Ranger Rick

Educator's Guide

Educational extensions for the May 2011 issue of Ranger Rick® magazine

Ranger Ricks OTTERS Eye to Eye

ENDANGERED SPECIES PARADE

Celebrate Endangered Species Day (May 20). Borrow an idea from "Dear Ranger Rick" (page 4): Have students make posters of endangered species and then display them for others to see and learn from. Or make masks and have a parade. You can find a list of endangered species at fws.gov/endangered.

OTTER ADAPTATIONS

"River Babies" (pages 6-11) describes the lives of river otters in their aquatic habitat. Discuss the concepts of habitat and adaptations and have students list the otters' special features, such as streamlined bodies and flaps to close their nose and ears. Then have students use the story to draw a map of the otters' home, including each of the elements necessary for the otters' survival.

SIGHTS AND SOUNDS OF SPRING

"Ask Rick" (page 12) explains that male frogs call in the spring to attract females and keep rivals away. Meanwhile, the spring bird migration brings a variety of birds flocking northward. Take students on a hike to look and listen for signs of spring, including frog and bird activity as well as insects, plants, trees, flowers, and other seasonal happenings.

ANIMAL GARDENERS

In "The Buzz" (page 14), you can read about how damselfish tend "gardens" of seaweed. Other animals also have gardening habits, such as leafcutter ants that cultivate certain fungi. Explore this topic with students, having them compare and contrast the purposes and techniques of animal gardeners with those of human gardeners.

ABCS OF CHICKADEES

Who doesn't love chickadees? Read about these delightful and common birds in "Backyard Wildlife: Chickadees" (pages 16-17). If you and your students aren't already familiar with them, find out what kind(s) live in your area and see if you can spot some. Then engage students in making short picture books about chickadees and their habits. When finished, they could share their books with a class of younger students.

MENUS FOR ALL KINDS OF EATERS

As you learn in "Picky Eaters" (pages 18-23), some animals eat just one thing. Others have more varied diets. Have each student choose an animal and make a restaurant menu of dishes appropriate for that species. For example, a panda might enjoy bamboo smoothies, bamboo salad, and bamboo soup, while a raccoon could be tempted by a wide range of things. Invite students to share menus for both particular and easy-to-please eaters, and discuss how a non-specialized diet generally provides a survival advantage. Ask students if they consider themselves "picky eaters" and whether a limited diet could present any problems for humans.

CAP MATH AND CAP ART

Read about turning bottle caps into colorful art in "Cool Caps" (pages 24–26). Have students save caps for a period of time and then sort the collection by source, size, color, and any other categories you devise. Build math skills by having students create bar graphs or pie charts to show the results. Then use "Fridge Flowers" (page 27) or your own designs to turn the caps into a creative class art project and put it on display.



Narwhal Mysteries



In "The Real Unicorns" (pages 32-35), you learn that there are many mysteries about narwhals. They are hard for scientists to study, which means many questions are still unanswered. Choose one of the questions below:

- 1. What's the purpose of a narwhal's tusk?
- 2. Why do male narwhals sometimes rub their tusks together?
- 3. Why do narwhals become patterned with splotches as adults?
- 4. Why did people once believe narwhal tusks were unicorn horns?

| Circle the question you chose and then invent an explanation to answer it. You can write a realistic explanation (one that could be true) or a fantasy explanation (one that is magical or non-scientific). Use the back of the page if you need more space. |
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Habitat Survey

