

Grandpa Santos headed for the hall staircase. “Tonight’s Christmas Eve,” he called out, “and the tree to concentrate on right now is the one down in the living room.” His voice trailed, “We need to finish decorating it, Nicky.”





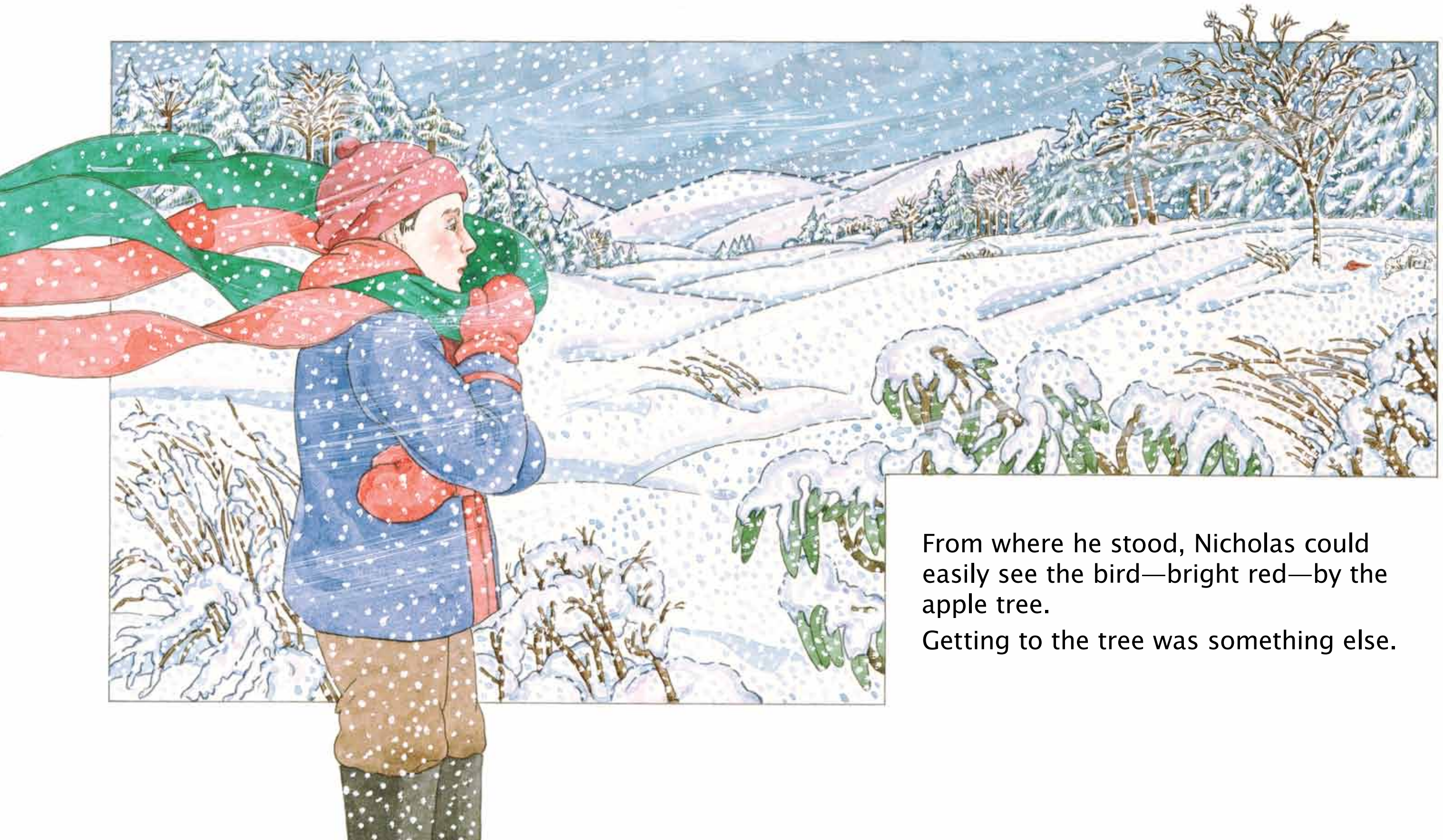
Nicholas turned back to the window. Watching the snow fly furiously, he saw a flutter of feathers. A bird tumbled off an apple branch onto a high drift of snow.

“No . . .” Nicholas whispered.



He rushed into his boots and coat. He threw on two scarves, his hat and mittens and ran out into the storm.





From where he stood, Nicholas could easily see the bird—bright red—by the apple tree. Getting to the tree was something else.

