



# Ranger Rick

# EDUCATOR'S GUIDE



EDUCATIONAL EXTENSIONS FOR THE OCTOBER 2021 ISSUE OF RANGER RICK® MAGAZINE

## DESIGN CHALLENGE: TUNNEL VISION

Prairie dogs are adorable. But more importantly, they play an essential part in the ecosystem and live fascinating lives! In **“Welcome to Prairie Dog Town”** on **pages 6–11**, we learned that prairie dogs share space with an active community of family members... and predators! They design their burrows as comfy homes, with specific chambers to keep them safe from predators and weather. Have students pretend that they are prairie dogs. Then, using what they learned from the story, they should design their own burrows with features to keep them safe and comfortable.

## PICK YOUR POISON!

As we read in **“Nobody Bothers Me”** on **pages 14–19**, many animals have developed fascinating (and sometimes deadly!) venomous adaptations to capture prey or to defend themselves. While the creatures in this article are all found in the ocean, venomous animals are found in various habitats. Have students research what venomous creatures may live in their state or region using the questions below. Then have them choose how they'd like to share what they've learned. Suggestions include storytelling, a digital presentation, or a work of art.

- In which habitats do these animals live?
- How do these animals disperse their venom? Do they use their venom primarily to subdue prey, protect themselves, or both?
- No bad guys! Have students discuss how even venomous creatures play an important role in nature.
- Have students imagine they are venomous creatures, either ones that exists or ones they imagine. Have them describe the creatures' characteristics and behavior.

## WILD NEIGHBORS

In **“Central Park”** on **pages 20–22**, Rick, Scarlett, and Boomer had an exciting time exploring New York City's Central Park. It may be surprising to encounter wildlife in the middle of a city, but parks and yards can provide an inviting habitat for animals. Help your students find opportunities to discover local urban wildlife:

- Have the class discuss animals they have seen in their yards, neighborhoods, schoolyards, and parks and brainstorm about other animals who may live nearby. Better yet, take a walk with students to see what animals can be discovered!
- Discuss what animals need to live in a particular habitat (food, water, shelter, and a place to raise young). Ask students to think about the animals they've seen locally: What are some examples of how these animals are finding what they need? How can humans help support the needs of wildlife in the city?

## TAG—YOU'RE IT!

In the article **“Bird Girl”** on **pages 33–35**, ten-year-old Ayla travels to Africa to band vultures with her father. Tagging and banding wildlife are key methods scientists use to learn more about animals' habits, travels, and lives. This helps scientists understand the animals better and protect them more effectively.

But to make a difference for wildlife, you don't have to travel all the way to Africa! Programs like this occur worldwide, and there are likely some opportunities in your community. Have students research wildlife monitoring and citizen science opportunities online or contact their state wildlife or natural resources agency to find volunteer opportunities.





# FEEL THE STING

In “Nobody Bothers Me” on pages 14–19, you learned about some fascinating ocean creatures that use some deadly tricks! Match each ocean creature below with the way it uses its venom to hunt prey and defend itself.

## OCEAN CREATURE

Lionfish

Blue-ringed octopus

Box jellyfish

Stonefish

Cone snail

Sea krait

## HOW VENOM IS USED

Sharp fangs that shoot venom

Venomous spines on back

Stinging spines in fins

Venomous “harpoon” that shoots from mouth

Tentacles lined with venomous stingers

Two kinds of venom in saliva paralyze or kill

Pick one animal to learn more about. Draw and name the creature in the box below and provide information about its habitat, prey and current conservation status

## HABITAT

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## PREY

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## CONSERVATION STATUS

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# FUNGUS FACTS

Fungi are fun and fascinating! After reading "Fungus Among Us" on pages 24–30, see how many fungus facts you know below. If you come across a false answer, rewrite it to make it true.

- 1 The main part of a fungus is a rootlike structure called a mycelium.  


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- 2 Spores are the seed-like part of a fungus that can spread by wind, rain or being carried by animals.  


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- 3 A mycelium is very easy to spot.  


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- 4 Scientists think that some mushrooms glow in the dark so it's easier for humans to find their way through the woods at night.  


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- 5 Some fungi smell gross to attract insects that will carry spores away to grow new fungi.  


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- 6 Even if the middle of an underground mycelium dies, the living edges can still continue to sprout a ring of mushrooms that grows bigger over the years.  


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ANSWERS: 1) TRUE 2) TRUE 3) TRUE 4) FALSE 5) FALSE 6) TRUE

