



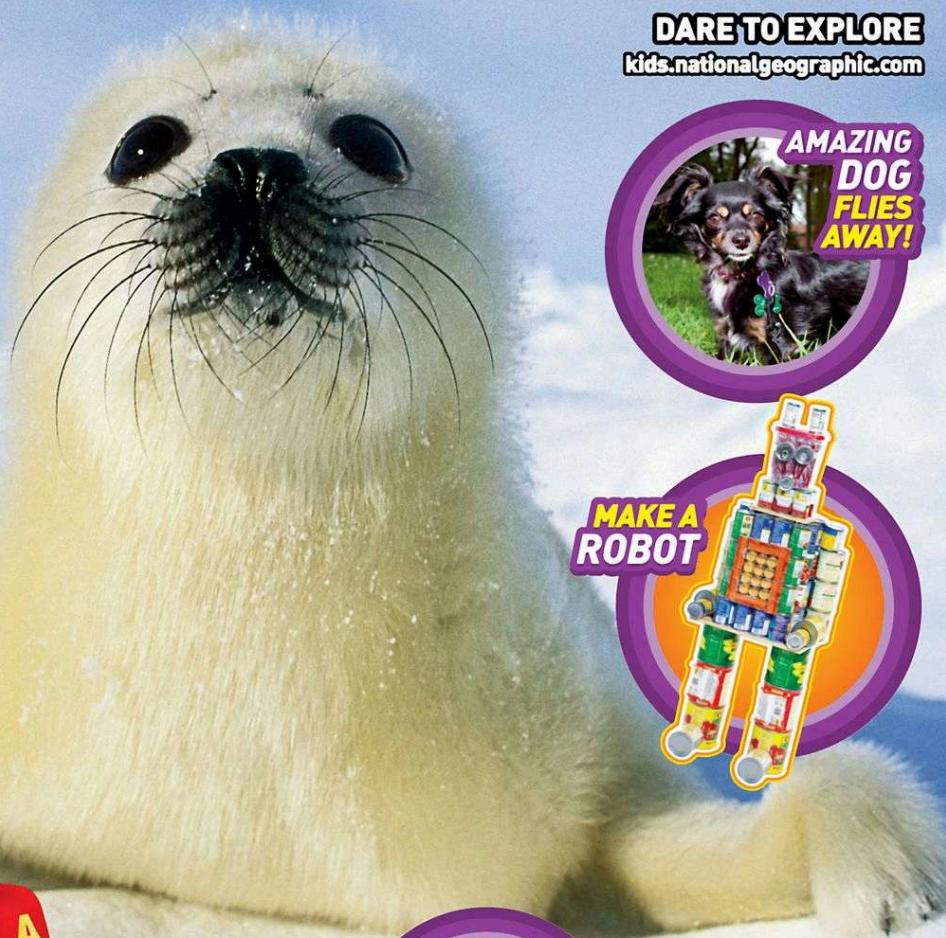
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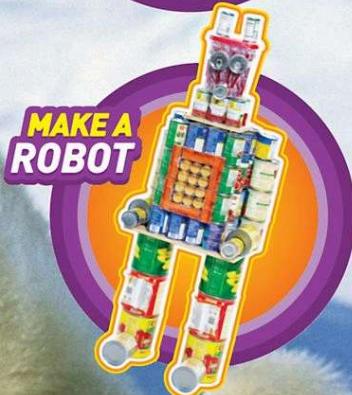
FREE Pullout  
Poster!

# KIDS

10  
COOL  
THINGS  
ABOUT  
HARP  
SEALS



DARE TO EXPLORE  
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ALVIN AND THE  
CHIPMUNKS:  
THE SQUEAKQUEL



NATIONAL  
GEOGRAPHIC

FEBRUARY 2010  
\$4.99US \$6.99CAN



0 70989 36821 7



A CHEETAH IN  
SOUTH AFRICA  
STARES INTO  
THE CAMERA.

**FREE  
PULLOUT  
POSTER**

p.18

## Inside

### 20 The Truth Behind the New Movie *Alvin and the Chipmunks: The Squeakquel*

The chipmunks are back. Find out how these digital rascals got along with the human actors.



### 22 10 Cool Things About Harp Seals

Discover unusual details about these marine mammals—from how they “party” under the ice to why they journey 6,000 miles each year.



### 26 Bear Rescue

Determined firefighters saved this badly burned cub, then nursed him through recovery.



### 28 World's Wackiest Hotels

Check out these amazing places to stay on vacation.



## Departments

- 3 Cool Inventions
- 4 Weird But True
- 6 Stupid Criminals
- 8 Guinness World Records
- 9 Just Joking

- 10 Sports Funnies
- 11 Bet You Didn't Know
- 12 Video Game Central
- 13 All About You
- 14 Kids Did It!

- 16 Amazing Animals
- 31 Fun Stuff
- 34 What in the World?

