



**READ & PLAY
WITH
RICKY**



F Is for Frog



Find four animals that start with the letter **F**.
Find an animal that ends with the letter **F**.



ANSWERS: firefly, flamingo, fox, fish
Animal that ends in "F" is wolf.





Old Green

STORY BY KATHY KRANKING ■ ILLUSTRATIONS BY CHRISTIAN SLADE

A few years ago, Ricky Raccoon and his friends celebrated spring in a special way. They hiked to the biggest, oldest tree in Deep Green Wood. Then they had a picnic under the tree. Today they were going back!

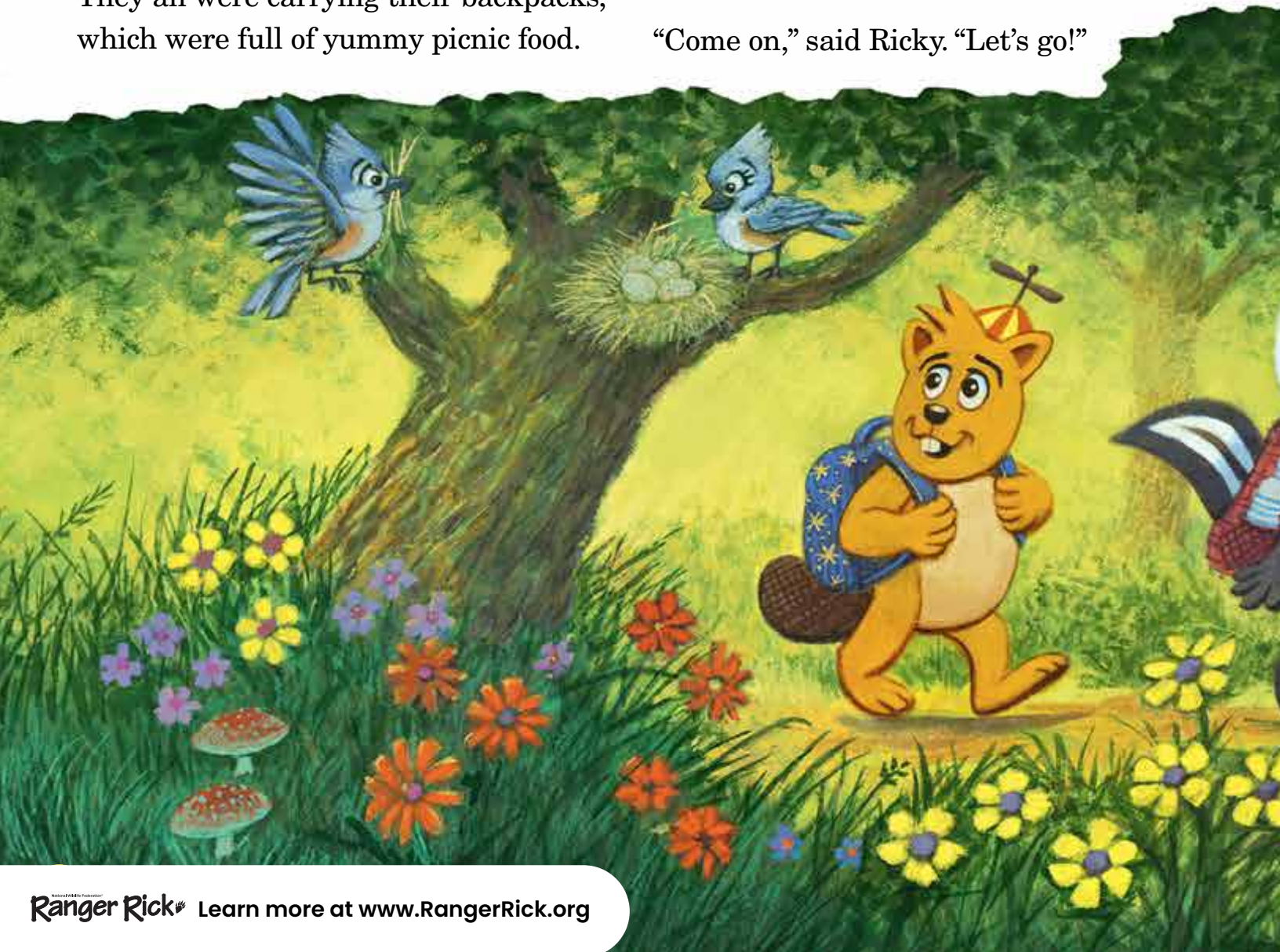
Ricky had just met up with Bizzie Beaver, Mitzi Mink, and Flora Skunk. They all were carrying their backpacks, which were full of yummy picnic food.

“I can’t wait to see ‘Old Green’ again,” said Ricky.

“Yes,” agreed Flora. “It will be covered with bright-green new leaves.”

“I love how the branches hung all around us when we sat under the tree. It was like being inside a leafy room!” Bizzie said.

