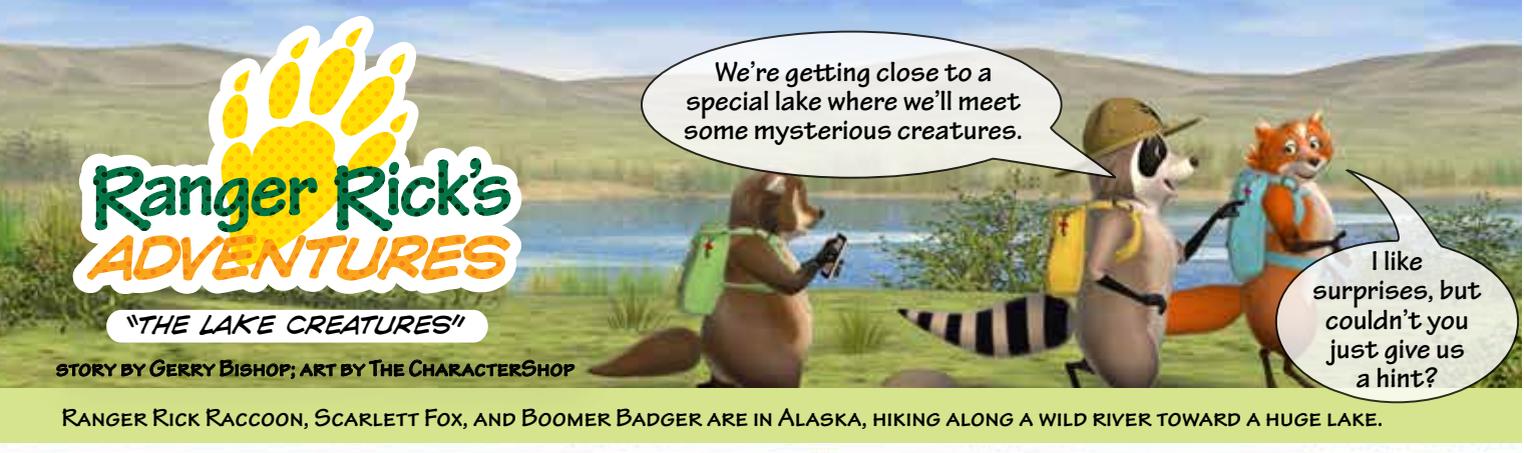


Ranger Rick's ADVENTURES

"THE LAKE CREATURES"

STORY BY GERRY BISHOP; ART BY THE CHARACTERSHOP

RANGER RICK RACCOON, SCARLETT FOX, AND BOOMER BADGER ARE IN ALASKA, HIKING ALONG A WILD RIVER TOWARD A HUGE LAKE.



We're getting close to a special lake where we'll meet some mysterious creatures.

I like surprises, but couldn't you just give us a hint?



Come on, Boomer, let's go.

And I believe we should find a way around these bears.



Biggest lake in all of Alaska. You can't even see the far side!

A SHORT TIME LATER...



What's the lake's name again?

Iliamna. It's spelled just the way it sounds, il-ee-AM-nuh.



WHOA! Google says MONSTERS live there! So, THAT'S what you're not telling us, Rick?



Hey, Scarlett, let me borrow your binoculars. I think I see something coming.

Uh-oh. This could be the big moment!



They're pretty big, and they're swimming to the surface and then going underwater again.

Yes! Yes! That's how the lake monsters swim!

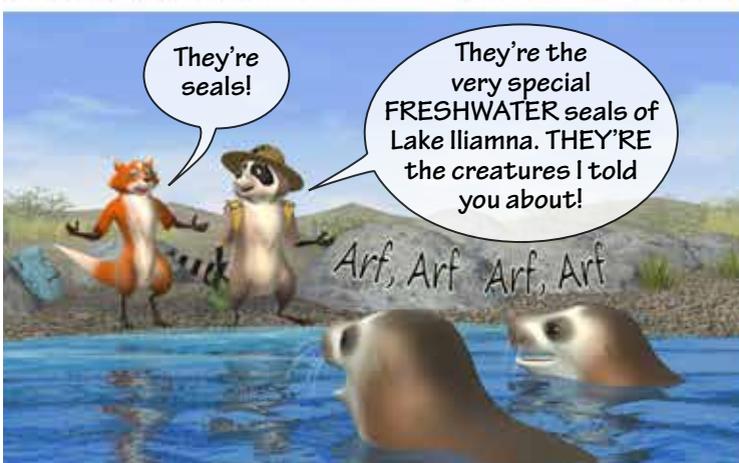


Says here that the monsters have heads and tails like a wolf's and bodies like a killer whale's. They're 30 feet long, and they attack and kill people!



