



Please pass the apple juice, Boomer.



Dang bees! I HATE 'em!



Oh, yeah? If it weren't for bees, there'd be no apples to make that juice.

Cubby's right, Boomer. Pollinators such as bees help bring us all kinds of good things.

Huh?

SCARLETT EXPLAINS THAT MANY KINDS OF INSECTS, BATS, AND BIRDS GO FROM FLOWER TO FLOWER IN SEARCH OF NECTAR TO EAT. AS THEY DO, THEY CARRY THE POLLEN FROM ONE FLOWER TO ANOTHER. PLANTS NEED POLLEN TO MAKE SEEDS AND FRUIT. ANIMALS THAT CARRY POLLEN ARE CALLED "POLLINATORS."



Speaking of pollinators, listen to this. It's a letter from Dee Dee, a butterfly living in Kansas.



"DEAR RANGER RICK: SOMETHING REALLY COOL IS HAPPENING HERE. YOU SHOULD COME CHECK IT OUT. WARNING: BE READY TO MEET A BUTTERFLY BIGGER THAN A HUMAN HOUSE!"

We should see for ourselves. Let's go!

THE NEXT DAY, RICK AND HIS FRIENDS ARE SOARING IN A HOT-AIR BALLOON, HEADING ACROSS THE COUNTRY FOR KANSAS.



Look at all the farmland down there.

Yeah—and almost no wild places. No prairies, no forests, and hardly any backyard flower gardens.

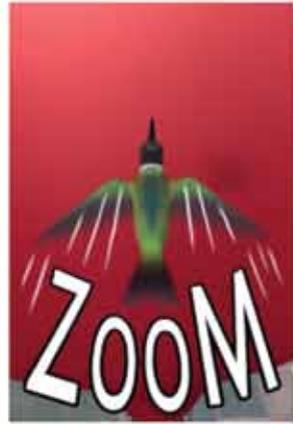


Hey, look—something's coming our way.

Looks like a hummingbird—and he's in a big hurry!



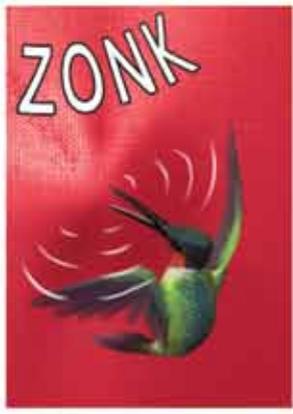
Yikes, he's heading straight for the balloon!



ZOOM



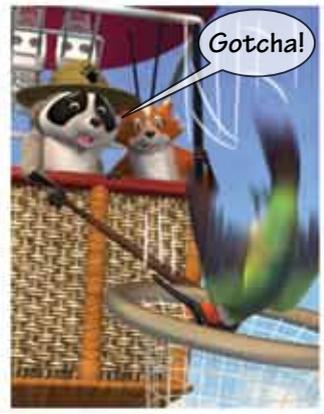
BOING!



ZONK



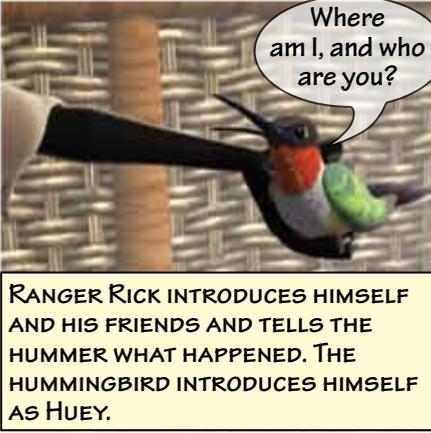
Rick—grab that net, QUICK!



Gotcha!



Come here, little guy.



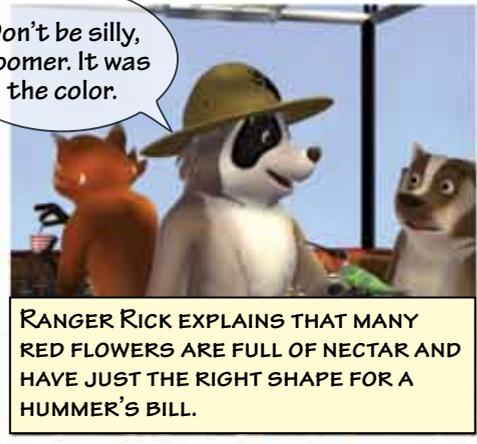
Where am I, and who are you?



