

# Loon Chase



By Jean Heilprin Diehl illustrated by Kathryn Freeman

# Loon Chase

Loon Chase is a delightful story about a boy and his mother on a peaceful canoe ride with their dog Miles. They soon find themselves frantically paddling to keep Miles away from a family of loons. They discover that their very domesticated and loving dog still has powerful instincts similar to animals in the wild. The outcome of the encounter between dog and loon beautifully illustrates the powerful parental instincts to protect their young. And, it is a story about a child's moment of wonder, when he finally meets the loon up close and personal.

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](http://www.ArbordalePublishing.com) include:

- For Creative Minds as seen in the book (in English & Spanish):
  - Loon Fun Facts
  - Loon Life Cycle
- 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 Harry Vogel of the Loon Preservation Society and to the staff of Maine Audubon for reviewing the For Creative Minds section and verifying its accuracy.

Jean Heilprin Diehl and her family have visited and lived in New Hampshire since the late 19th century and still own a cabin on Silver Lake, where loons nest every summer. Her Springer spaniel, Miles, loved to swim in the lake and provided the inspiration for Loon Chase. Jean is an award-winning author and critic whose work has appeared in such journals and anthologies as the Indiana Review, Antietam Review, Fodderwing, Sycamore Review, Kestrel, Many Mountains Moving, The Journal, and Great Writers/Great Stories.

Kathryn Freeman spent many summers on Conway Lake in the White Mountains region in New Hampshire where she learned to use pastels from her uncle, the landscape artist Robert Jordan. He and Kathryn often took a canoe out at dawn to check on nesting loons. Kathryn is known foremost as a painter. Her works have been exhibited nationally and internationally and are held in numerous private and public collections. She has also done a number of large public commissions, including three story murals for the new public library in Jacksonville, Florida. Loon Chase is her first children's book.



Jean Heilprin Diehl




Kathryn Freeman

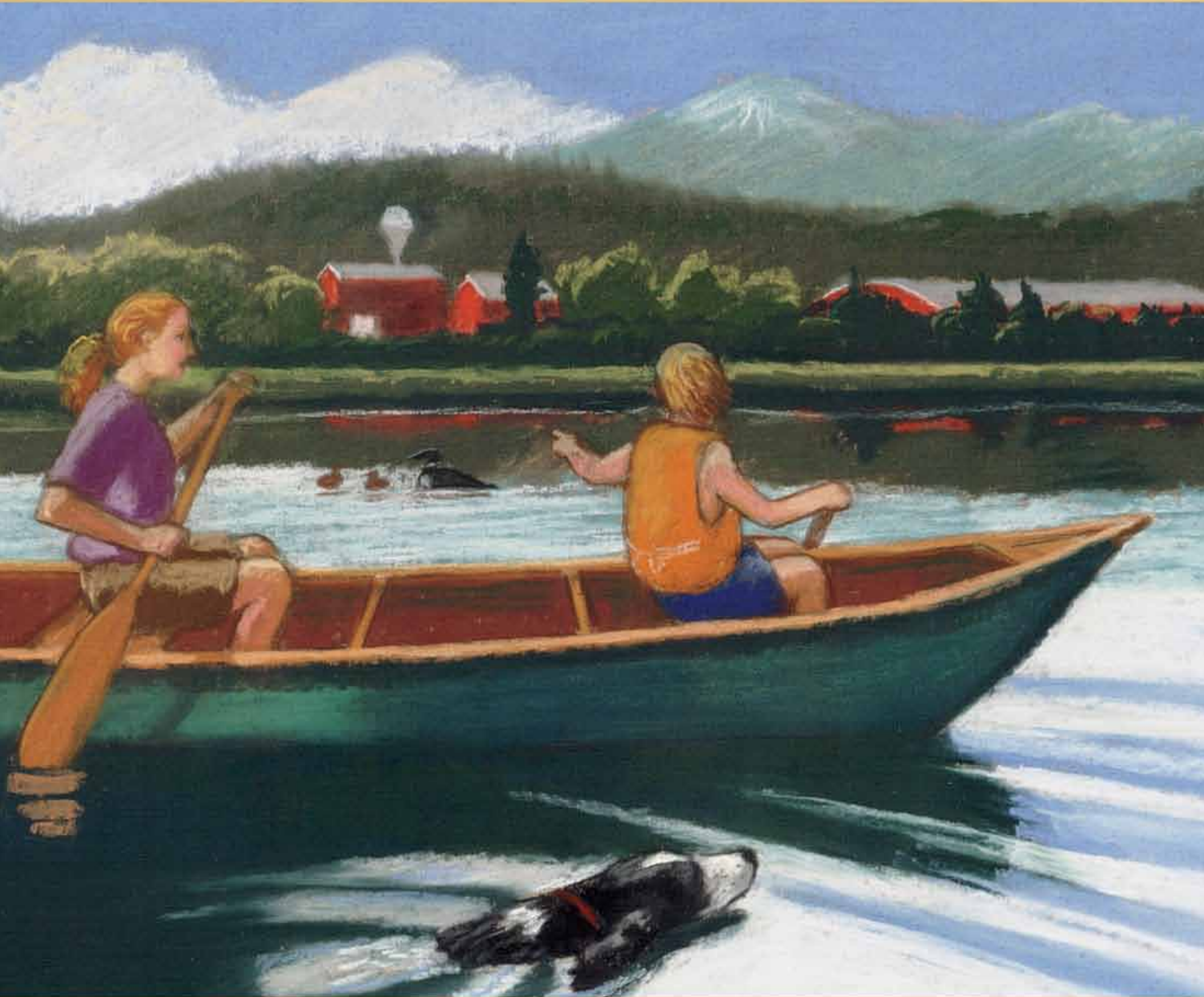
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Early one summer morning, before breakfast, Mom and I paddled to Big Island to pick blueberries. Our dog, Miles, leaped off the dock to swim with us. His nose puffed just above the water: *pfuh-huh, pfuh-huh - pfuh-huh.*



