

Ranger Rick's ADVENTURES

STORY BY GERRY BISHOP; ART BY THE CHARACTERSHOP

RANGER RICK RACCOON, SCARLETT FOX, AND BOOMER BADGER ARE HIKING IN A LONGLEAF PINE FOREST OF NORTH CAROLINA. THEY'RE ON THEIR WAY TO MEET A BIRD NAMED WYATT. WYATT IS A RED-COCKADED (KAH-KAY-DED) WOODPECKER ("RCW")—A RARE AND ENDANGERED SPECIES. HE LIVES IN THIS KIND OF FOREST ON A U.S. MARINE BASE CALLED CAMP LEJEUNE.



Hup, two, three, four. Hup—

Boomer, please STOP! You've been marching and "humping" for miles. It's driving me crazy!



It's SERGEANT Boomer, if you don't mind! And marching is part of being a U.S. Marine.

But you're NOT a Marine. You're a badger. So AT EASE, "Sergeant"!



Can you two call an end to this, please?

OK, how about this, Boomer: You stop "humping," and I'll ignore your dumb marching.

Fine—but I'll still be "humping" under my breath.



Look—a sign.

We've made it to Camp Lejeune! Now let's see if we can find Wyatt.



Wow—what nice, tall trees!

Yep, they're longleaf pines—just the trees that the RCWs need.



Look—someone painted some of the trees. How come?

Don't know, Boomer. But Wyatt probably does.



Hey—a snake is climbing that tree! What's it doing?

That hole is the opening to an RCW nest. The snake is looking for lunch!



Yuck!

Whoa! The snake's falling!

Yeah—the sap around that nest hole is sticking to its scales—and it doesn't like that one bit!

RICK EXPLAINS THAT RCWs DIG NEST HOLES IN LIVING TREES. THIS DIGGING CAUSES STICKY SAP TO FLOW AROUND THE HOLE AND DOWN THE TRUNK. THE SAP HELPS KEEP SNAKES AWAY FROM THE BIRDS' EGGS AND BABIES.



A FEW MINUTES LATER...

Whatcha hear, Scarlett?

Sounds like some kind of engine.

Come on—let's see what's going on!



Let's get closer—but be sure to stay out of sight!



That guy has a chainsaw! He's going to cut that big tree!

But RCWs need trees like that to survive!



Looks like a job for a tough and brave U.S. Marine!

Boomer! No!



Grrrrrrr!

Huh?



Grrrrrrr!

Grrrrrrr!



KAY RAP RAP KAI

Arghhh!



Wyatt, is that you? What's going on?

Yep, it's me, and I take it you're Ranger Rick, Scarlett, and Boomer.

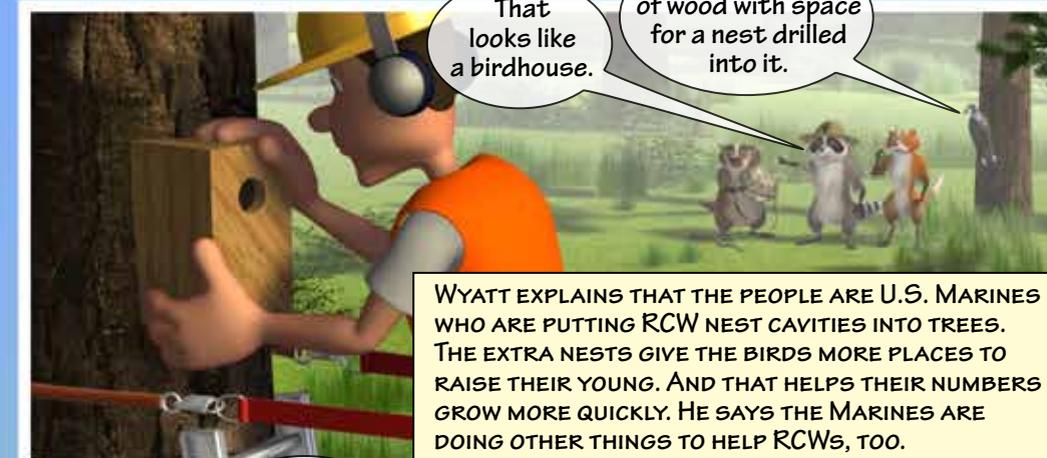
Yes, but—



Boomer here was about to make a very big mistake!

But what about those people with the saw?

No worries about them! Just watch!



That looks like a birdhouse.

It's a block of wood with space for a nest drilled into it.

WYATT EXPLAINS THAT THE PEOPLE ARE U.S. MARINES WHO ARE PUTTING RCW NEST CAVITIES INTO TREES. THE EXTRA NESTS GIVE THE BIRDS MORE PLACES TO RAISE THEIR YOUNG. AND THAT HELPS THEIR NUMBERS GROW MORE QUICKLY. HE SAYS THE MARINES ARE DOING OTHER THINGS TO HELP RCWs, TOO.



What kinds of things, Wyatt?

You saw some white marks on the trees back there, right?

Right! They were a mystery to us.



They tell the Marines that there are a lot of us woodpeckers around there. So they will avoid those marked areas during their noisy military drills.

Sounds like a great deal. The woodpeckers get a nice place to live, and the Marines get the space they need, too!



What they REALLY need are a few good badgers—starting with me! Lead me to the action!

I think you've seen enough action for one day, Boomer. Time to go home!

MORE FACTS

- Red-cockaded woodpeckers get their name from the tiny red stripe behind the eyes of the males. This stripe looks a bit like a kind of old-fashioned hat decoration called a cockade.
- Millions of RCWs once lived in the longleaf pine forests that grew along the coastline from Virginia to Texas. But lumber companies cut down nearly all the great old trees.
- RCWs prefer older longleaf pines. The trees' wood is often less hard in the middle of the trunk, which makes it easier to dig nest holes. As these trees disappeared, the woodpeckers nearly became extinct.
- Old longleaf pines still survive in some places—very often on U.S. government property such as Camp Lejeune. But even there, many trees are too young and small for the birds to dig nests in. That's why adding nest cavities is a big help to these endangered birds.

