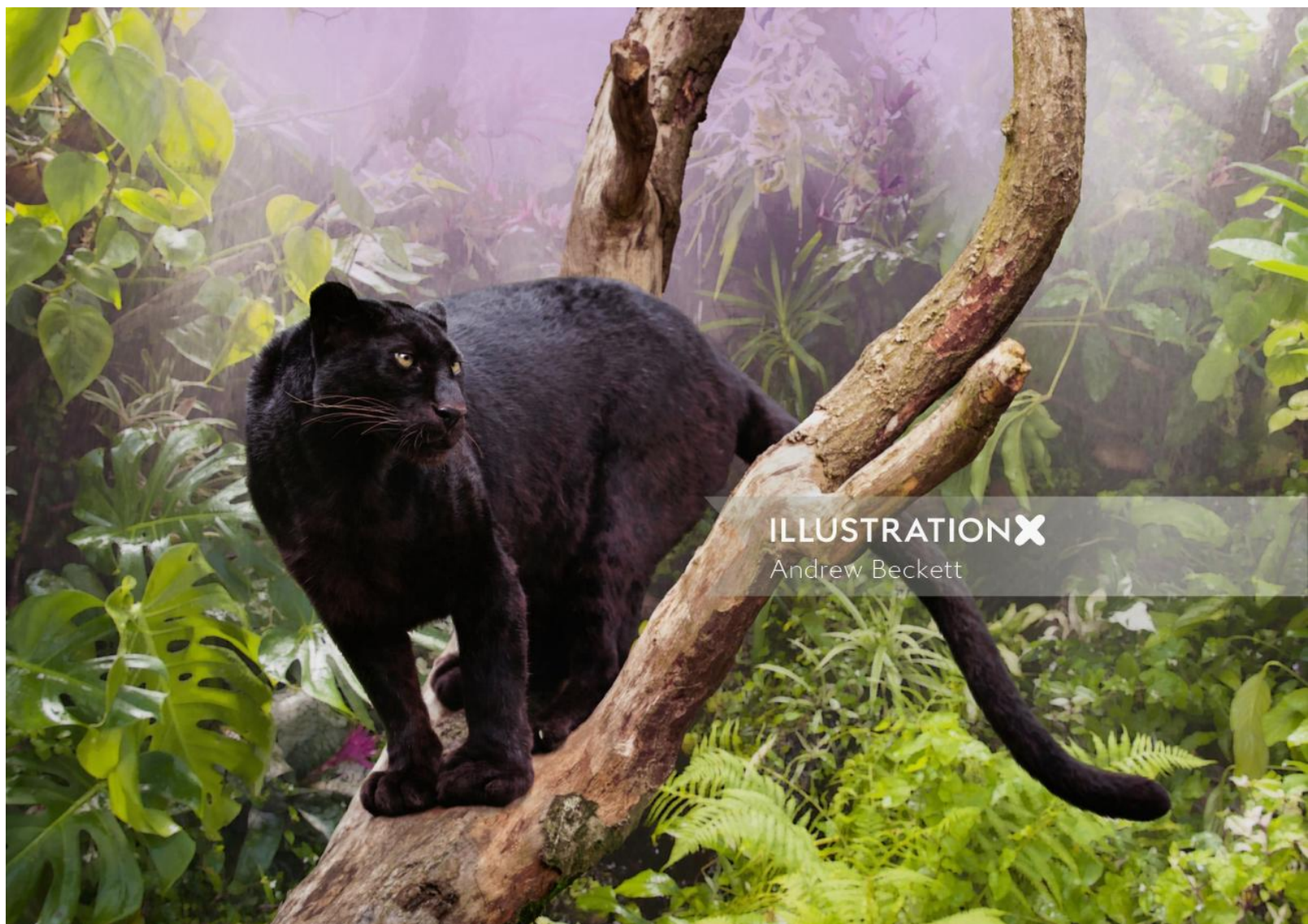


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134

life on earth • WETLANDS

50

per cent of all known fish species are found in freshwater habitats, as well as more than 10 per cent of all the world's animal species.

140,000

sq km (54,000 sq miles) – the minimum estimated size of the Pantanal.

440

fish species or more migrate between ocean and freshwater habitats.

135

Wetlands

Salty oceans are not the only watery environments on Earth. Rivers, lakes, ponds, and large waterlogged areas known as wetlands are all crucial freshwater habitats – home to more than 100,000 species of plants and animals.