## Just for KIDS online!

Go online to learn about jaguars, send Valentine e-cards, and play action games.  
[kids.nationalgeographic.com](http://kids.nationalgeographic.com)



**On the Cover**  
Baby harp seals are born on ice in Arctic regions.  
COVER PHOTOGRAPH © WAYNE LYNCH / ARCTIC PHOTO

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NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC KIDS (ISSN 1542-3042) is published ten times a year by the National Geographic Society, Washington, DC 20036. Periodical postage paid at Washington, DC, and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC KIDS, P.O. Box 63002, Tampa, FL 33663-3002. Subscriptions: United States, \$19.95; Canada, \$35.95 in Canadian funds or \$26.00 in U.S. funds; elsewhere, \$29.95 in U.S. funds. United States and its outlying areas, \$34.00 for two years; Canada, \$55.95 Canadian funds or \$41.95 in U.S. funds. Single copy: United States, \$4.99; Canada, \$6.99 in Canadian funds or \$5.75 in U.S. funds; elsewhere, \$9.99 in U.S. funds equivalent (includes postage). In Canada, Agreement number 40063649, return undeliverable Canadian addresses to NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC KIDS, P.O. Box 4412 STA A, Toronto, Ontario M5W 3W2.

The submission of photographs and other material to NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC KIDS is done at the risk of the sender; NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC KIDS cannot accept liability for loss or damage.

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# COOL inventions



## RUNNING ON AIR

Tell Dad to leave the minivan at home—you'll look so much cooler when you pull up to school in one of these. The appropriately named AIRPod runs on compressed air. Unlike gasoline-powered cars, it produces zero pollution and actually emits air that's cleaner than the stuff you breathe every day. Designed for scooting around town, the itty-bitty AIRPod has four wheels and three seats (one in front, two in back). Like a regular car, it has an accelerator and a brake pedal on the floor. But instead of a steering wheel, the AIRPod has a joystick. If you know how to play a video game, you know how to make this little car turn. Simply push the stick left or right. There is no reverse, so spin the car around by holding the joystick all the way right or left. Let's see your parents' minivan do that.

## CLEVER DOG WALKER

You just got home after a long day at school, and your restless four-legged friend is barking and running laps around your room. But it's cold and rainy, and the last thing you feel like doing is taking him for a walk. Relax. Lead your canine pal onto this JOG A DOG doggie treadmill, slowly turn the speed dial on the remote control to get things moving, and wait for him to work up to a trot. Fido gets a workout, and you stay dry.



## BEDSIDE WEB BROWSER

It's Monday morning, and before you even get out of bed you've already played a game, watched a few videos on YouTube, and found out that it might snow later. It's all thanks to Chumby, a small device that provides Internet access from your bedside table. Chumby displays channels of content that you select—weather, celebrity news, your favorite posted photos, even a live panda cam from the San Diego Zoo. Each screen stays up for about 30 seconds to a minute before the next one slides in. Using the touch screen, you can also play games such as pinball and checkers. There's even a fun motion sensor—just pick up and tilt Chumby for a labyrinth-style game called Chumball.

**weird  
but  
true**

# Check out these 9 outrageous facts.

Houseflies buzz in the key of F.



Most snowflakes have six sides.

4,000-year-old popcorn was found in a cave in New Mexico.

It takes the average 10-year-old kid



about 20 minutes to fall asleep.

4

The odds that an average golfer will make a hole in one during a game are

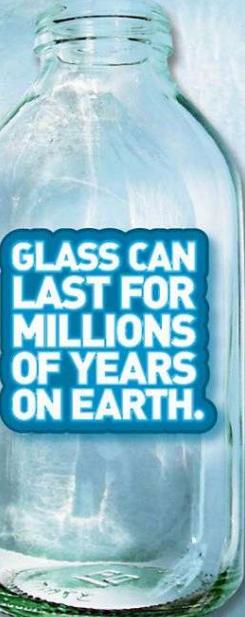
12,000 to 1.



Americans spend one and a half times more money on pet food than on baby food.

The most commonly used letters in the English language are e, t, a, and o.

The fastest time for twisting a balloon into a dog shape is 6.5 seconds.



GLASS CAN LAST FOR MILLIONS OF YEARS ON EARTH.

# 3

# DAYS TO FIND YOUR INNER CHEETAH!



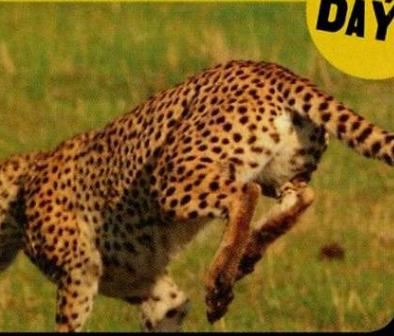
**DAY 1**

## RUNNING

Cheetahs are the **FASTEST** land animals in the world, reaching speeds up to 65 mph!

Ready, Set, GO! On day one of your cheetah training, you will work on speed. Go outside with a friend and practice sprinting a short distance as fast as you can. Have a friend time you and see if you can improve your speed over time.

**NEXT LEVEL:** New Balance Fierce Trax are super light and cushioned so that you can go your fastest!



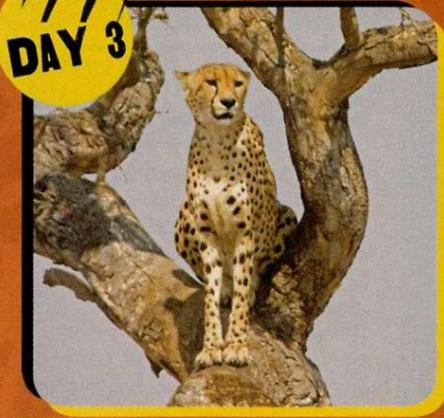
**DAY 2**

## JUMPING

Can a cheetah jump farther than you? Cheetahs can cover 23 feet in one stride!