Don't believe everything you read online, Boomer.

Yeah, yeah. I know it's right. Wow — monsters!



They're seals!

They're the very special FRESHWATER seals of Lake Iliamna. THEY'RE the creatures I told you about!



Hi, I'm Massak.

And I'm Nilak. You must be Ranger Rick and Scarlett!



Hey, look—brown bears!

And they're catching salmon! The river is full of 'em!



The salmon are migrating from the ocean to the lake to lay their eggs. Many kinds of animals chow down on the fish for food.

Yep—and it says on my smartphone that the lake monsters eat them, too!

Oh, Boomer. You'll believe anything.



Yes, and Boomer... Boomer?



Boomer, what were you doing?

I was uh... uh... just trying to get out of the wind.

Yeah, right, Boomer. Sure you weren't hiding from, maybe, lake monsters?



You've heard about them, right?

Lake monsters?



Oh, sure—people tell stories.

Aren't you scared?

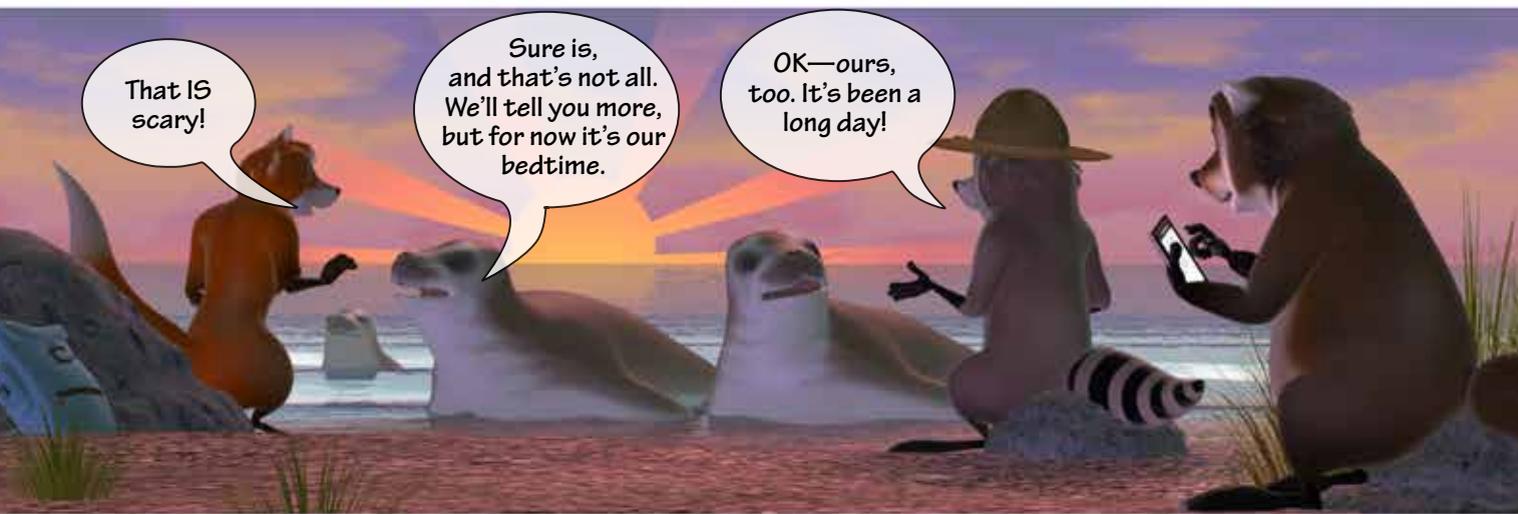
And we don't know if they're true.



Oh, no. Monster stories don't bother us.

We have bigger things to fear.

THE SEALS EXPLAIN THAT COMPANIES WANT TO DIG A MINE NEARBY TO GET AT COPPER AND OTHER MINERALS DEEP UNDERGROUND. THE DIGGING WOULD BRING UP TONS OF ROCK, WATER, AND HARMFUL CHEMICALS, WHICH WOULD BE STORED BEHIND DAMS. BUT IF THE DAMS WERE TO BREAK, THE LAND AND WATERWAYS ALL AROUND WOULD BE POLLUTED WITH THIS WASTE.



That IS scary!