Marshes, swamps, bogs, and fens are examples of wetlands – flooded areas covered in water plants that are incredibly biodiverse inland habitats. They typically form close to rivers that periodically flood, or at the edges of lakes and oceans. The Pantanal in South America is the world's largest freshwater wetland, but other wetlands can contain salty water, or a mixture of both salty and fresh.

Pantanal
Fed by tributaries of the Paraguay River, the Pantanal has one of the highest concentrations of wildlife in South America. It is a seasonal wetland that largely dries out during the dry season, leaving pools and small lakes, and flooding again when rainfall resumes. Among its grasses, rushes, and other plant life, many animals make their home.

Paradoxical frog
The tadpoles of the paradoxical frog start off very large, up to 27 cm (10.7 in) long, but shrink as they develop into adults. Fully grown frogs, which hide in the murky water, are smaller – only up to 7.5 cm (3 in) long.

Freshwater habitats
There are two types of freshwater habitat. Lotic habitats include flowing water, such as in rivers or streams, whereas lentic habitats include calm or standing water, such as in lakes or ponds. From birds swooping in and out to slow-swimming fish, the diverse organisms in these habitats spend their time in different parts of the water. While some stay at the bottom, others thrive closer to the surface.

Pond habitat
Above pond surface
Pond margin
Pond surface
Mid water
Pond bottom

Giant water lily
The largest member of the lily family, the giant water lily only opens its white, fragrant flowers at night. The flowers turn pink after being pollinated by beetles.

Jabiru stork
This large bird with a long upturned black bill wades in shallow water.

Giant lilypad
Stretching up to 3 m (9.8 ft) across, the lilypads of the giant water lily are strong enough to support a small child.

Jaguar
These big cats are strong swimmers and often wade through the water hunting for prey to crush with their powerful jaws.

Yacare caiman
Millions of this crocodilian species live in the Pantanal, snatching up snakes, amphibians, and fish such as piranhas for food.

Rosette spoonbill
These birds use their spoon-shaped bills to forage under the water. They get their pink colour from the crustaceans they eat.

Capybara
The world's largest rodent, the capybara is a semi-aquatic mammal that feeds on land but sometimes hides in the water.

Goby
Goby attaches itself to the rock.

Climbing fish
The Hoplin rock-climbing goby lives in flood- and landslide-prone streams in Hawaii and on other volcanic islands. In order to travel upstream to breed, the goby has developed a special sucker that allows it to stick to the rocks behind waterfalls and propel its body upwards to reach the river beyond.

Wattled jacana
This resourceful bird can carry its chicks tucked under its wings when crossing flooded areas. Its long toes allow it to perch on floating vegetation.

Giant river otter
These sociable mammals are at home on land and in the water and can grow up to 1.8 m (6 ft) long.

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South American lungfish
This large air-breathing fish swims in floodwater. To survive in times of drought, it burrows in the mud and surrounds itself with a waterproof layer of mucus.

Chiquitano cichlid
These small fish have special teeth in their throats that enable them to grind down the shells of snails.

Spotfin hatchetfish
Strong fins allow these fish to jump above the water to catch prey such as insects.

Humboldt catfish
Found in soft, sandy areas at the bottom of swamps, this fish burrows into the sediment for protection.

Green anaconda
This gigantic, semi-aquatic snake crushes and swallows its prey whole, before slowly digesting it.

Freshwater stingray
The eyes of this flat fish sit on the top of its body, with its mouth and gill slits underneath.

Red-bellied piranha
Schools of 20 or more piranhas often swim together, using their razor-sharp teeth to hunt small fish and insects.

Serpae tetra
These colourful, flame-coloured fish hide from predators in plants.