Miles loved to swim. He could dog-paddle faster than I could paddle a canoe.

I made a triangle with my arms and the neck of my wooden paddle, dipped the paddle into the lake, and pulled—just like Mom had taught me.

“Can I go out to the island by myself soon?” I asked.

Mom just smiled. I could tell that it wouldn’t be long until she said, “yes.”

At the end of the lake, by the mill, a loon and two loon chicks were swimming. Loons were rare birds, and seeing them was as exciting as watching a shooting star. There were so few left in the world, and it was against the law to hurt one. I was glad that they were far away, though. Miles was a bird dog; he wasn’t mean, but he just had to chase every bird he saw.

“Pfuh-huh—pfuh-huh.” His nose sprayed silvery drops. Luckily, Miles was too busy swimming to see the loons.

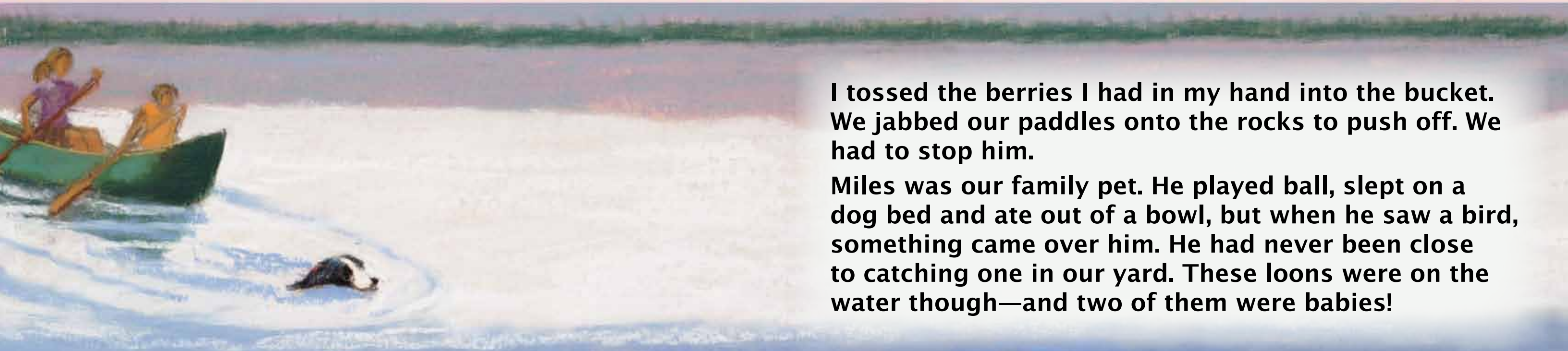




At Big Island, I stood in the canoe picking berries while Mom held the boat steady. Now we were busy, so we didn't notice when Miles stopped sniffing around in the bushes and swam away.

Sound carries a long way over water. Before we saw Miles again we heard, "*Pfuh-huh—pfuh-huh, pfuh-huh—pfuh-huh.*" The sun bounced so brightly off the lake that we had to squint to see him, out in the middle, his black head pointed straight toward three tiny specks—the loons.