“Come on,” said Ricky. “Let’s go!”



Old Green was on the other side of Deep Green Wood. It took a long hike to get there. On the way, the friends saw lots of signs of spring. Birds were building nests. Flowers bloomed along the path. And the breeze blew soft and warm.

“I’ll be glad when we get there,” said Bizzie. “I’m getting hungry.”

“Don’t worry,” Mitzi said. “We will be there soon.”

“I sent a note to Mrs. Cardinal,” said Ricky. “So maybe she’ll meet us there.”

The friends walked on. They were almost to the part of the woods where Old Green grew. But as they got closer, something seemed different.

“Don’t we usually see Old Green by now?” asked Flora.

“I thought so,” said Ricky. The friends kept walking.

“Wait a minute,” said Mitzi. “Look at that.” She pointed at a tree in the distance. It was big. It was tall. It was right where Old Green should have been. But it was . . .



“Dead!” exclaimed Ricky. “Old Green is dead! I can’t believe it!”

They started running. When they got closer to the big tree, the four friends stopped and stared.

“What do you think happened to it?” Bizzie asked sadly.

“I can answer that question for you,” said a familiar voice. They saw their friend Mrs. Cardinal standing on one of Old Green’s limbs.

“Mrs. C!” they all shouted. “What happened to Old Green?”

“Old Green got hit by lightning during a storm last year,” Mrs. C said.

The friends stared at the gray, leafless tree. It looked bare and lonely. “I can’t think of anything sadder than a dead tree,” said Flora.

“Actually,” said Mrs. C, “a dead tree is not sad at all. For lots of animals, it’s a happy sight.”

“How could a dead tree be a good thing?” asked Mitzi.

“Take a closer look at Old Green,” said Mrs. C, “and you’ll see how.”

They all walked closer to the tree. They looked carefully. And then they began to notice some things.

“Hey, a woodpecker just flew into that hole in Old Green’s trunk,” said Ricky.

“A dead tree makes a great place for woodpeckers and some other birds to nest,” explained Mrs. C.

“Look at that little bird,” Flora said. “It’s pecking at Old Green’s bark.”

“Tons of insects live under the bark of a dead tree,” Mrs. C explained. “It’s a wonderful place for animals to find food.”

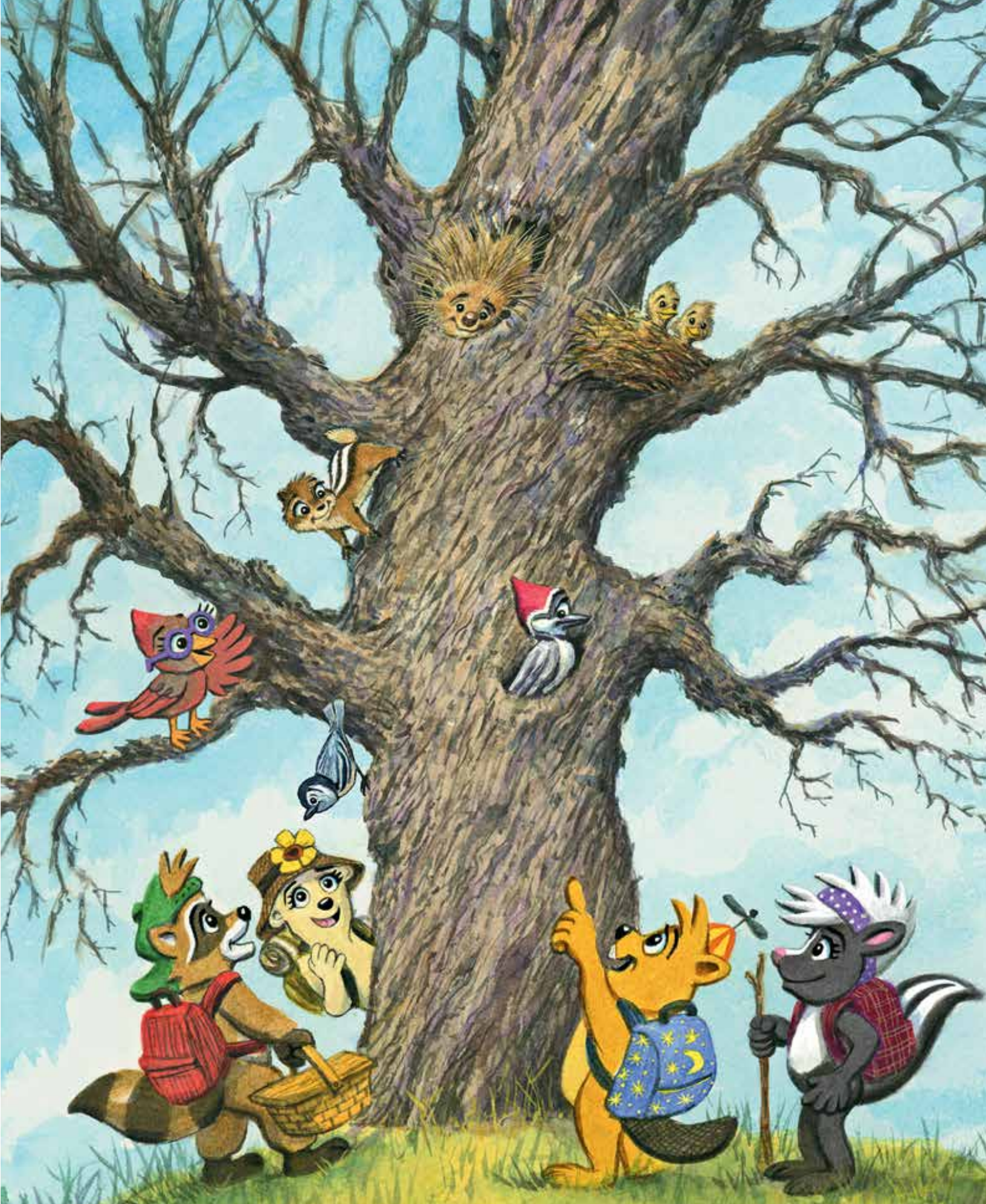
“Check it out!” cried Bizzie. “There’s a porcupine peeking out of a hole way up the trunk!”