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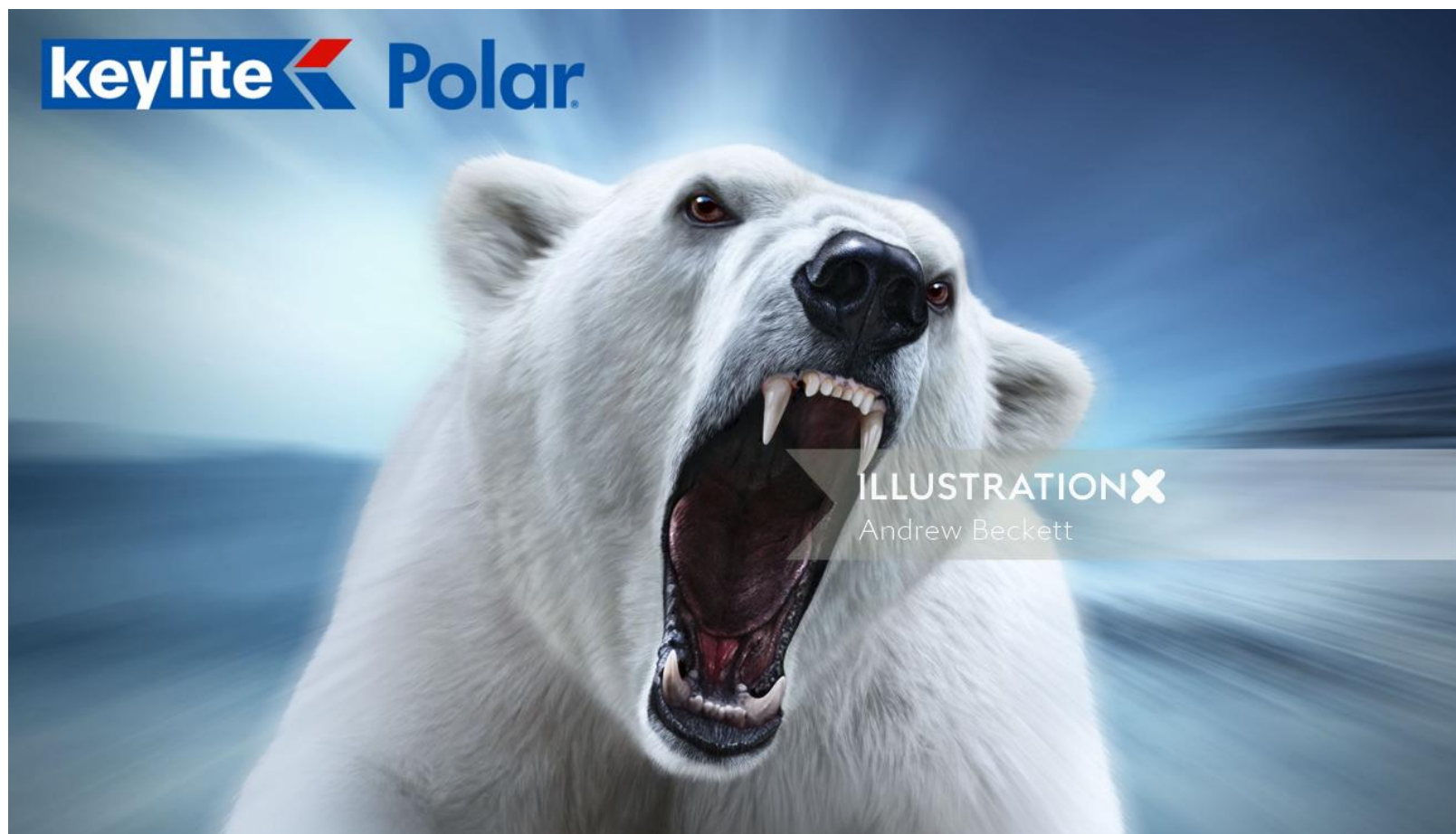