How far can you jump? It's easy to find out. Take a measuring tape and a piece of chalk outside to get started. Draw a dot on the sidewalk, stand on the dot, and then jump as far as you can. Put another dot where you land. Now take your measuring tape and measure dot to dot to see how far you leaped. Keep it up and you'll be jumping like a cheetah in no time!

**NEXT LEVEL:** New Balance Fierce Trax have shock-absorbing powers that will keep you jumping all day.



**DAY 3**

## CLIMBING

Cheetahs love to climb trees. That way, they get a great view of what is going on down on land.

A fun part of exploring is climbing, whether it be a huge rock, a hill, or a big tree in your backyard. Go outside and find something you can climb (*get your parent's permission and supervision first*). Once at the top, take a look below you and see what you can spy. Make a list of your discoveries.

**NEXT LEVEL:** New Balance Fierce Trax have NB GRIP—"catlike" treads that can grip the most demanding surfaces.

## GO TO THE NEXT LEVEL

CHEETAH FACTS PROVIDED BY:



Congratulations, you've mastered your inner cheetah! Now it's time to go to the next level, and New Balance Fierce Trax can help take you there. They are anything but tame.

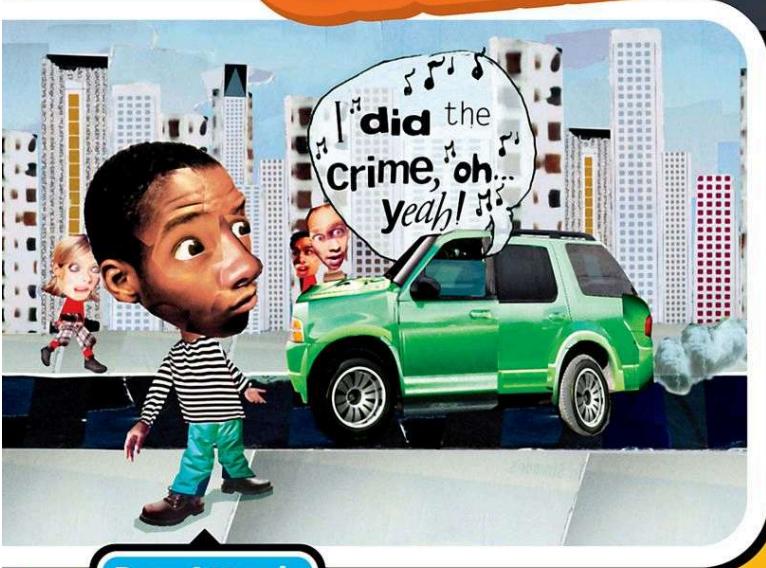


**FIERCE trax**

FEATURING  
**grip**

# Stupid Criminals

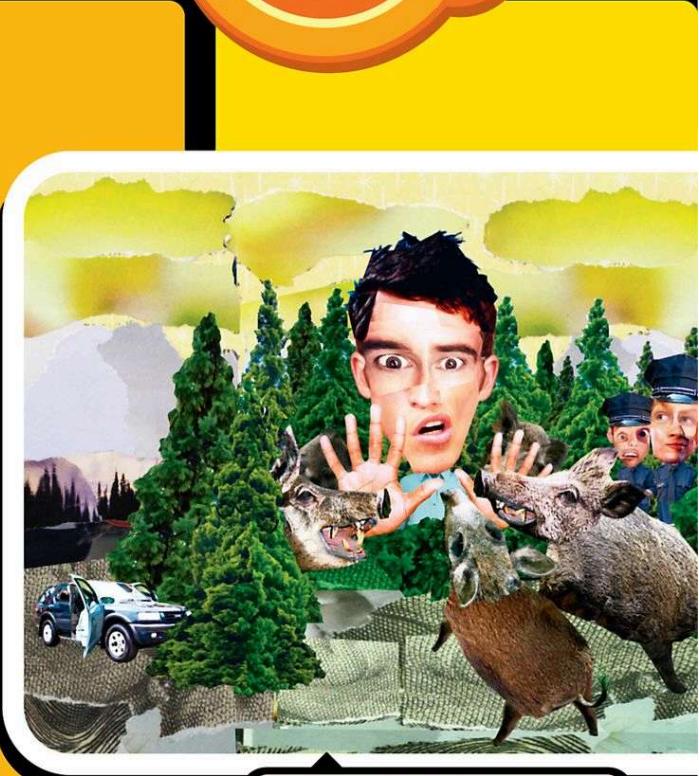
BY ELISABETH DEFFNER



## Rap Attack

DUBLIN, GEORGIA

One criminal said he never attacked anyone—but he *sang* a different story. He wrote a rap song claiming credit for the crime, and even named his victim in the tune! “He bragged about what he did in his song,” says Brandon Faircloth, deputy chief assistant district attorney. “That definitely did not work in the criminal’s favor.” Now the bad guy is singing the blues—the jailhouse blues.



## Sticky Fingers

LYNCHBURG, VIRGINIA

Table manners are important, even for criminals. One crook took time out for a snack from the refrigerator in a house he was robbing. He left behind the piece of fried chicken he’d been munching, as well as an orange juice bottle with his greasy fingerprints all over it. Once police had the prints, it was a cinch to figure out the identity of the burglar and arrest him. “He certainly made things easier,” says Captain Brandon Zuidema. Bet this guy wishes he’d cleaned up his mess after he was done eating!