Gee, I'm sorry for all the trouble. I'm just so hungry that I lost control of myself!

Hungry enough to eat a balloon?

RANGER RICK INTRODUCES HIMSELF AND HIS FRIENDS AND TELLS THE HUMMER WHAT HAPPENED. THE HUMMINGBIRD INTRODUCES HIMSELF AS HUEY.



Don't be silly, Boomer. It was the color.



Yes, Rick. Trouble is, the right kinds of flowers are getting harder to find.



Here you go, Huey. I mixed up some sugar and water for you. It'll help you get your strength back.

Perfect!

RANGER RICK EXPLAINS THAT MANY RED FLOWERS ARE FULL OF NECTAR AND HAVE JUST THE RIGHT SHAPE FOR A HUMMER'S BILL.

A FEW MINUTES LATER...



Looks as if you're ready to go, Huey!

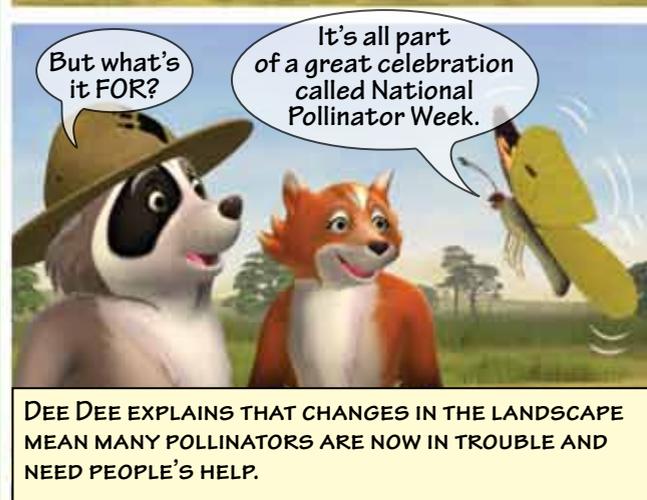
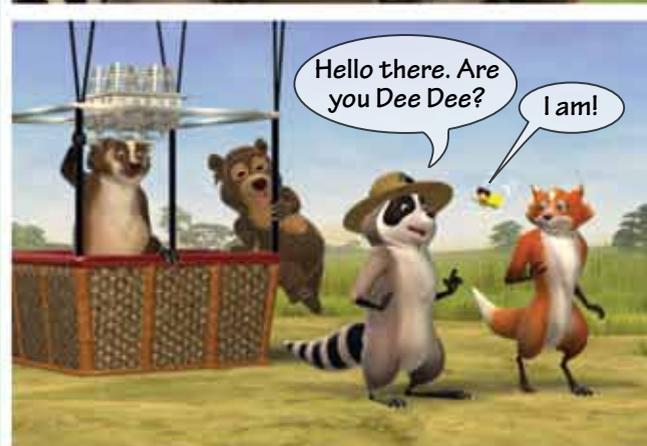
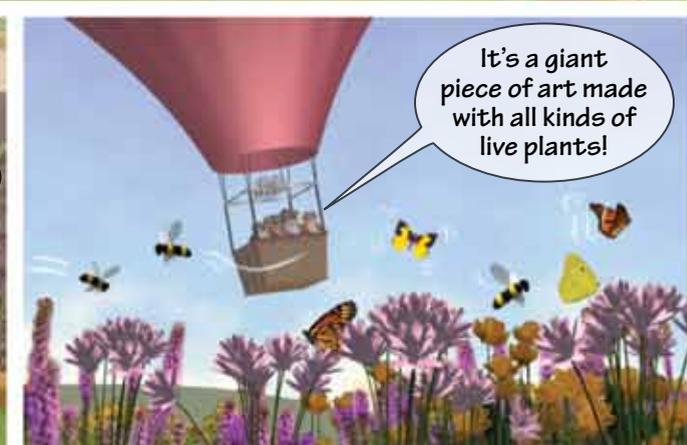
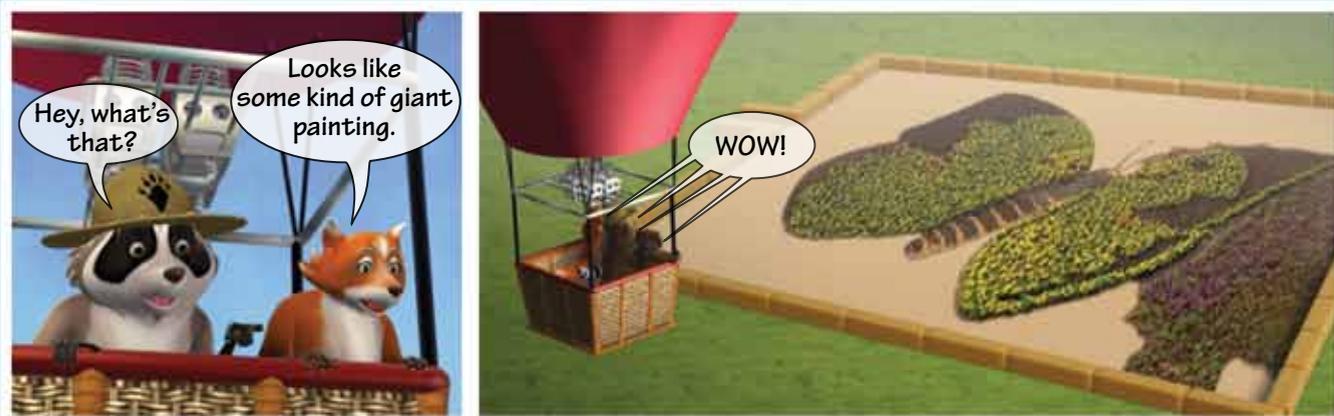
Sure am! Thanks, and goodbye. By the way—you're headed right for an amazing monster butterfly. You can't miss it!