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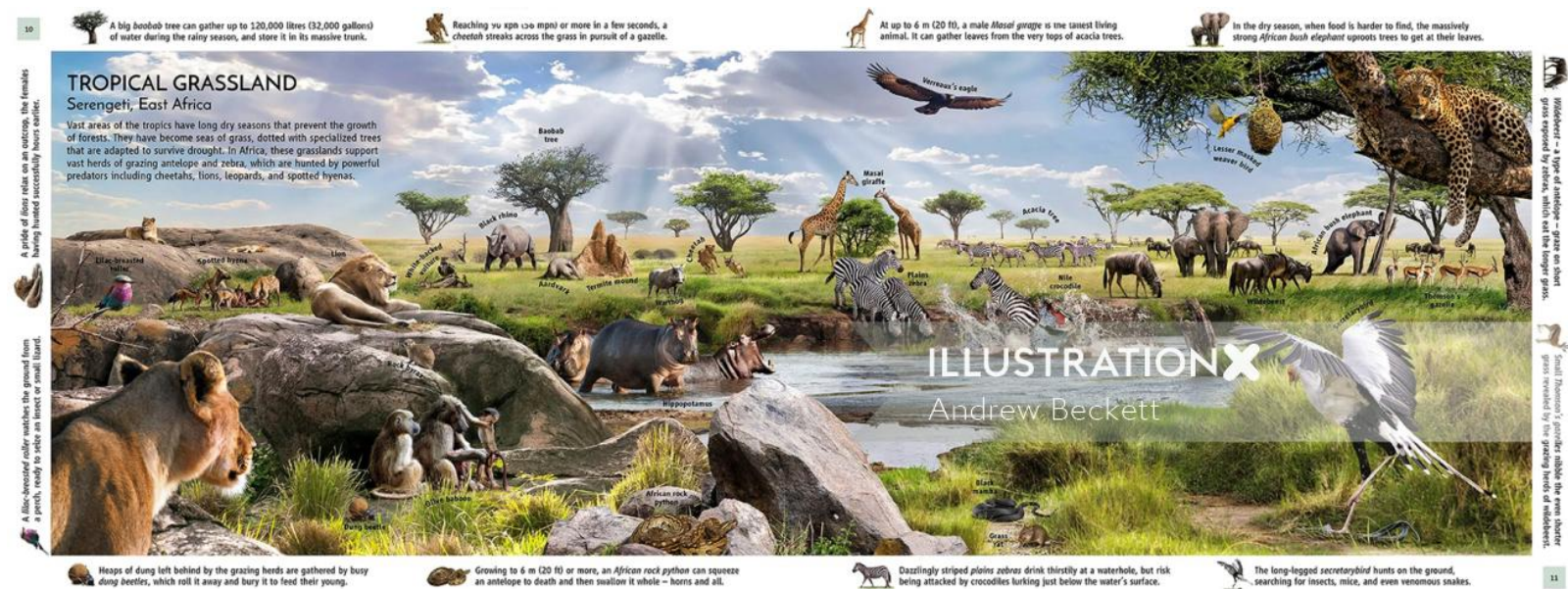
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