## Crime-Fighting Herd

SCHÖNBERG, GERMANY

This car thief discovered that police officers aren’t the only ones who can corner a criminal. After stealing a car, two bad guys led police on a car chase to the edge of a forest, where the thieves took off on foot. The passenger was caught right away, but the driver kept running—and ran smack into a herd of toothy wild boars. Surrounded by the angry animals, which had babies nearby, the trapped criminal had no choice but to yell for help. Officers shouted and shooed the boars off. And then they hauled the thief to jail.

# ANYTHING BUT TAME



introducing  
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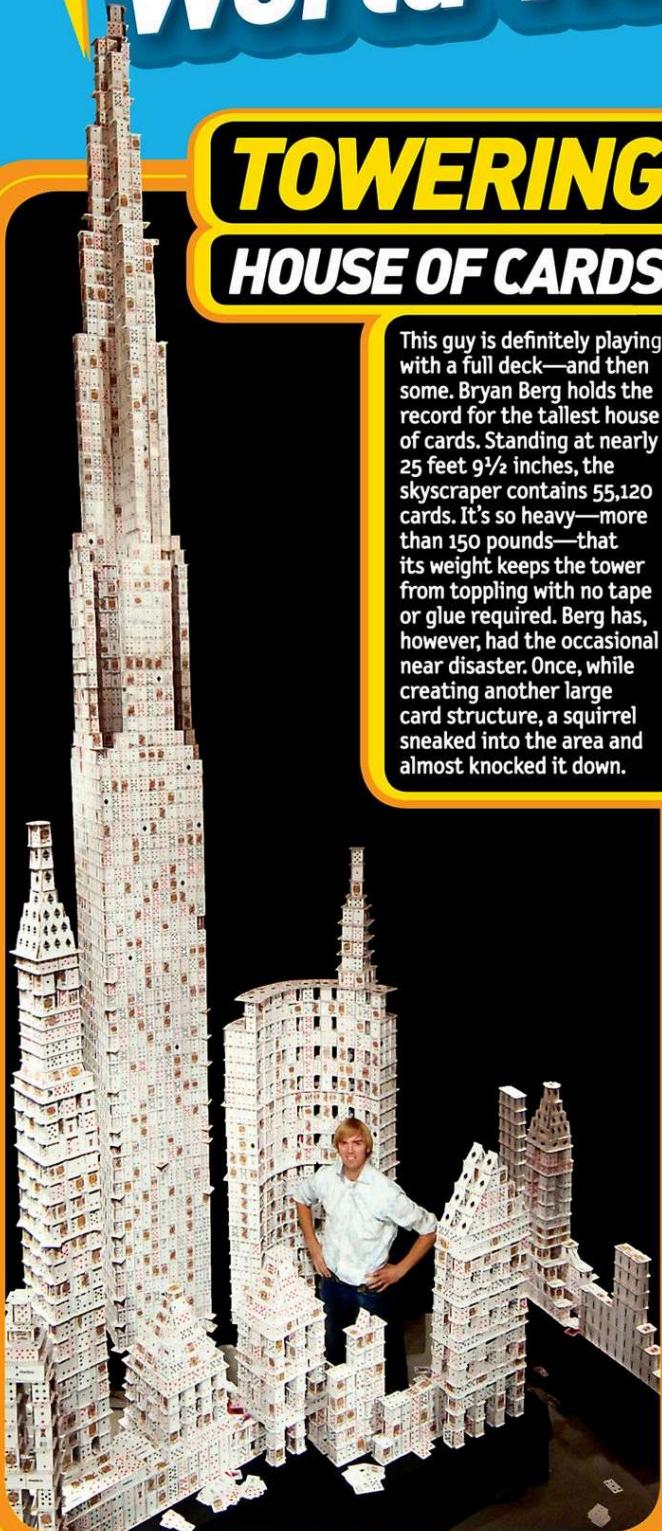
ASTONISHING  
STORIES FROM  
THE FILES OF

# Guinness World Records

BY KRISTIN HUNT

Go online for more information about Guinness World Records! [kids.nationalgeographic.com/Videos](http://kids.nationalgeographic.com/Videos)

## TOWERING HOUSE OF CARDS



This guy is definitely playing with a full deck—and then some. Bryan Berg holds the record for the tallest house of cards. Standing at nearly 25 feet 9½ inches, the skyscraper contains 55,120 cards. It's so heavy—more than 150 pounds—that its weight keeps the tower from toppling with no tape or glue required. Berg has, however, had the occasional near disaster. Once, while creating another large card structure, a squirrel sneaked into the area and almost knocked it down.



## PRICEY BIKE

Cruising the streets to show off this sweet bike to your friends would be fun. But considering the price, you may want to rethink that ride. Selling for \$116,000, this gold-plated, crystal-encrusted bike is the most expensive bike commercially available. It features 24-carat gold, 600 Swarovski crystals, a hand-sewn leather seat, and leather handlebars. The only thing missing is a gold helmet.