“Lots of animals make their homes inside a dead tree,” said Mrs. C. “A dead tree is many things to many animals. It can be a restaurant, a bedroom, a nursery, or just a place to hang out.”

“I think we need to rename Old Green,” said Flora. “Maybe its name should be Old Gray now.” The friends all agreed.

“You know what?” said Ricky. “Even though Old Gray is dead, it’s still full of life! And I think it’s still a great place to have our picnic.”

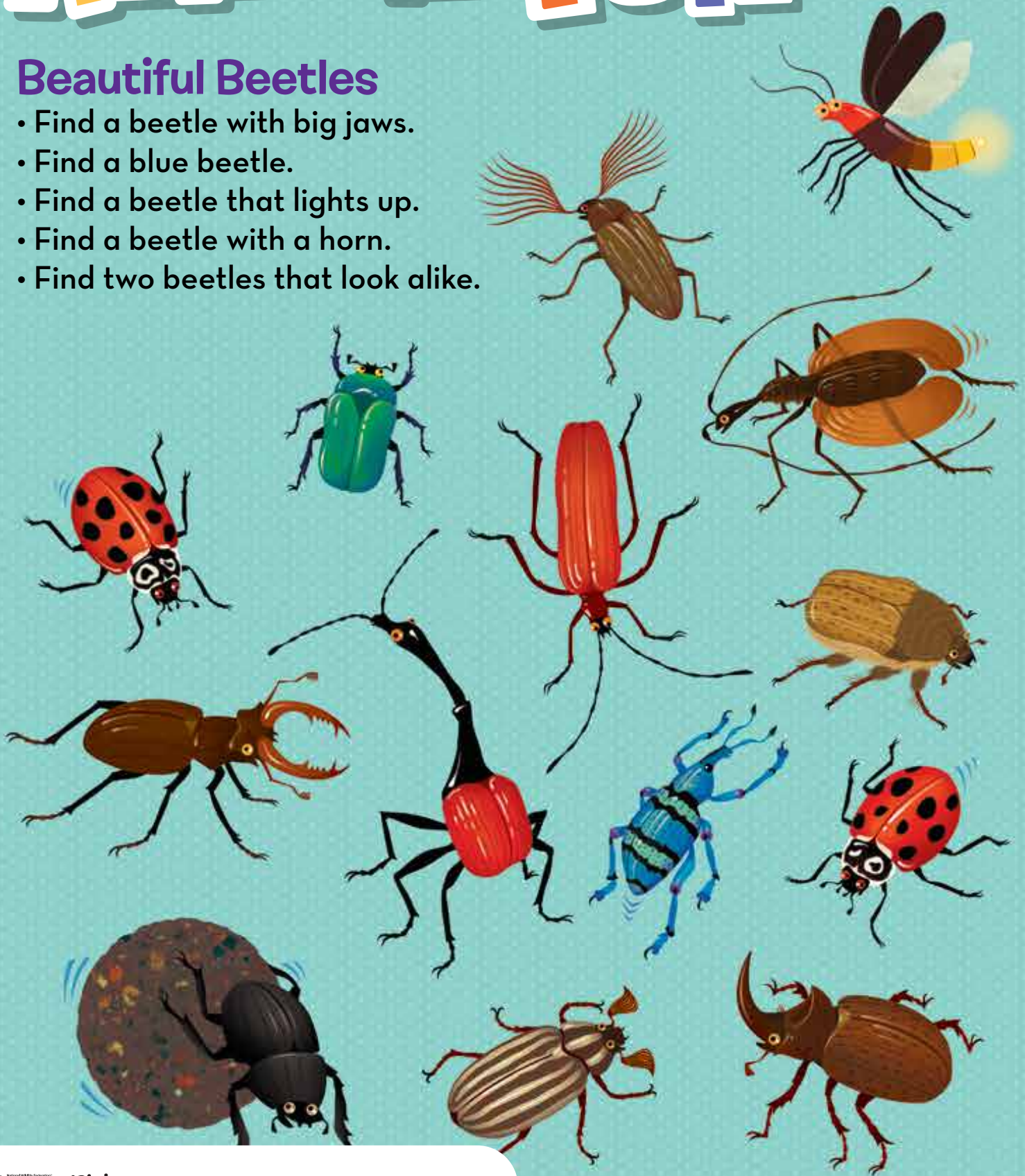
So that’s just what the friends did.