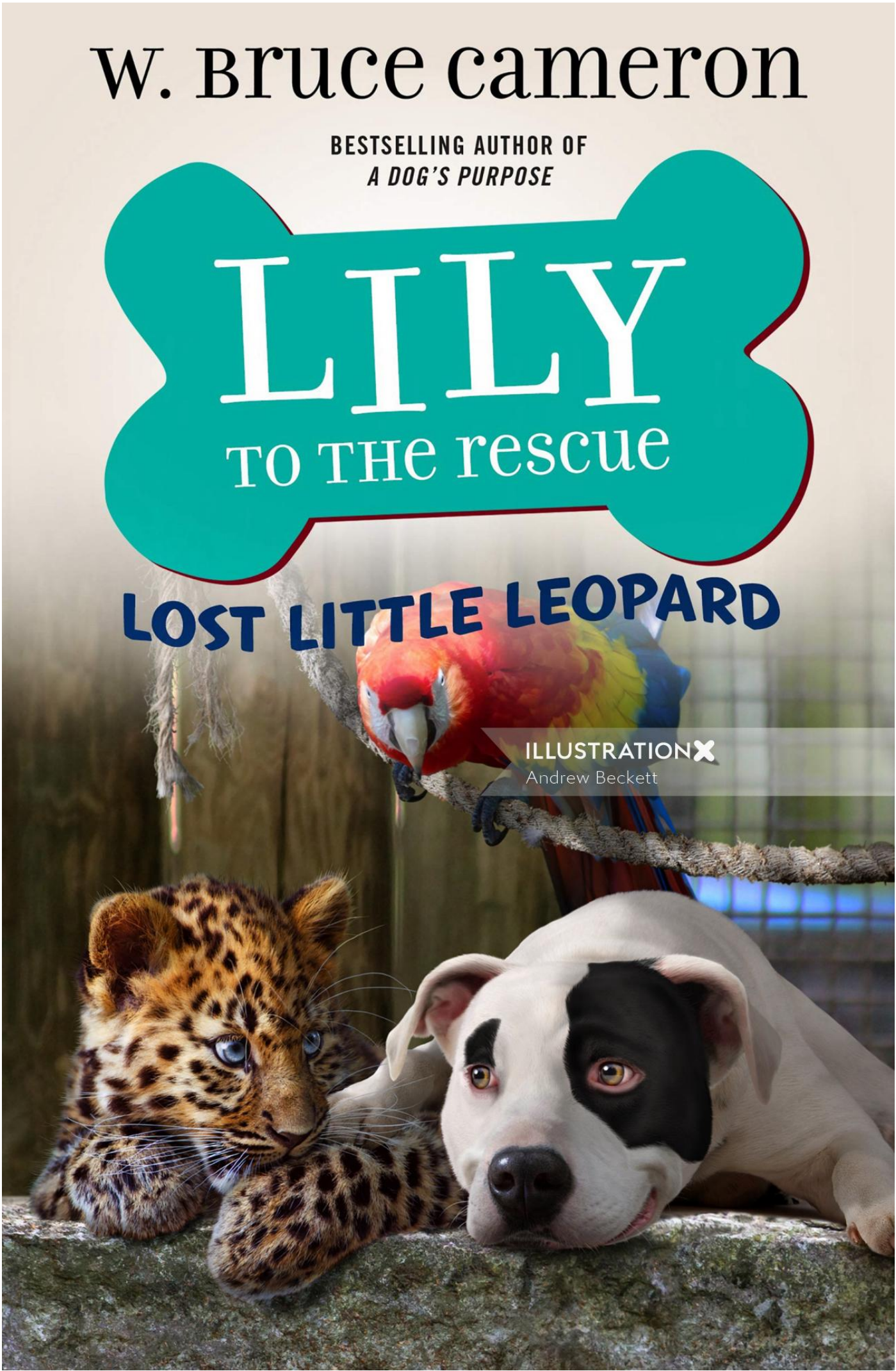
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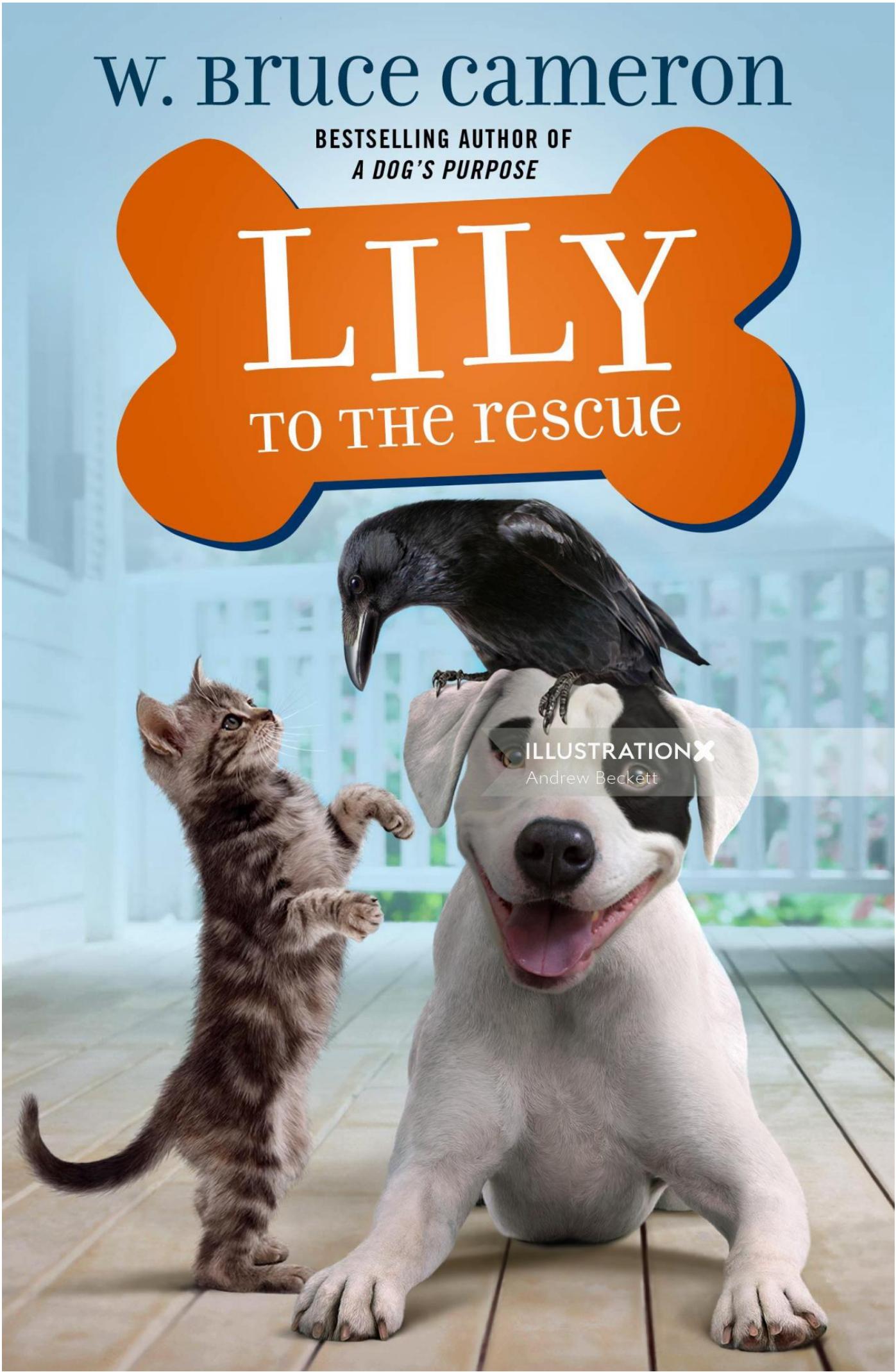
