



Ranger Rick

EDUCATOR'S GUIDE

EDUCATIONAL EXTENSIONS FOR THE FEBRUARY 2015 ISSUE OF RANGER RICK® MAGAZINE

SEA OTTER STORY

In “**Floating Through Life**” (pages 6-11), students learn that sea otters eat, sleep, and even give birth to their babies on water. Have students create a picture book (fiction or nonfiction) about how well these endearing animals are suited to aquatic life. Ask children to add illustrations and address these questions:

- How does a sea otter spend its days?
- What adaptations (body parts and behaviors) help it survive in its watery habitat?

YOU'VE GOT A FRIEND!

Have students choose one of the animal pairs in the article “**Best Buddies**” (pages 14-17) and use what they read about the pair’s special friendship to create two Valentine’s Day cards—one from each animal to the other. The messages should describe what each creature cherishes about the other.

ANIMAL ARCHITECTS

After students have read “**Master Builders**” (pages 22-28), have them complete the “Animal Builders” Student Page. Then encourage students to refer to their completed pages as you discuss the following questions:

- Why do animals build structures?
- What kinds of structures do they build?
- What are some basic materials used to make these structures?
- What are some advantages and disadvantages of using each of these materials? (Cover concepts such as strength, flexibility, availability, water resistance, camouflage potential, attractiveness, and how easy the material is to build with.)
- Why is this article called “Master Builders”? What would be another good title?

MODEL HOMES

Invite students to build an animal home, diorama-style. They might choose to make a realistic representation of one of the structures in the “**Master Builders**” story or to invent one that reflects their own ideas for an animal mentioned in the article. Give each “builder” time to explain his or her home to the class. Conclude the discussion by asking students the following: Was it easy to build your diorama home? Would it be easier for the animal to build it? Why or why not?

BELLY-BUTTON WILDLIFE

In “**Open Wide, Look Inside**” (pages 30-32), students learn that tiny, one-celled life forms called *microbes* live inside their mouths. Others live on their skin, in their guts, and guess what, even in their belly buttons! Go online at navels.yourwildlife.org to show students some photos of belly-button microbes. So far, scientists have found about 2300 microbial species in belly buttons. But just eight of those species seem to be frequent and abundant. And about 99% of them don’t harm people. As with microbes in the mouth, some can even help people stay healthy. To learn more about belly-button wildlife, go online at kidshealth.org/kids and do a search for “What’s in Your Belly Button?” After students have read this article, ask the following:

- How is your belly button like a rainforest?
- In Japan, many mothers tell their children not to wash their belly buttons or they’ll get a stomach ache. Why would they say this? Do you think it is good advice?
- About 90% of the cells within us are not ours—they are microbes. Is this a good or bad thing?
- Scientists say that living with microbes is a balancing act. What do they mean by this?



ANIMAL BUILDERS



Use what you learned from reading “Master Builders,” pages 22–28, to complete the following chart.

ANIMAL BUILDER	NAME OF STRUCTURE(S)	BUILDING MATERIALS	SKETCH
BOWERBIRD			
TERMITE			
BEAVER			
PAPER WASP			
WEAVER ANT			



PICTURE THIS!



After reading about fishers in this month's Ranger Rick's Adventures, pages 19–21, go online to find actual photos of these animals (if possible, get photos of Pacific fishers). Print out a few examples.

1. Take a close look at the fisher photos. How would you describe this animal to someone who has never seen one? Start by making a list of specific details on the lines below.

2. Find someone who has never seen a fisher to be your partner in this activity. Give him or her a blank sheet of paper and a pencil. Ask your partner to draw a fisher as you describe it. Turn your back and don't look at your partner's drawing! Use your notes (above) to help you remember all the important details.

3. When you finish describing, and your partner finishes drawing, put the photos and drawing side by side.

- How does the drawing look like a real fisher?

- What is wrong or missing in the drawing?

4. How could you have changed or added to your description to help your partner draw the fisher more accurately?