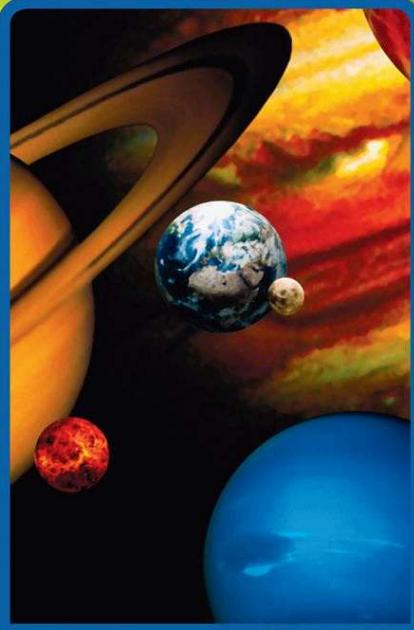
## LONGEST HORSE TAIL

That's one big "ponytail." JJS Summer Breeze the paint horse has a 12-foot-6-inch tail, the longest on record for a horse. That's about three times longer than the average paint horse's tail. Owner Crystal Socha keeps the braided, folded-over tail in a tube sock so Summer doesn't trip over it. The horse sits still while her freshly washed tail gets blow-dried, but she isn't always so patient. Once Summer nudged Socha out of the way to drink from a water fountain.

# Just Joking

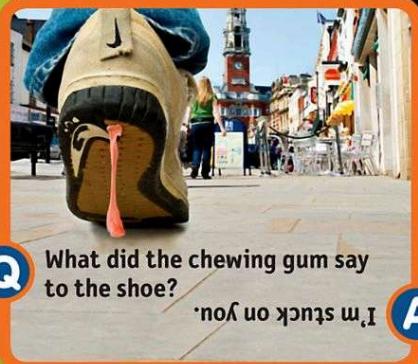
KNOCK,  
KNOCK.

Who's there?  
Frank.  
Frank who?  
Frank you for being  
my friend.



Q What do planets use to  
download music?

A Neptune.



Q

What did the chewing gum say  
to the shoe?

A I'm stuck on you.



TONGUE  
TWISTER!

Say this fast  
three times:

Cooks  
cook  
cupcakes  
quickly.

You've got to be joking...



Q What sound do  
**porcupines**  
make when they  
**kiss?**

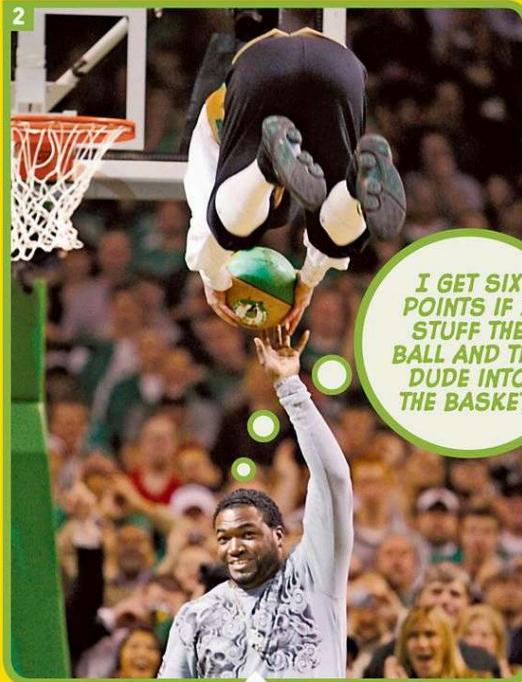
A Ouch!

# sports funnies

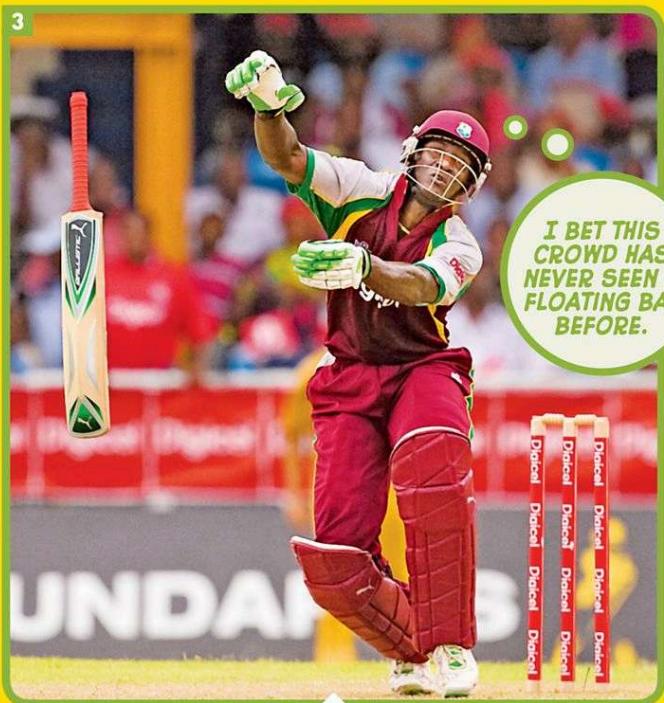
uh-oh!