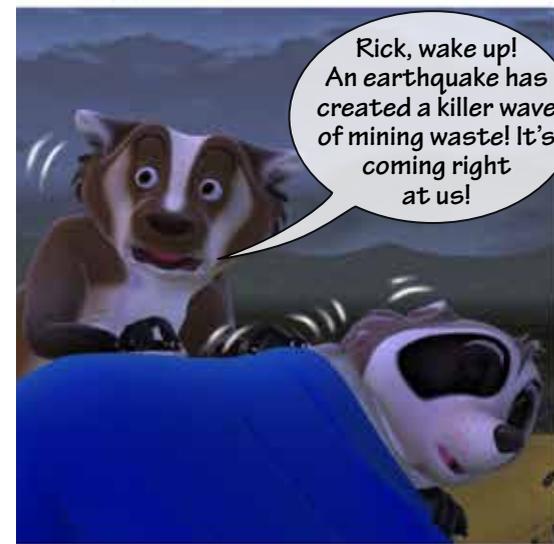
Sure is, and that's not all. We'll tell you more, but for now it's our bedtime.

OK—ours, too. It's been a long day!



Oh, NO! A dam must have broken!

Shhhwwwoossh!

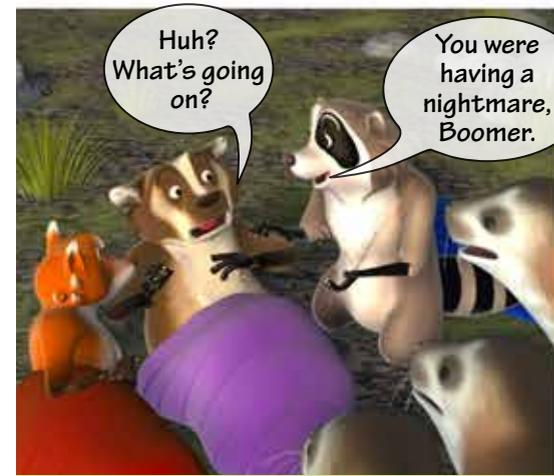


Rick, wake up! An earthquake has created a killer wave of mining waste! It's coming right at us!



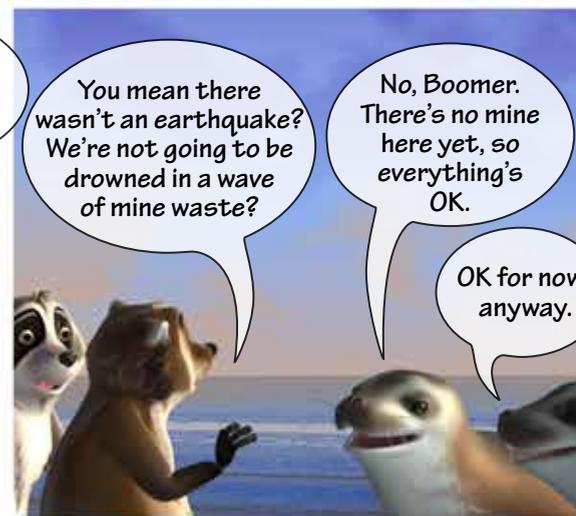
Boomer, you're the one who needs to wake up.

Rick! Wake up! Wake up!



Huh? What's going on?

You were having a nightmare, Boomer.



You mean there wasn't an earthquake? We're not going to be drowned in a wave of mine waste?

No, Boomer. There's no mine here yet, so everything's OK.

OK for now, anyway.



LATER THAT NIGHT...



Huh? The ground's shaking! An earthquake!

Rrrrrumble!
Rrrrrumble!



Massak, Nilak, could anything like that really happen?

Maybe no killer wave, but a mine here would still be a great disaster!



For sure. This is one "monster story" that we hope never turns out to be true!

MORE FACTS

- The mine being planned near Lake Iliamna is called Pebble Mine. But lots of people are trying to stop it from ever happening.
- Many kinds of animals, and many people, depend on the salmon that live in waterways in the area. Mining waste could easily leak into the rivers and lakes and poison the salmon as well as other wildlife.
- The mine would be too far from Lake Iliamna to cause a killer wave like the one in Boomer's dream. But it could destroy many miles of streams and acres of valuable wetlands.
- Even if people are able to stop this mine, they know that some companies may try to get permission to dig other mines that could be harmful to wildlife habitat. They know it's important to keep an eye out for such possibilities.
- Several kinds of seals live in oceans around the world. But seals that live in freshwater, such as those in Lake Iliamna, are rare. Some people think that the Iliamna seals should be put on the U.S. Endangered Species list. This would help protect them from harm.