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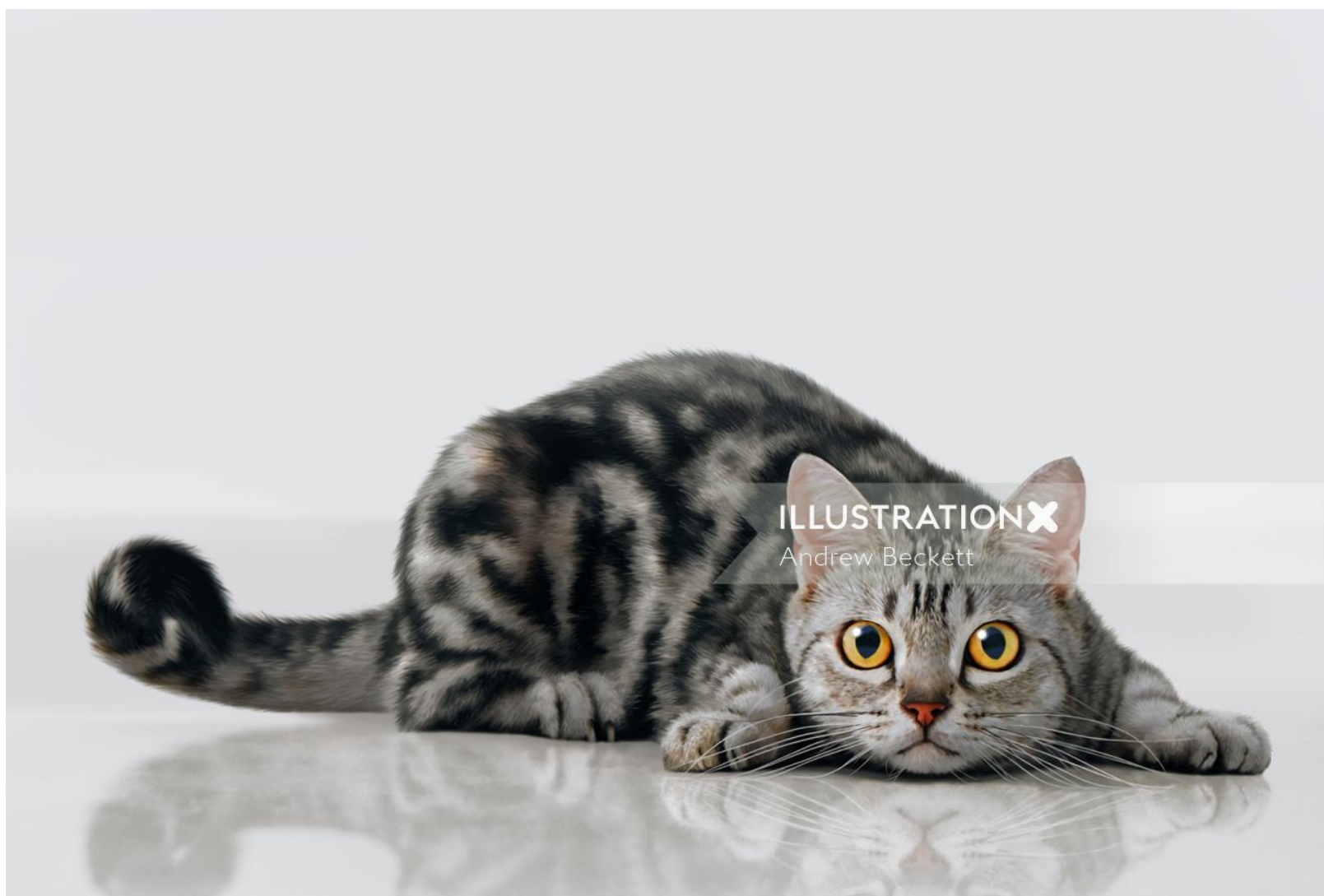
