



# Educator's Guide

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

## FEED THE BIRDS

Check out “Dear Ranger Rick” (page 4), which features kids who made wreaths stuffed with treats for backyard birds. Then set up your own winter bird-feeding station—a wreath, a seed or suet feeder, pine cones spread with peanut butter, or whatever you choose. Keep a field guide and a journal near the window; encourage students to look up the birds they see and to record their observations in the journal.

## CAMO CONFUSION

“Out of Sight!” (pages 16-21) is all about blending in. Take a camouflage walk to investigate this topic. First, tune up your observation skills with the classic “Unnature Trail” activity from the Sharing Nature Foundation, in which students try to spot “unnatural” objects you have placed along a path. Find step-by-step instructions at [sharingnature.com/activities.pdf](http://sharingnature.com/activities.pdf) (scroll down to page 3). Then continue your walk, looking for camouflaged natural things. Who can spot a squirrel, bird, or insect that blends in with its surroundings?

## IT'S ALL RELATIVE

Read “Mega-Rodent” (pages 22-27) to learn about the largest of the rodent relatives. Discuss the meaning of “mega.” Then, for fun, ask students to imagine a giant counterpart for another small animal. (A toad the size of a hippo? A butterfly with a 10-foot wingspan?) In small groups, have students make a poster showing their invented animal’s appearance, diet, habits, and habitat. Invite each group to present their animal to the rest of the class.

## HAPPIER HOLIDAYS

Boomer adopts a new philosophy about holiday gifts in “Ranger Rick’s Adventures” (pages 28-30). Follow his lead and, as a group, brainstorm some “planet friendly” holiday activities to make the season greener, simpler, and more meaningful. For instance, students could create handmade or edible gifts, design coupons for “gifts of time,” swap unused toys and clothes, or make gift wrap from recycled or reusable materials.

## LIFE IN FAST FORWARD (OR SLOW-MO)

“Ask Rick” (page 31) answers a question about the world’s shortest-lived creatures. How would it feel to live life at a very different pace from our human time scale? Ask students to write a journal entry in the voice of a being with a lifespan much shorter (a gastrotrich, a mayfly) or much longer (a bristlecone pine, a boulder). Starting prompts: “How well do you remember the beginning of your life?” “How slowly or quickly do days or seasons pass?” “What’s on your ‘to-do’ list and how much time do you have to do it?”

## A MODEL AVALANCHE

Read “Avalanche!” (pages 34-39) and visit the *Ranger Rick* Web site ([nwf.org/rangerrick](http://nwf.org/rangerrick)) to see the model avalanche the kids assembled at Keystone Science School. Then get hands-on by making your own avalanche model. Try different combinations of layered ingredients (flour, sugar, etc.), surface material, and slope angle to find out which result in slides. For more specific directions, visit [pbs.org/wgbh/nova/teachers/activities/2418\\_avalanch.html](http://pbs.org/wgbh/nova/teachers/activities/2418_avalanch.html).







# CAPY CONCEPTS

After you read "Mega-Rodent" (pages 22-27 in the December 2008 *Ranger Rick*), make a concept map showing what you learned. List one fact about these giant rodents in each of the bubbles below.