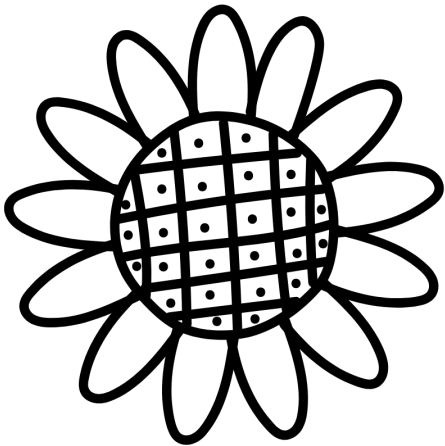
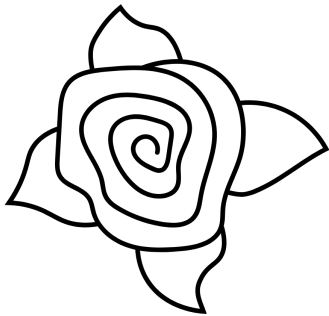
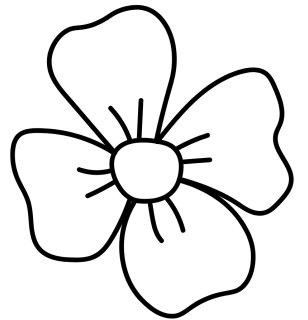
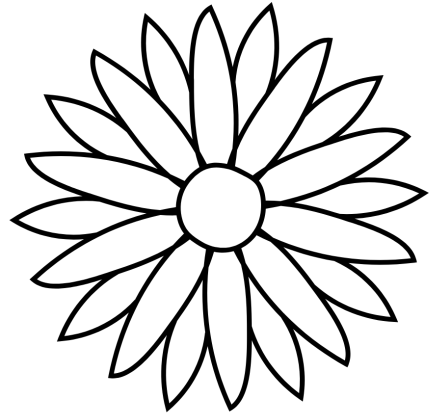


Animal Fun

Beautiful Beetles

- Find a beetle with big jaws.
- Find a blue beetle.
- Find a beetle that lights up.
- Find a beetle with a horn.
- Find two beetles that look alike.