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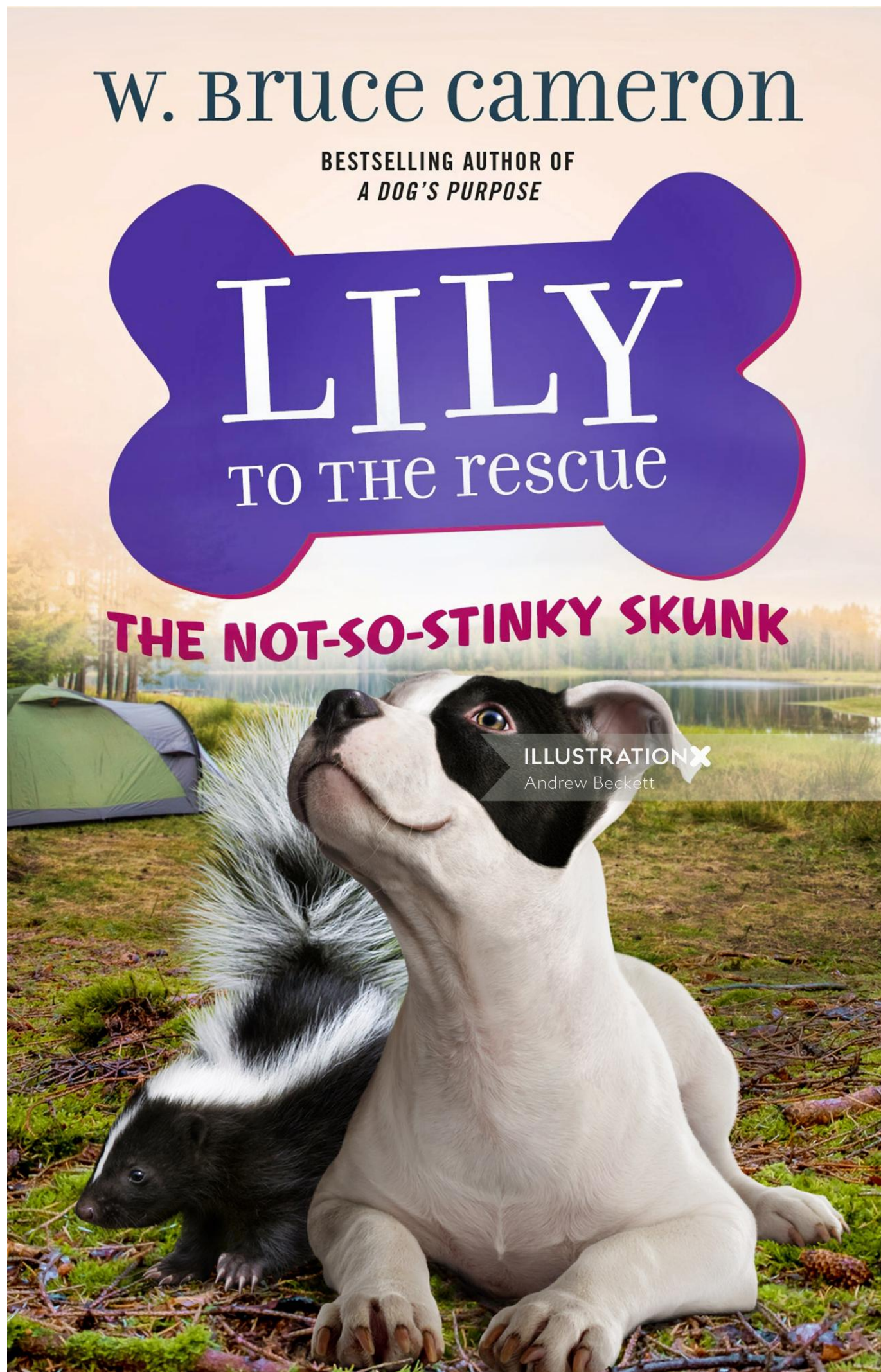
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