



Ranger Rick

EDUCATOR'S GUIDE

EDUCATIONAL EXTENSIONS FOR THE MARCH 2014 ISSUE OF RANGER RICK® MAGAZINE

POSTCARDS FROM FAR AWAY

In “Dear Ranger Rick” (page 4), Solomon’s letter describes his family’s trip to Alaska, including a visit to a far-off place with no roads to get there. Have students find Seldovia on a map. Then ask them to imagine their own adventurous trips to remote places—anywhere in the world! Where would they go, and what would they do? Have them write and illustrate postcards to exchange with each other about their imagined journeys.

FARM IN THE CITY

“The Buzz” (pages 6-7) features a garden growing on the roof of a city bus in Spain and goats performing weed control in the nation’s capital. Are people bringing the farm into the city in any way where you live? Investigate! Even better, start a project at your school that brings fresh food, wildlife habitat, or ecological solutions right to your school grounds. The National Wildlife Federation’s Eco-Schools USA (eco-school-susa.org) and Schoolyard Habitats (nwf.org/school-yard) programs can help you get started.

ANIMAL PLAY OBSERVATION

After reading “Animals at Play” (pages 8-15), ask students to observe animals playing. Dogs and cats are surely the easiest examples to find. With a little luck, you might also see squirrels, crows, or other wild creatures doing playful things. Or you could plan to observe animals during a trip to the zoo. Have students categorize the types of play they see (such as social play, object play, and interaction with habitat). After reading the article and making their observations, ask students to articulate their own ideas about why animals play. For more on animal play, check out the book *Animals at Play: Rules of the Game* by Marc Bekoff.

LINKS FOR LYNXES

The title of “The Missing Lynx” (pages 16-21) is a play on words. It’s not just the Iberian lynx that has gone missing. For the lynxes to make a comeback, crucial links in the food chain and habitat must be restored, too. The lynxes need plenty of rabbits to eat and safe places to reproduce. Discuss the various parts of this complex topic with students. Then work together to draw a concept map of the connections—or links—between the lynx and the other factors that are contributing to their success story.

TREEFROGS IN SONG

Are you feeling musical? After reading “Treetop Hoppers” (pages 26-31), engage students in composing a song with verses about the characteristics of treefrogs. (Perhaps you’d like to invite a musically talented parent to help.) Then perform your song, with students accompanying on noisemakers (such as combs, rubber bands, jingle bells, etc.) to create a frog chorus.

MAKE A MINI-CAROUSEL

Inspired by the wild variety of animals in “Wild Carousel” (pages 32-35), have students create animal stick puppets. (They can draw and cut out animals or assemble them from colored construction paper, then glue them onto paint stirring sticks.) You might focus on endangered animals or animals native to where you live. Stage a mini-carousel, parading round and round to show off your animals. This could be a fun activity for a spring celebration such as Earth Day (April 22) or Endangered Species Day (May 16).



ANIMAL PLAY GUESSING GAME



After reading "Animals at Play" (pages 8-15), write descriptions of three different animals playing. Use the examples in the article or other animals you know about. But don't include the animal's name in your description! Just describe, using lots of

details, (1) what the animal does, (2) how it moves, and (3) any companions or objects (siblings, parents, water, trees, snow, etc.) that might be part of its game. Then trade descriptions with a partner. Can each of you guess which animals the other described?

MYSTERY ANIMAL #1

PARTNER'S GUESS: _____

How it plays: _____

MYSTERY ANIMAL #2

PARTNER'S GUESS: _____

How it plays: _____

MYSTERY ANIMAL #3

PARTNER'S GUESS: _____

How it plays: _____





THE UPS AND DOWNS OF THE IBERIAN LYNX

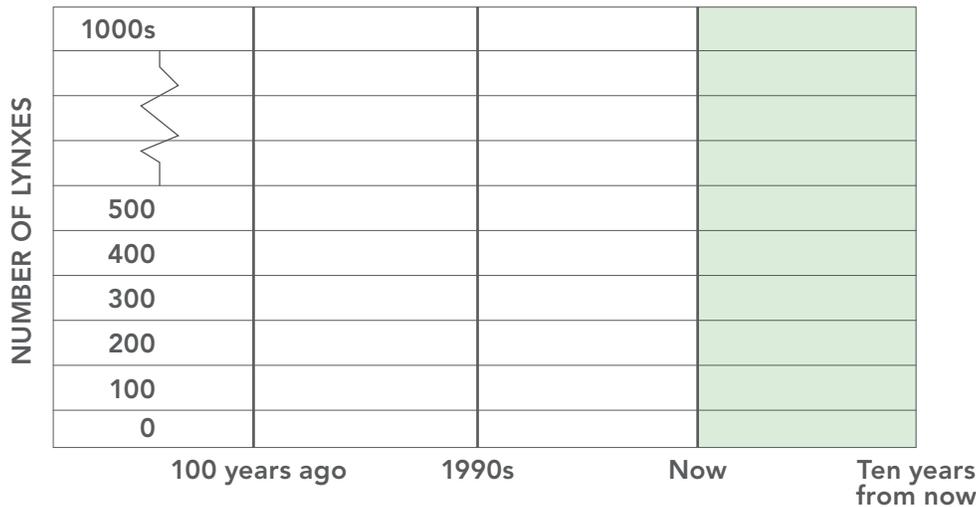
Read "The Missing Lynx" (pages 16-21). Use the information in the article to fill in the blanks below about the size of the Iberian lynx population during different time periods.

Number of Iberian lynxes 100 years ago: _____

Number of Iberian lynxes in the 1990s: _____

Number of Iberian lynxes today: _____

Use the numbers you filled in above to make a graph showing the changes in the Iberian lynx population over time. First make a dot for each of the numbers above. Then connect the dots to make a curve.



The number of lynxes is closely tied to the number of rabbits. The lynxes can survive and multiply only if they have plenty of rabbits to eat. If the number of rabbits goes up, the number of lynxes will likely rise soon, too. If the number of rabbits goes down, the number of lynxes will go down soon after that. On the graph, add another curve, using a different color, for the rabbit population. Your curve should show how you think the rabbit population changed over this same amount of time.

Now use your graph to make a prediction. What do you think will happen to these curves over the next 10 years? Will the lynx and rabbit populations go up, down, or stay at the same level? On the shaded part of the graph, extend your two curves using dotted lines.

Why do you think the lynx and rabbit populations will follow the curves you drew?