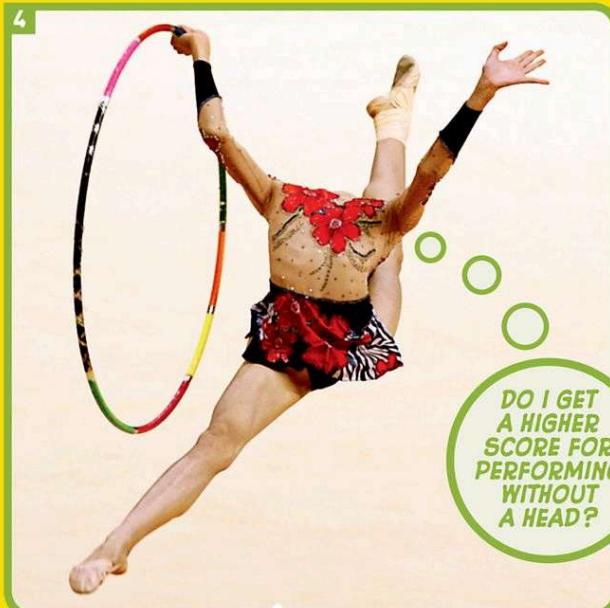
Danny Summerhill of Colorado bikes across the finish line at the 2007 cyclocross Portland Cup in Oregon.



David Ortiz of the Boston Red Sox passes a ball to Lucky the Leprechaun, the Boston Celtics' mascot, to dunk during a timeout in a 2008 basketball game.



Darren Sammy of the West Indies loses his bat during a 2008 cricket match against an Australian team.



Vietnam's Thi Minh Thu Tran competes in rhythmic gymnastics during the 2007 Southeast Asian Games in Thailand.

© TROY WARWICK / NEWSFOTO / COREL [1]; REUTERS / BRIAN SNIDER [2]; REUTERS / BRAHMINSON / YONHAP [3]; © RUNGROJ YONGRIT / EPA / CORBIS [4]

## Bet you didn't know

# 6 splashy facts about sea creatures

**1** **Sharks** lived on Earth more than 170 million years before dinosaurs.

**2** An **octopus** can have nearly 2,000 suckers on its **arms**.

**3** The world's smallest **sea horse** is smaller than a **postage stamp**.

**4** **Manatees** are related to **elephants**.

**5** **Dolphins** sleep with one eye open.

**6** Some **giant jellyfish** have tentacles that could stretch one-third the length of a **football field**.

# VIDEO game CENTRAL

BY MARK MACDONALD

## BARGAIN TREASURES!

With so many great games being released every month, who has time to play them all? Nobody—and that's a good thing! Because it means there are plenty of awesome games left over from just a year or two ago that you can now find supercheap. Check your local game store to find any of these cool games and other bargains.

### DE BLOB

**Wii**

What if the whole world looked like an old black-and-white TV show? That's what happens in this wacky game after the evil INKT Corporation sucks out all the colors



from Chroma City. But you can come to the rescue as de Blob, a squishy lump of goo who splashes color everywhere he goes. Bounce around to

paint buildings while avoiding spikes and INKT soldiers. Smash into a paintbot if you ever want to change colors or need more paint.



### SONIC UNLEASHED

**Wii, PS3, Xbox 360**

Maybe you've played a Sonic game before and think you know what to expect: running, jumping, and collecting gold rings, all at lightning speed. There's plenty of that in *Unleashed*, but this time the famous hedgehog has a new secret: He transforms at night into a giant, hairy werehog. He may lose a lot of speed, but werehog-Sonic makes up for it. He has super-strength and stretchy arms that allow him to grab faraway objects, lift heavy stones out of the way, and activate switches.



**>>TIP #1:** At the start of any racing level in the Wii version of the game, swing the Wii remote just before the announcer says, "Go!" Sonic will jump out of the gate with a blinding burst of speed.

**>>TIP #2:** In the PS3 and Xbox 360 versions, if you want to build up extra lives, head to Spagonia. You might be able to collect enough power-ups to earn three or four extra lives. Repeat the level as often as you want for up to 99 lives.

### LEGO INDIANA JONES: THE ORIGINAL ADVENTURES

**Xbox 360, PS3, PS2, PSP, Nintendo DS, Wii, PC**

In this game, take the best parts of the *Indiana Jones* movies—riding on a speeding mine cart, fleeing from a giant runaway boulder, whipping across rivers of red-hot molten lava—and re-create them completely in LEGO blocks. Switch between playing as Indy and all your other favorite characters. You can also play with a friend in co-op mode and help each other get past obstacles and solve puzzles.



**>>TIP #1:** Enter the code V83SLO on the blackboard in the math classroom at Barnett College to unlock the ability to build all your LEGO objects superfast.

**>>TIP #2:** Enter H86LA2 at the same spot to activate a treasure magnet, MDLP69 to regenerate hearts, and 3X44AA to unlock secret characters.

# All about YOU

BY C.M. TOMLIN

THE AVERAGE U.S. KID  
HAS ONLY ONE  
**BROTHER  
OR SISTER**  
IN HIS LIFETIME,  
BUT...

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Your mom  
would have to have  
**triplets**  
every year for **133 years**  
for you to have as many  
brothers and sisters as a  
**red-eyed tree frog.**



\* All numbers based on averages

### Fishing for piranhas

and spotting howler monkeys are just a couple of the wild encounters that 15 NG KIDS readers and two teachers recently experienced in Peru. The explorers are winners of the 2009 NG KIDS Hands-On Explorer Challenge (HOEC), an essay and photo competition sponsored by the makers of Purell.

The expedition team visited Peru's coast, highlands, and rain forest. They took photographs along the shore of the Pacific Ocean, presented gifts to a remote school high in the Andes mountains, and trekked through dense Amazonian jungle. The team enjoyed the surprises they discovered around every corner. Even the hotels held adventure. "After swimming one afternoon, I was headed back to my room," says Cady van Assendelft, 11, of Staunton, Virginia. "On the way, I saw two alpacas grazing on the hotel's lawn!"