AFTER ABOUT AN HOUR...



These farm fields seem to go on forever!

Yeah, and we're still waiting to see that you-know-what.



DEE DEE EXPLAINS THAT CHANGES IN THE LANDSCAPE MEAN MANY POLLINATORS ARE NOW IN TROUBLE AND NEED PEOPLE'S HELP.

RICK INTRODUCES EVERYONE AND TELLS DEE DEE THAT THE GANG HAS COME TO SEE THE GIANT BUTTERFLY SHE WROTE ABOUT IN HER LETTER.

Hey, what's that?
Looks like some kind of giant painting.

WOW!

So Dee Dee and Huey were RIGHT! There IS a giant butterfly in Kansas!

Let's go down and check it out.
Unbelievable!

It's a giant piece of art made with all kinds of live plants!

Hello there. Are you Dee Dee?
I am!

Isn't it amazing? It's a southern dogface butterfly just like ME!
DOGFACE??

But what's it FOR?
It's all part of a great celebration called National Pollinator Week.

So that's what Huey meant when he said he couldn't find enough of the right kinds of flowers!
That's right. Hummers travel hundreds of miles north every spring. So they need to find food along the way.



Speaking of food, I think we should have a little celebration of our own.
I'm up for that!

My favorite pollinators are honey bees. I wouldn't have my favorite treat—honey—without them!

And don't forget that apple juice you were drinking. Many foods such as apples wouldn't exist without pollinators.

You know, that chocolate came from trees pollinated by tiny flies.

But many of us pollinators need help surviving these days.

We're hoping that people learn more about us during National Pollinator Week this month. Then maybe they'll do more to help!

We'll tell our readers about it. Everyone knows that great things happen when THEY pitch in to help!

SWEET!

MORE FACTS

- About 100 of the most common fruits, nuts, and vegetables come from plants that honey bees pollinate. In fact, thousands of different animal species pollinate plants that are important to people.
- Like all wild creatures, pollinators need habitat—places where they can find food, water, shelter, and space to raise their young. People destroy habitat when they clear land for towns, roads, and farms.
- The good news is that many people care about pollinators. That's what National Pollinator Week (June 18–24) is all about. You and your family can celebrate this special week by helping pollinators right in your own backyard. Find out more by going online to nwf.org/rangerrick.
- The "crop art" butterfly in this story was for real. It was based on a set of U.S. postage stamps that featured pollinators. The art and stamps helped people spread the word about pollinators. How will YOU spread the word?

Ranger Rick