



Educator's Guide

Educational extensions for the October 2008 issue of *Ranger Rick*® magazine

SPEAKING FOR CHEETAHS

In “Cheetah’s Best Friend” (pages 6-11), you meet Chewbaaka, the “spokes-cheetah” for the Cheetah Conservation Fund in Namibia. Chewbaaka helps people learn and care about cheetahs just by his presence, but what if he could talk? Ask students what they think Chewbaaka might have to say to people about cheetah conservation. Then have students write an opinion piece (in the style of a letter to the editor) in Chewbaaka’s voice.

WELCOME WINTER WILDLIFE

In this month’s installment of “Ranger Rick’s Adventures” (pages 12-15), the gang finds relief from an early cold snap in a “dream-come-true” backyard habitat. You, too, can turn your yard or schoolyard into a winter retreat—and enjoy watching wildlife discover it. Engage students in planning and creating some winter habitat features. For ideas, visit nwf.org/backyard and nwf.org/rangerrick. Then start a journal to keep track of the wildlife you observe, including what species visit, how often and at what times of the day, and what behaviors you notice.

FILL THE BILL

Different birds’ bills do a lot of different jobs, as you’ll see in “Cool Tools” (pages 16-22). Give students a chance to experience this firsthand by setting up stations that represent a variety of foods birds eat. For example: a tall vase of water (nectar in a flower); a basin of water with large chunks of foam (fish) and puffed rice (small aquatic plants or animals); nuts or

seeds in shells. Then set out some tools, such as an eyedropper, a strainer or slotted spoon, tongs, and a nutcracker. Students can rotate through the stations, trying the different tools to determine which works best for each application. Afterward, discuss their findings. Could a hummingbird catch fish? Could a heron sip nectar? Of course not! But each bird’s bill is adapted in just the right way for what it does eat.

TRASH CENSUS

After reading “Trash Tracker”(pages 31-35), do some trash tracking of your own. Organize a clean-up project at a park, beach, or trail in your area. Have students keep a running tally of the objects they collect. Which kinds of trash are most abundant? Can you determine the source of some of these items? For instance, are people littering at the site, is litter washing or blowing in from somewhere else, or is there some other explanation? If possible, help students investigate ways they might take action to stop some of the trash at its source.

WHO’S FOR REAL?

As you see in “Who’s the Real Taz?” (pages 36-40), the cartoon Taz and real Tasmanian devils have some things in common—but also some big differences. Have students choose another animal with a cartoon counterpart (such as Bugs Bunny, Donald Duck, or Wile E. Coyote). Then have them write a description or make a Venn diagram indicating the similarities and differences between the cartoon and the real animal.





PRESENTING... PUMPKINS

Check out the amazing jack-o-lantern display in “Blazing Pumpkins” (page 23-26 in the October 2008 *Ranger Rick*). Then imagine you could create your own blazing pumpkin show. Follow the steps below to design your display.

1. What objects or scenes would you make with pumpkins? List your ideas here.

2. Draw a map of your display. Include a path showing where people would walk to see all of the pumpkins.

3. How many pumpkins do you think you'd need to build this display? Estimate the number for each object or scene, and then add up the numbers to get the grand total.