A highlight of the trip was visiting Machu Picchu, considered one of the wonders of the world. Five hundred years ago, the Inca people built their magnificent city a mile and a half above sea level but abandoned it suddenly. The city was unknown to the outside world until 1911. It's now an archaeological site that the visitors had to reach by train, bus, and steep uphill hiking. "Our bus zig-zagged around 14 switchbacks up the mountain," says McKenna Tucker, 14, of Eads, Tennessee. "Then we climbed a path to a ledge overlooking all of Machu Picchu before heading down to explore." The Inca city provided the backdrop for the picture of the team (bottom right).

A remote rain forest lodge deep in the Tambopata National Reserve was home for the last three nights of the expedition. At the lodge, the rooms were open to the forest. Mysterious forest sounds filled the nights as the kids slept in beds draped with mosquito netting. Daily excursions led to new activities, including luring tarantulas from their holes, climbing a tall steel tower to the top of the forest canopy, and searching for piranhas in a lake. "We caught three from my boat," says Peter Meehan, 14, of White Hall, Maryland. "Their teeth were cruel-looking and very impressive!"

"Every waking moment of this trip was an adventure," says Lijah Hanley, 13, of Cumming, Georgia. "We became a great team of explorers; we worked and played hard—together."

Does an expedition to see wild animals and meet people from another culture sound like fun? Details about the 2010 expedition will be posted online soon. Watch the Web site. [kids.nationalgeographic.com/contests/Explorer-trip-2010](http://kids.nationalgeographic.com/contests/Explorer-trip-2010)



COSTUMED PERUVIAN HOSTS GREET THE TEAM.



MANY PARROT SPECIES LIVE IN PERU.



LIJAH'S PHOTO SHOWS A PIRANHA'S IMPRESSIVE TEETH.



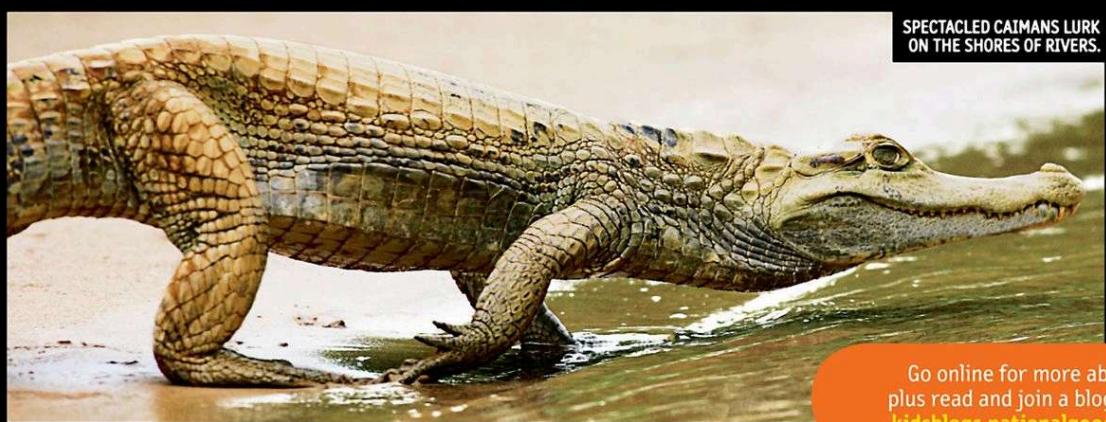
LEAF-CUTTER ANTS USE THEIR JAWS TO CARVE PIECES OF LEAVES.



MEMBERS OF THE 2009 NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC KIDS EXPEDITION TEAM AT MACHU PICCHU IN PERU: FRONT ROW (LEFT TO RIGHT): GRACE KENNEDY, 12; WYATT JORDAN, 10; RACHEL DAY, 12; LUCY ANDERSON, 11; CADY VAN ASSENDELFT, 11. MIDDLE ROW: REBECCA BUXTBAUM, 12; PETER MEEHAN, 14; IAN BAER, 12; MCKENNA TUCKER, 14; NELLIE KASSEBAUM, 12. BACK ROW: SHARON ANDREWS (TEACHER WINNER); ELIOT SCHOENIG, 14; GRACE NALANI TREDDINICK, 14; LAURA BETH ANDREWS, 14; DEWEY SHEEHAN, 13; LIJAH HANLEY, 13; CARISSA LLOYD (TEACHER WINNER).