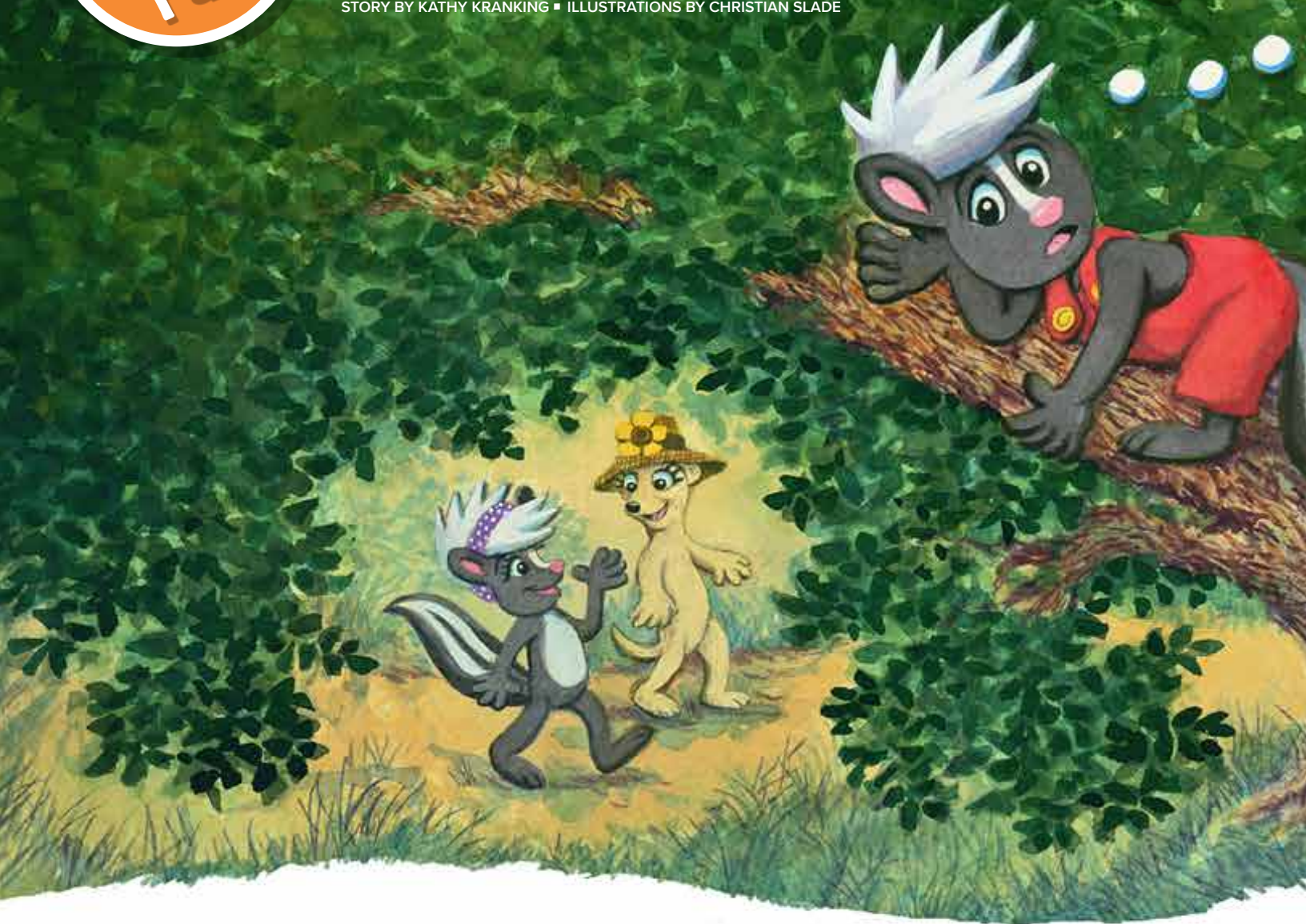






What Did You Say?

STORY BY KATHY KRANKING ■ ILLUSTRATIONS BY CHRISTIAN SLADE



Sammy Skunk was on a spy mission. Tomorrow would be his birthday, and he was trying to find out about his party. His sister, Flora Skunk, refused to tell him anything.

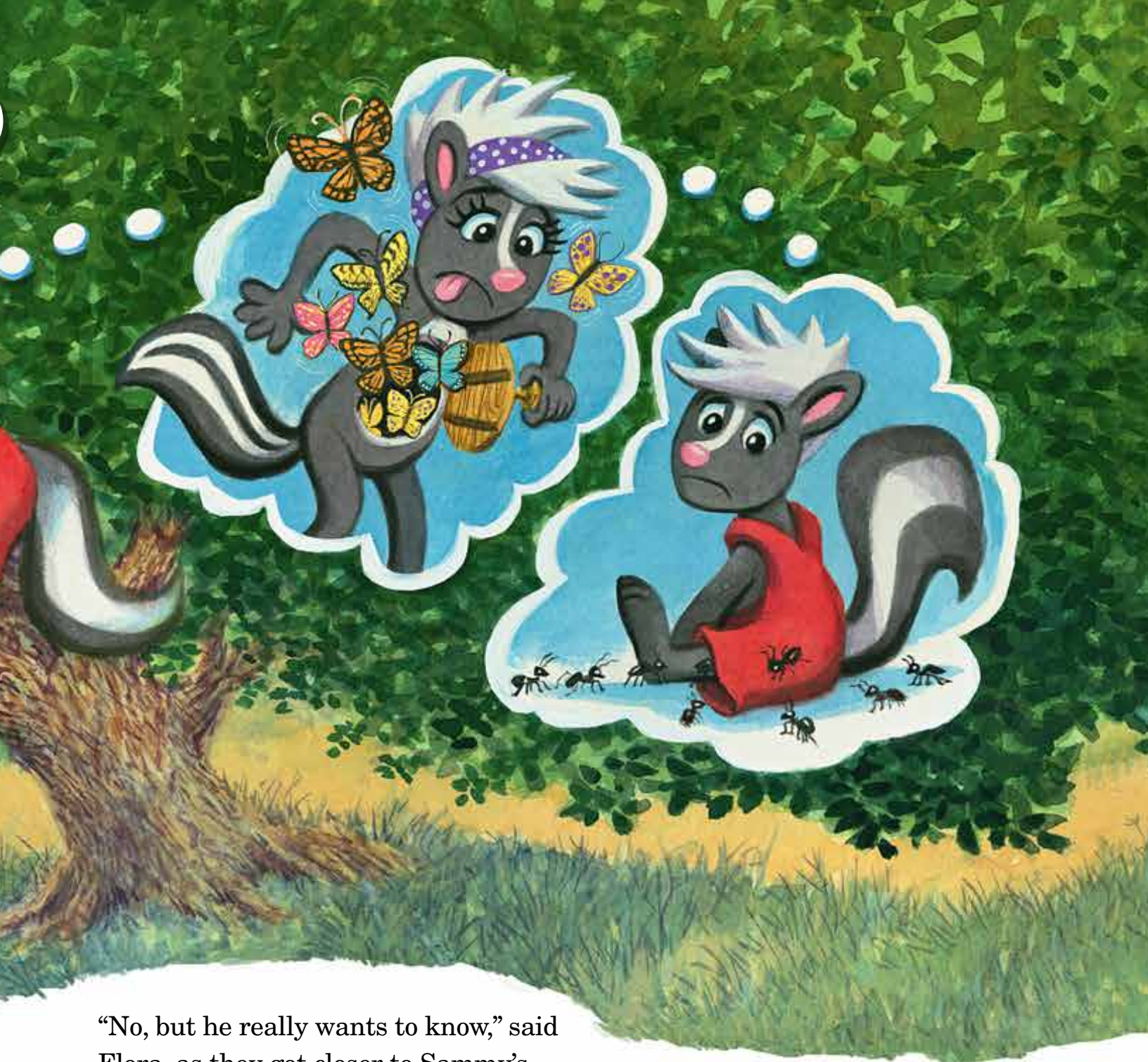
“It’s a surprise,” she had told him.