I tossed the berries I had in my hand into the bucket. We jabbed our paddles onto the rocks to push off. We had to stop him.

Miles was our family pet. He played ball, slept on a dog bed and ate out of a bowl, but when he saw a bird, something came over him. He had never been close to catching one in our yard. These loons were on the water though—and two of them were babies!

Loons Nesting  
Please  
Keep Away



## For Creative Minds

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### Loon Fun Facts

A loon is a large water bird that looks something like a duck, but is not related to a duck at all. Loons belong to a family of ancient birds, at least 20 million years old. The best-known species is the common loon (*Gavia immer*). The common loon is the state bird of Minnesota.

Loons spend almost all of their lives on water, and come on land only to mate, build their nest, and to incubate their eggs.

Scientists think loons may live as long as 30 years. **Who do you know who is about 30 years old? Does that seem old to you? Is that a long time for a bird?**



The common loon is famous for the black and white pattern of its summer feathers, and its many eerie, unmistakable calls.

Loons eat small fish, insects, snails, crayfish, frogs, and salamanders.



Underwater, loons almost always use their feet to move, not their wings. **What parts of your body do you use to swim?**

Loons' webbed feet (adapted for swimming) are set so far back on their bodies that it is difficult for them to walk on land.



Loons have been known to dive to depths of more than 100 feet. They usually dive for about a minute at a time to hunt for food. How long can you hold your breath? How deep can you dive in a swimming pool?

Loons are able to fly at speeds of 60 to 90 miles (96.5 to 145 km) per hour. **Many cars on a highway drive about 60 miles (96.5 km) per hour. If a loon flies at 60 miles (96.5 km) per hour, how long does it take to fly five miles?**

**What is five miles from your house or school? How long does it take you to drive those five miles? Walk? Ride a bike?**

While most birds have hollow, sponge-like bones, making their skeletons light, loons have solid bones. To lift their heavy bodies into the air, loons need a long runway, sometimes several hundred yards of water surface.

Male and female adult loons look alike, though the male is often a little bigger.



Common loons weigh between 8 and 15 pounds (3.6 to 6.8 kg) and get larger in size as you go from west to east (Maine has larger loons compared to the west or Midwest.) **Math activity: find something in the house or classroom that weighs 10 pounds or 5 kilograms (bags of flour, a few books).**

They are 28 to 35 inches (71 to 90 cm) long with a wingspan of an adult being up to 58 inches (147 cm) wide. **Math activity: use a yard stick to see how long a loon is and how wide the wingspan is. Use chalk to draw how big a loon is on the driveway, a quiet street, sidewalk, or playground.**



## Loon Life Cycle

Put the common loon life-cycle events in order to spell the scrambled word.

Loon pairs are territorial during the breeding season which means they defend an area around their nest and young, chasing other loons away if they come too close. Sometimes these chases lead to intense fights between the birds. Loons usually pair off with the same partner each year, but not always.

Common loons spend summers on lakes in the Northern United States and Canada. Loons migrate each season, flying back from their winter, ocean homes usually to the same lake.

They build their nests right at the shoreline because they need to slip on and off the nest without being seen by predators. Sometimes people will float an artificial nesting platform for a loon to nest on, which is especially useful on lakes where dams artificially raise or lower the water level each year.

Loon parents keep their chicks in a sheltered "nursery" area of the lake until they are three to four weeks old. Their feathers turn from downy brown to gray, and gradually the young loons swim in a larger part of the lake.

In winter, they live on the ocean along the Pacific coast, all the way to Mexico, and along the Atlantic coast, south to Florida and the Gulf of Mexico. Look at a map and identify where Loons spend the summer and winter. **Do they live in your area?**



Chicks spend their first couple of hours drying off in the nest and then leave it forever. They move to the lake to swim.

After the female lays one or two olive-colored eggs, the male and female share the job of sitting on them until they hatch after 27-28 days.

In the fall, the adult loons leave the lake to return to the ocean before the young loons do. The adults also lose their black and white summer feathers, which are replaced by gray, winter plumage. Young loons are ready to fly when they are 10 to 12 weeks old. When they reach the ocean, they stay there for several years before returning to the lakes to breed.

For the first two weeks, young chicks often ride on their parents' backs to rest and to be protected from eagles, large fish, and snapping turtles that may try to eat them.

Thanks to "Birds of North America Online" <http://bna.birds.cornell.edu/bna>, maintained by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, for the use of their loon map.



This book is dedicated to the memory of Miles—JHD & KF  
The author and illustrator donate a portion of their royalties to the Loon  
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