SOUNDS LIKE . . .
Remind students that homonyms are words that sound alike but have different meanings. Sometimes homonyms have different spellings; other times they do not. Select a student to read all seven stanzas of the Critter Crackups (page 5) poem. Encourage the rest of the class to read along silently, looking for homonyms in the poem. Ask students to identify the homonym pairs (yak/yak, bore/boar, fly/fly, skate/skate, swallow/swallow) as well as word pairs that are almost homonyms (lie/lion, cheat/cheetah, rob/robin). Point out that in the poem the first word in the pair is always a verb and the second is the name of an animal (noun).

Encourage students to write and illustrate similar animal poems of their own. If students struggle with appropriate homonym or near-homonym pairs, suggest some of the following: flee/flea, be/bee, bare/bear, wail/whale, bat/bat, ram/ram, bully/bull, rein in/reindeer, outfox/fox.

ADVENTURES IN GREAT BEAR RAIN FOREST
In “Spirit Bears” (pages 6–11), students glimpse into the private world of spirit bears. These bears live solely in the Great Bear Rainforest of British Columbia, Canada, which is the largest undisturbed forest of its kind. A 2006 agreement preserves five million acres of the forest for wildlife. Encourage students to read more about this awesome forest and efforts to preserve it in the November 2009 Ranger Rick’s Adventures story available online at nwf.org/Kids/Ranger-Rick/Adventures.aspx. A good children’s book on spirit bears and their habitat is Spirit Bear by Jennifer Harrington (EcoBooks 4 Kids).

After students have done some extra reading, suggest they select another animal from the Great Bear Rainforest (e.g., sea wolf, Pacific salmon, wolverine, Sitka deer, goshawk) and write an adventure story about its life in Great Bear Rainforest. Children can write the story in a comic format similar to Ranger Rick’s Adventures or as a standard narrative.

IT’S COOL TO STAY IN SCHOOL
In “Good Reasons to Stay in Schools” (pages 14–19), students discover that, for some fish, schooling is a smart way to survive. The following subheads appear in the article: Circle Time, Field Trips, Quick Studies, Cafeteria Line, Schoolmates, School Uniforms. After the class has read the story, write these on chart paper or a chalkboard. Discuss how each subhead represents a reason for fish to participate in a school. Encourage students to page through the article for information that helps them elaborate on these “reasons.” Then ask students how the subheads might represent reasons for them to do some schooling of their own. What are other reasons that “schools rule” for them?

MONARCH MANIA
This issue’s Ranger Rick’s Adventures (pages 20–23) is about monarch butterflies. If monarchs live in your area, your students have an excellent opportunity for hands-on observation. Here are some options:

• Invite monarchs to visit by planting a butterfly garden with milkweed and nectar plants. Go to monarchwatch.org for more information on creating an official Monarch Waystation.

• Look for the nearest milkweed patch and see if you can spot any monarchs. If you find caterpillars, bring them back, feed them fresh milkweed each day, and keep them until they turn into butterflies.

• Visit Journey North at learner.org/jnorth/monarch to check out the annual migration map. Get updates on the monarch’s progress and, if you spot monarchs in your area, add your sighting to the map. On this site, you’ll also find lots of other good resources for teaching about monarchs.
Spirit bears are a type of black bear. They have a lot—but not everything—in common with other black bears as you learned from reading “Spirit Bears,” pages 6–11. Look at the diagram below. Where the circles overlap, list at least five things all black bears have in common. Outside the overlapping areas, list things that make spirit bears and other black bears different from each other.
Select two animals from the “Stranger Than Fiction” story, pages 24-29, and write their names here:

ANIMAL 1: ____________________________________________________________

ANIMAL 2: ____________________________________________________________

What might these animals wonder about each other’s “strange” qualities? Imagine a question-and-answer session in which the two discuss how being unusual helps them survive. Write the conversation below. (Be sure to use quotation marks correctly.)

(ANIMAL 1) :

(ANIMAL 2) :

(ANIMAL 1) :

(ANIMAL 2) :

(ANIMAL 1) :

(ANIMAL 2) :

(ANIMAL 1) :

(ANIMAL 2) :

(ANIMAL 1) :