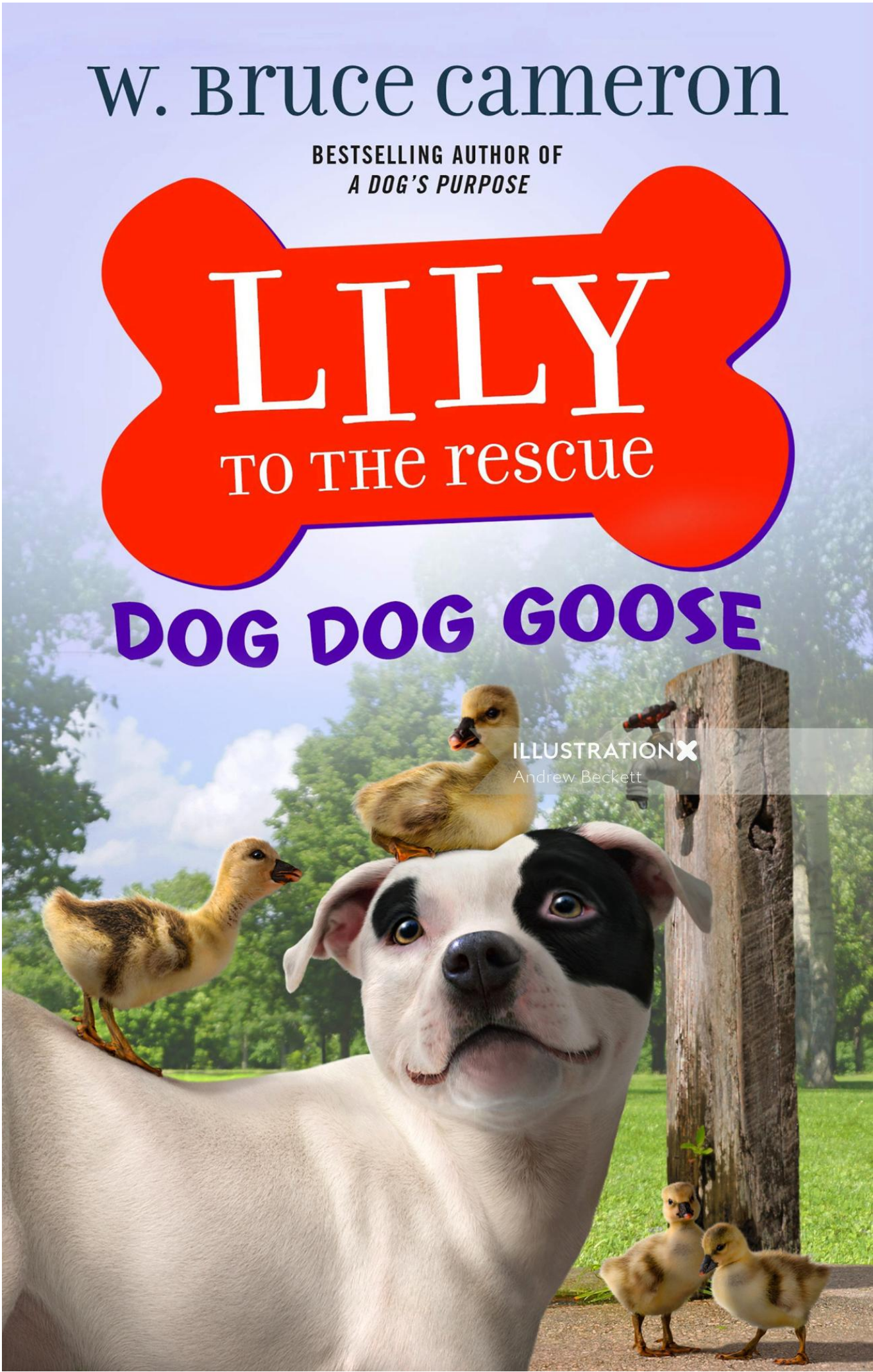
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