But Sammy wanted to know. So now he was perched in a tree along the path in the woods.

He knew Flora and Mitzi Mink were coming his way. And he hoped to hear them talking about the party.

Soon he could see Flora and Mitzi in the distance. But he couldn’t hear what they were saying yet.

“Has Sammy found out anything about his party?” Mitzi asked Flora.



“No, but he really wants to know,” said Flora, as they got closer to Sammy’s tree. “I’m nervous that he will find out.” And just as they walked below Sammy where he could hear them, Flora added, “I have butterflies in my stomach.”

Mitzi grinned. “And Sammy has ants in his pants!” she said. She and Flora both laughed. They kept walking, and Sammy couldn’t hear anything else.

Sammy frowned. He was puzzled. “What did all that mean?” he asked himself. He looked down at his overalls. He didn’t see any ants. And he didn’t feel any, either. “Why would Mitzi say that?” he wondered. “And what did Flora mean? Did she eat some butterflies? Yuck!”

Just then, Sammy heard more voices. It was Ricky Raccoon and Bizzie Beaver, but at first they were too far away for Sammy to hear them.

“Well, so much for that,” Ricky was saying. “We went berry-picking and couldn’t find any berries.”

“Yeah,” said Bizzie, as they passed under Sammy’s tree. “That was a real wild goose chase!”

Now Sammy was more confused than ever. “Why would Ricky and Bizzie be chasing wild geese?” he asked himself. “There sure are a lot of strange things going on around here.”

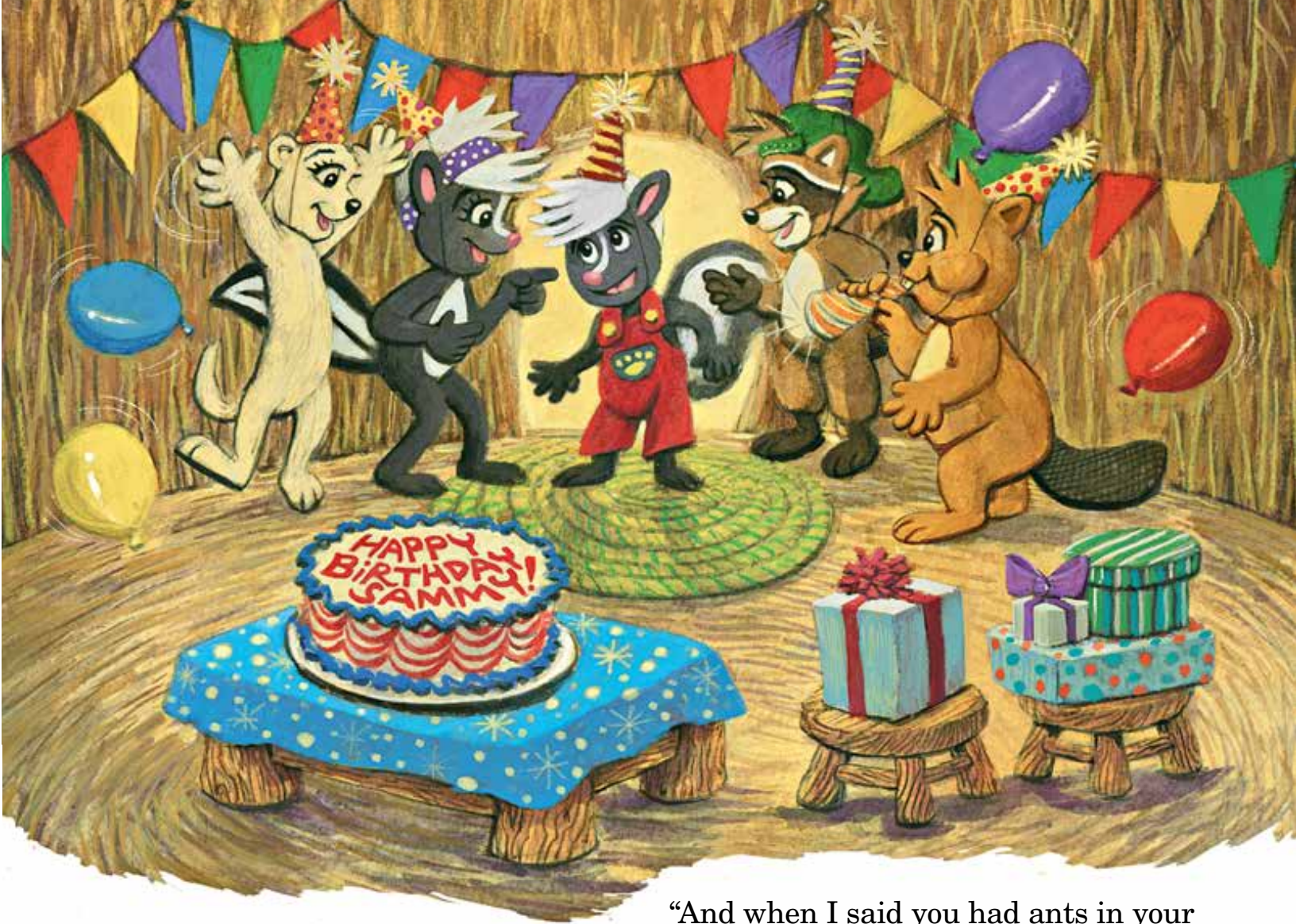
Still puzzled, Sammy climbed down out of the tree. He walked along, deep in thought, trying to make sense of what he had heard.

