



Educator's Guide

Educational extensions for the December-January 2010 issue of *Ranger Rick*® magazine

COMMUNITY PHOTO CONTEST

Check out the photo contest winners in “Your Best Shots” (page 4). Discuss what makes each of these photos effective. Then organize a nature photo contest for your group or class, your school, or your whole community. Come up with a theme, such as “Nature in Our Neighborhood.” Invite participants to explore their surroundings with a camera and submit their best photos. Then post the photos (anonymously) and let everyone vote for their favorites.

THE WORD ON WALRUSES

Read about walruses in “Two-Ton Tusks” (pages 6-11) to find out why these goofy-looking animals are well equipped to survive in an extreme habitat. Then ask students to draw a walrus, label its major features (such as blubber, flippers, whiskers, and tusks), and add a sentence or two about each feature that describes how this adaptation helps the walrus survive in its habitat.

THAT'S A LAUGH

“The Buzz” (page 13) explains how scientists are discovering that apes—and perhaps other animals, too—can laugh. Discuss this finding with students. What makes students laugh? What does laughter bring to their lives? Does the fact that other animals laugh change the way we humans might think about them? How might it change the way students interact with their pets at home?

SPONGE PLAY

After reading “Meet the Sponges” (pages 18-25), see how much information students “absorbed” by staging

a play about the lives of these under-appreciated animals. Have students cut up and decorate kitchen sponges to make stick puppets. Then invite students to create a script that highlights the main ideas about sponges that they learned from the *Ranger Rick* story.

PULLING FOR PANDAS

The panda pop-quiz in “Panda-Mania” (pages 30-31) explains that, while pandas are still rare, their numbers seem to be rebounding. Have a few students visit the library or search online to find out more about the panda comeback, and then invite them to report their findings to the rest of the group. Other students could research and report on additional aspects of panda biology, using the quiz answers as a starting point.

TOUCAN POEM

Who can write a toucan poem? You can! Read “Toucans” (pages 34-39). Then have students use the bird's fun-to-say name and facts about its fantastic bill to write an amusing but informative poem about toucans.

EXPLORE AFTER DARK

Use the instructions in “Winter Lights” (page 44) to make snow and ice lanterns to light up a dark winter night. Then plan an after-dark walk to experience the sights, sounds, and feelings of this season. Place your lanterns along the path you will travel, and pause along the way to enjoy the frosty air, the stars in the night sky, the wind in the trees, and any night-time animal sounds you might hear.





TOUCAN TRUTHS

Read "Toucans" on pages 34-39 in the December/January 2010 issue of *Ranger Rick*. Then read the statements below. They're all wrong! Using what you learned in *Ranger Rick*, rewrite each sentence to tell the real story about toucans.

1) A toucan's big bill is so heavy that the bird cannot fly.

2) A toucan uses the hooked tip and jagged edges of its bill for killing and eating large animals.

3) The toucan's bill has a built-in heater to keep the bird warm in cold weather.

4) Scientists have proven that toucans recognize each other by their bills and send messages by tapping their bills on tree branches.

5) Toucans aren't very coordinated. They drop anything they try to pick up in their bills.

6) With their massive bills, toucans have no trouble hollowing out trees for their nests.

7) All toucans are black birds with big orange-and-white bills.

8) You can see toucans all around the world.





WINTER SURVIVAL

After you read “Wild Winter Campout” (pages 40-43 in the December/January 2010 issue of *Ranger Rick*), answer the questions below.

The kids in the story had fun camping out in the winter, even in the cold and snow. To stay comfortable, they had to meet some basic survival needs. How did they get each of the following things?

Shelter: _____

Warmth: _____

Food and water: _____

Wild animals that stay active in winter need these same things to survive—but they can't come inside to central heat and a well-stocked refrigerator! Give some examples of how animals such as birds, deer, and squirrels meet their needs in winter.

Shelter: _____

Warmth: _____

Food and water: _____

