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

DIGGING DEEPER
“What’s New in the Past?” on pages 14–19 is full of fascinating dino discoveries! Paleontologists use several important tools to find prehistoric animals and to collect data. Sometimes tools and technology are complex, but sometimes they are as simple as a measuring tape. Have students research the tools and technology paleontologists use in their work, using the following questions as a guide:

- How do paleontologists know where to start looking?
- What tools are used at a dig site? How does each one function/what is its purpose?
- What tools are required to extract a discovery and transport it for further study?

ADAPTING TO SURVIVE
In “Leafy Lookalikes,” pages 24–29, we learn how some insects have adapted to mimic the leaves in their environment. Ask students to research the two types of adaptations, structural and behavioral. Once students have defined these terms, ask them to reread the story and categorize each insect’s adaptations as structural or behavioral. What evidence did students use to categorize each animal? Encourage discussion and debate.

WHAT’S YOUR FAVORITE?
We’ve all been spending more time in front of screens, just like Boomer in “Boomer’s April Fool” on pages 30–32. But as the temperatures begin to warm up and more wild animals are out and about, this is a great time to discuss screen time alternatives.

1. Ask the class, “What are your favorite things to do that do not require a screen?” Have students spend two minutes writing down anything that comes to mind.

2. Group students into threes or fours. In their groups, they will share their lists.

3. Come back together as a class. Ask each student to pick a favorite activity and write it on a sticky note. The activity can be from their own list or from the list of another member of the group.

4. Have students place their sticky notes on a dedicated wall space. Ask them to organize their answers into a kind of bar graph, with similar activities grouped together into columns.

5. Ask each student to use the data to create a bar graph on paper, complete with title, axis labels, and a key.

OBSERVING WILDLIFE
Spring is a great time for students to observe birds in their backyards and around their neighborhoods. After reading “Sparrows,” pages 33–35, let’s see how many sparrows (and other bird species) students can observe in a week. Before you begin, have each student estimate the total number of birds the class will observe.

Students will create a five-day observation journal. Talk with students and reach a consensus about what data to include, such as weather conditions, time of day, location, bird identification, and sketches or color patterns. (If students want help identifying the birds they see, steer them to allaboutbirds.org, Cornell Lab’s online bird guide.) Create space each day for small groups of students to meet and share their observations. At the end of the week, ask students to reflect on what they learned and think about how community observations can help scientists. Lastly, tally the total number of birds observed. Which student’s estimate was closest?
In “Boomer’s April Fool” on pages 30–32, Boomer realizes what he’s been missing while inside and connected to screens. Take a couple of minutes to think about what you like to do that does not involve screen time. Then write these favorite activities on a piece of scratch paper. Choose a template below and cut it out. Write your list on the template, then hang it in a place where you will see it often—maybe next to the TV remote control.

Here are some activities that might be on your list: Play a game with a friend or family member, read Ranger Rick magazine, or sit outside and make nature observations.
Max Meow, Cat Crusader, introduced us to cats with real-life superpowers in “Super Cats!” on pages 6–11. Choose a cat you read about in Ranger Rick. Then choose a creative writing story starter below (or create your own) and write your own “cat-tastic” adventure.

- You are out bird watching when suddenly you hear . . .
- While playing in the park with friends, you find a photograph and . . .
- You are riding your bike when you see the biggest . . .