As Sammy opened his front door, he saw Flora, Ricky, Bizzie, and Mitzi. “Surprise!” they all shouted. Birthday decorations were all around, and a big cake was on the table.

“But my birthday isn’t until tomorrow,” Sammy said.

“I know,” giggled Flora, as she put a party hat on Sammy’s head. “I wanted to surprise you, and I knew you weren’t expecting the party today.”





Sammy smiled. But then he remembered what a confusing day he'd had. "Wait a minute," he said. "Today I overheard lots of crazy things. Flora had butterflies in her stomach, Ricky and Bizzie were chasing geese, and I had ants in my pants!"

"Those are all just funny animal expressions, Sammy," said Ricky. "They don't really mean what they say."

"Right," said Flora. "When I said I had butterflies in my stomach, I meant I was nervous you would find out about the party."

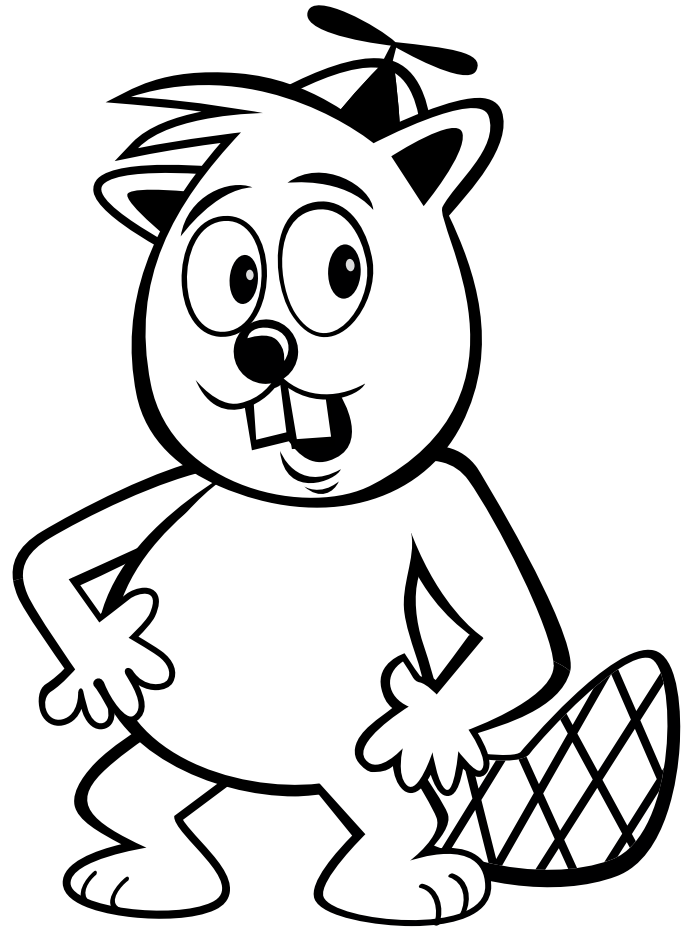
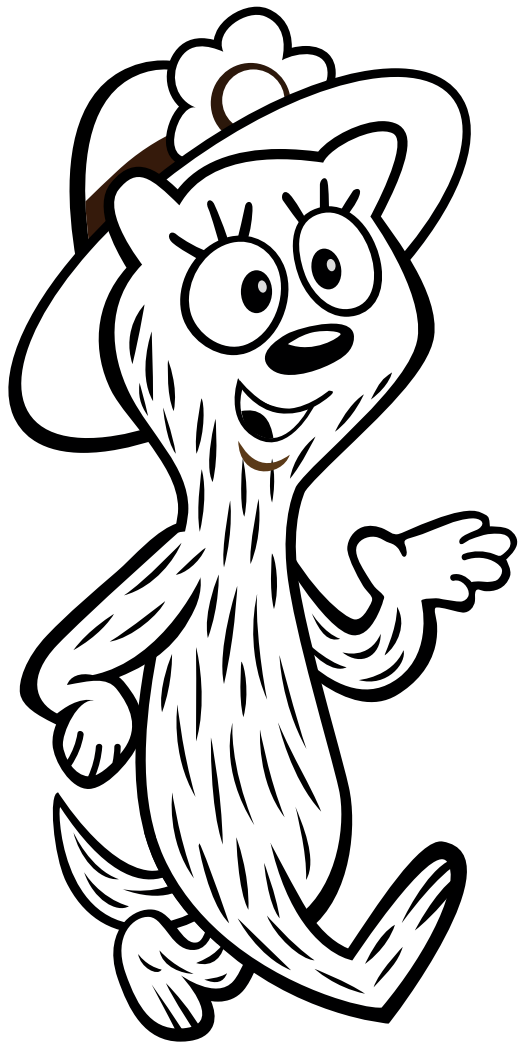
"And when I said you had ants in your pants, I meant that you were jumpy," explained Mitzi.