For Creative Minds

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Spanish/English Glossary



si - yes
muy enojado - very angry
pobrecito - poor little bird
no sé - I don't know

es un cardinal



it is a cardinal

Cardinal (and Bird) Fun Facts

Birds are the only animals that have feathers. They have one bill, two legs, and a four-chambered heart. Like us (mammals), they are warm-blooded and breathe air. Birds lay eggs.

A male Northern Cardinal is usually recognized by bright red coloring. The female Northern Cardinal is grayish tan with red in the wings, tail and its crest. Both male and female adults have a red bill.



When the babies are 9 or 10 days old, they leave the nest. The male watches them and cares for them for about three weeks while the female sits on the nest with more eggs.

Many birds have different colorings depending on whether the bird is a male or female. Generally, males have brighter colors or markings to attract the females. The females tend to have duller coloring to help them hide (camouflage) as they sit on the nest.

The female sits on the nest, and the male brings food for her and the babies.

Cardinals migrate short distances.

Both cardinals raise their babies together. They usually have three or four babies at once and may have up to two or three sets (broods) of babies in the spring and summer.

Making a Bird-Happy Backyard Habitat

Just like us, birds need food, water, and a place to live. If they can find those things in your backyard, you might just have some birds move in as neighbors!

Birds need native food

Plant native trees, shrubs, grass, or flowers that will provide a variety of food like nuts, acorns, fruits, and nectar. Different birds like to eat and live in different types of plants.

Cardinals eat a variety of seeds. If you want to attract cardinals, plant things like:

Mulberries
Serviceberries
Dogwoods
Crabapples

Wild grape vines
Virginia Creeper
Black oil sunflowers (black seeds)
Safflowers



- If it will not damage the house, leave dead limbs on trees so birds can eat the bugs.
- Make a pile of dead branches that fall or yard clippings in an out-of-the-way area to attract birds.
- Use leaves and other autumn "fallings" as mulch in your winter gardens – it will attract birds and help your garden!

Birds need water to drink and to bathe

- Buy or make a shallow bird bath, (with no more than one inch of water) that rests on the ground. Place it near quick shelter, too, like a shrub or small tree in case cats are around.
- You could make a bath out of a heavy plastic lid or old garbage can lid. You can even use a terra cotta or plastic saucer from a plant pot!
- Birds really like dripping water which you can supply by hanging an old bucket with a small hole in the bottom over the birdbath. Make sure to change the water every few days to keep it fresh.

Birds need a place to sleep and build nests

- Some birds like to live high in the trees; others like to live low to the ground.
- Cardinals like to nest in dense hedges or thickets. They especially like nesting in honeysuckle thickets. They like living in various types of pine trees (evergreens) during the winter when it gets cold. If you plant trees, flowers or bushes to attract birds to your backyard, use plants that are native to your area.

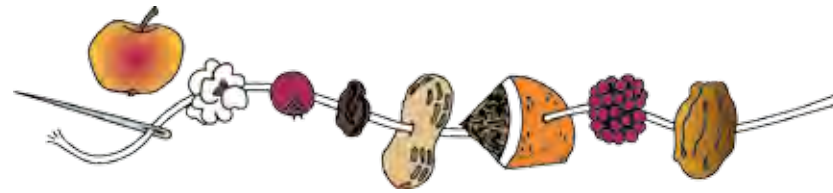


Bird Feeders Are Not Just for Winter! Easy Crafts

There are several bird feeders that can be purchased and used. Different types of birds will eat out of different feeders. Cardinals like eating from platform feeders, but will also eat out of hopper feeders (with a tray) or tube feeders with big enough perches. Backyard birds like eating out of feeders all year long—not just during the winter.

1. Tree Garland

Using a heavy string, natural yarn, or twine and a blunt yarn-type needle, string the following bird treats. When finished, drape the garland in a tree or on a bush for the birds to enjoy.



Popcorn
Peanuts (in the shell) or other nuts
Crab apples

Slices of oranges or fresh berries
Dried fruit (any type)
Cranberries or raisins



2. Peanut Butter Pinecones

Attach a heavy string, natural yarn or twine to the top of a pinecone. Cover the cone with peanut butter or suet (purchase at bird-feed stores), press sunflower seeds or a birdseed mix into the peanut butter or suet. Hang from a tree branch.

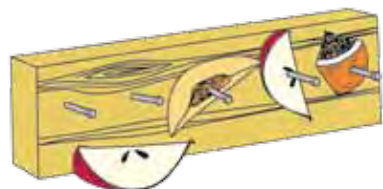
3. Bird Platter

Take an aluminum pie pan and punch several nail-sized holes in the bottom (for drainage). Place the tin on top of an old hanging plant container and hang from a tree limb or a pole or simply place the pan on top of a fence or deck post. Cardinals like eating about 5 to 6 feet off the ground. With enough drainage holes, the seeds should be okay through most rains. Change the seeds if they get too soggy and wet. An old plastic sand shifter toy could also be used.



4. Bird Buffet

Hammer non-rusting galvanized nails into a piece of wood – leaving an inch or two poking out. Nail it to the side of a fence or a pole. Place pieces of orange, lemon, apple, pear, or peach on the nails.



What To Do If You Find An Injured or Orphaned Bird



If a bird is obviously injured or has something that looks like grains of rice in its feathers, take it to a wildlife rehabilitator right away. Poke several holes in a small box for ventilation, and line it with paper towels. Place the bird in the box, and carry it gently.

If a baby bird seems to have fallen out of the nest but is hopping around, it is probably just learning to fly. Put the bird in its nest if you know where it is and can reach it. Otherwise, put it in a bush (not a tree). If there are no bushes close by, you can use a small, shallow basket with some pine needles in the bottom. Tack it to the side of the tree and then put the baby in it. In all cases, keep cats and dogs inside and away from the bird. Watch it for two hours or until dark. If the parents have not returned for it in that time, take it to a wildlife rehabilitator.



Cardinal Numbers and Math Games

A “**cardinal**” number really doesn’t have anything to do with birds – but it does use the same word! A cardinal number is a counting number. “Three baby birds learned to fly” has the cardinal number “three.”



An “**ordinal**” number would be putting a number in a place or in order. “The third baby bird learned to fly” uses the ordinal number “third.”



If
one
female
and one male
cardinal have three
different broods (groups
or sets) of babies and each
brood consists of three babies, how
many baby cardinals do they have?



For older children: If each of the original babies has the same number of babies, how many grand-babies birds would there be?

Thanks to Ann Shahid, Education Director, Audubon Center at Beidler Forest (SC) for reviewing the For Creative Minds section for accuracy.

To my father, with whom I've planted many trees -- A.V.
For R.A.H. -- E.S.



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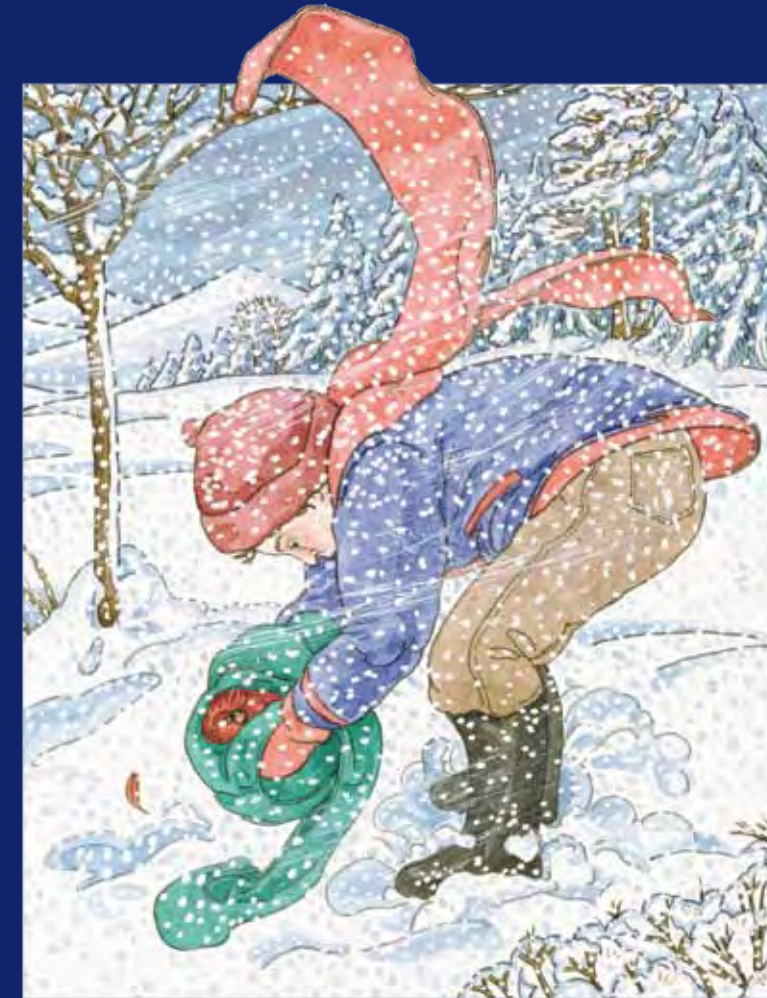
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