"And we tried to go berry-picking, but we couldn't find any berries," said Bizzie. "A wild goose chase means you try to get something but you can't."

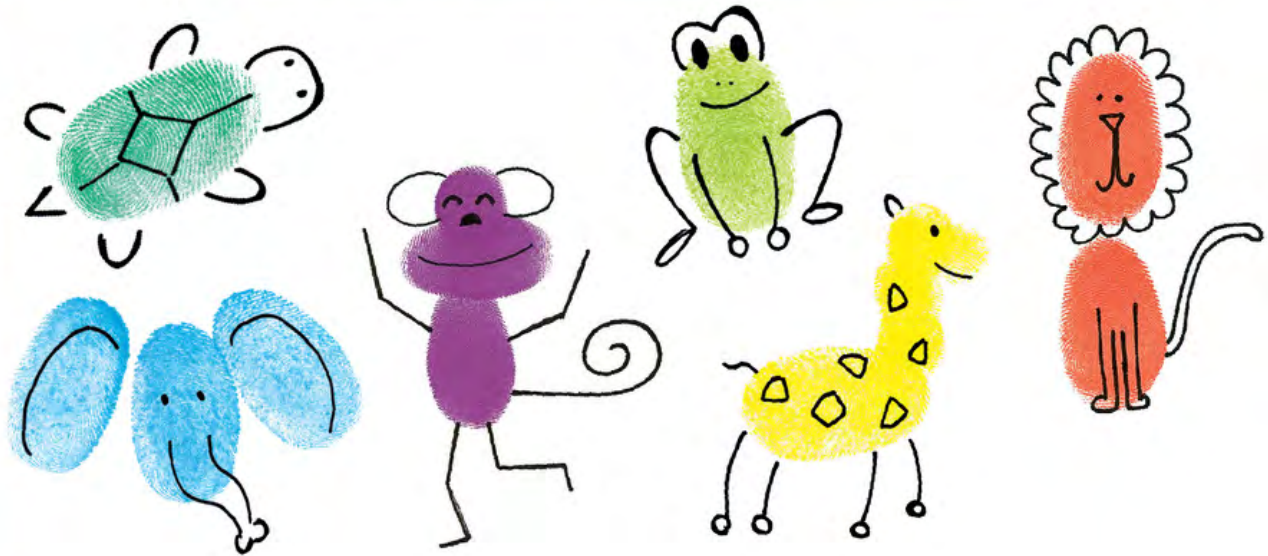
"Oh, I see," said Sammy slowly. "And you know what? I just thought of an animal expression, too."

"Tell us, Sammy," said Flora.

Sammy grinned as he said, "All day long, there have been a lot of FISHY things going on around here!"



THUMBPRINT ANIMALS



Use an ink pad, a pen, and your thumb to make thumbprint animals.

E is for Elephant

F is for Frog

G is for Giraffe

L is for Lion

M is for Monkey

T is for Turtle



What is as big as an elephant but weighs nothing?

An elephant's shadow.