# PERU

BY CATHERINE D. HUGHES



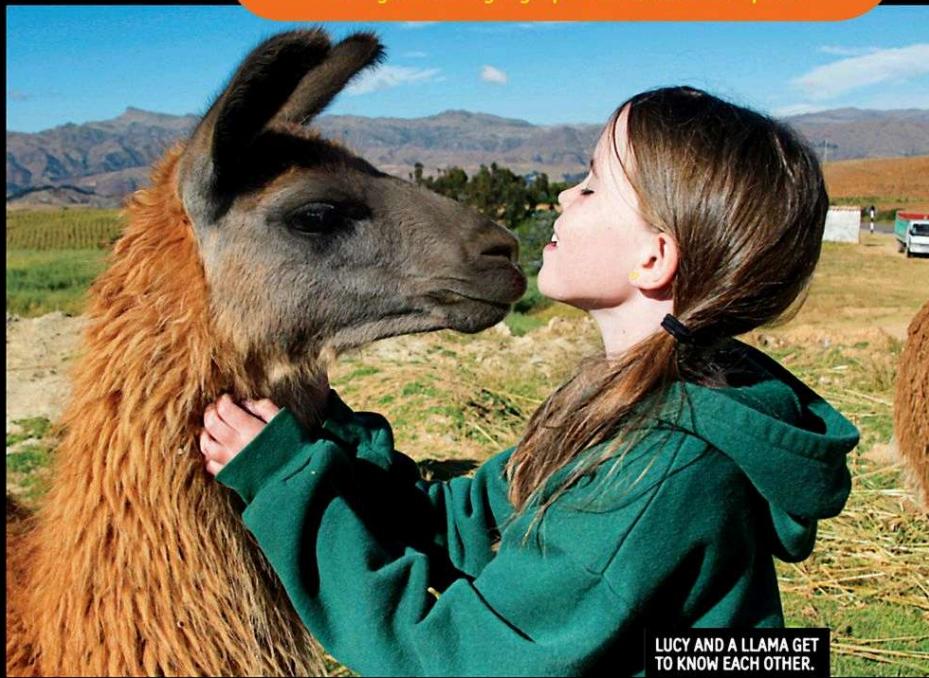
SPECTACLED CAIMANS LURK ON THE SHORES OF RIVERS.



Go online for more about this expedition and Peru, plus read and join a blog with the expedition members. [kidsblogs.nationalgeographic.com/handsonexplorer](http://kidsblogs.nationalgeographic.com/handsonexplorer)



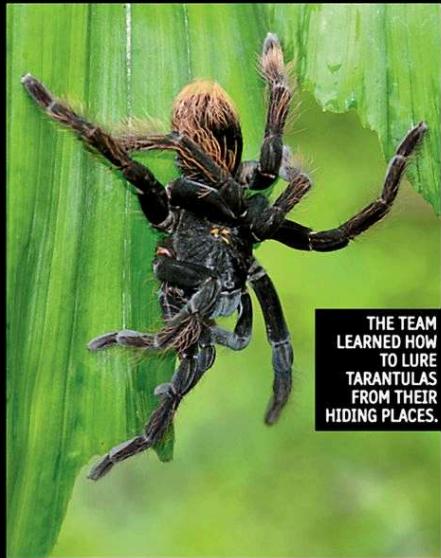
THE KIDS SAW SADDLEBACK TAMARINS IN THE TREES JUST OUTSIDE THEIR ROOMS.



LUCY AND A LLAMA GET TO KNOW EACH OTHER.



RACHEL ZIPS DOWN A ROCK SLIDE IN THE ANDES.



THE TEAM LEARNED HOW TO LURE TARANTULAS FROM THEIR HIDING PLACES.



ELLIOT SPOTTED THIS MOUSE OPOSSUM EATING A SPIDER.



A TRADITIONAL INCA KING DELIVERS A MESSAGE OF WELCOME.

AMY TOENSING [MASK, PARROT, HOEC TEAM, LUCY AND LLAMA, RACHEL ON SLIDE, INCA KING]; LIJAH HANLEY [PIRANHA]; © THOMAS MARENT / MINDEN PICTURES [ANT, TAMARIN]; © M. WATSON / ARDEA [CAIMAN]; © FABIO LIVERAN / NATURE PICTURE LIBRARY [TARANTULA]; ELLIOT JAMES SCHONIG [MOUSE OPOSSUM]; MARTIN WALZ [MAP]

# Amazing Animals



## ORANGUTAN SAVES HER BABY

WITH HER BABY HOLDING ON, THE MOTHER ORANGUTAN CATCHES A ROPE.



MOM WEIGHS HER OPTIONS.



SLOWLY THE APES ENTER THE WATER, AND MOM SWIMS TO SAFETY.



### Sabah, Malaysia

Emergency! A flooded river had trapped a wild orangutan mom and baby up a tree. The apes were gathering food in a tree on the bank of the Segama River when a flash flood hit, stranding them as the raging river overflowed.

Conservation groups rushed to the scene. Knowing it would be dangerous to interact directly with the protective mother, rescuers tossed her a rope they had tied to another tree. Amazingly, the orangutan knew what to do! With her baby clinging to her, the mother grasped the rope in one hand, dog-paddled to shore with the other, and disappeared into the rain forest. "We rarely see orangutans in the water," says primate expert Serge Wich of the Great Ape Trust in Iowa. "But these moms go to great lengths to save their babies."

—Kristin Hunt

## DOG FLIES AWAY

### Rochester Hills, Michigan

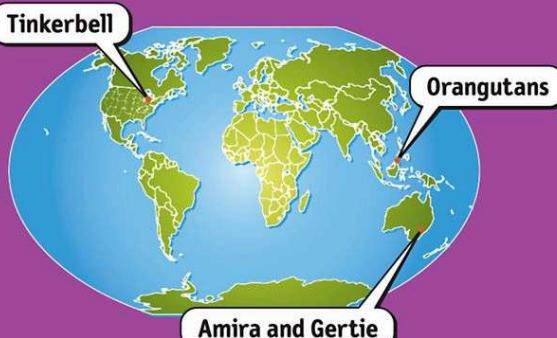
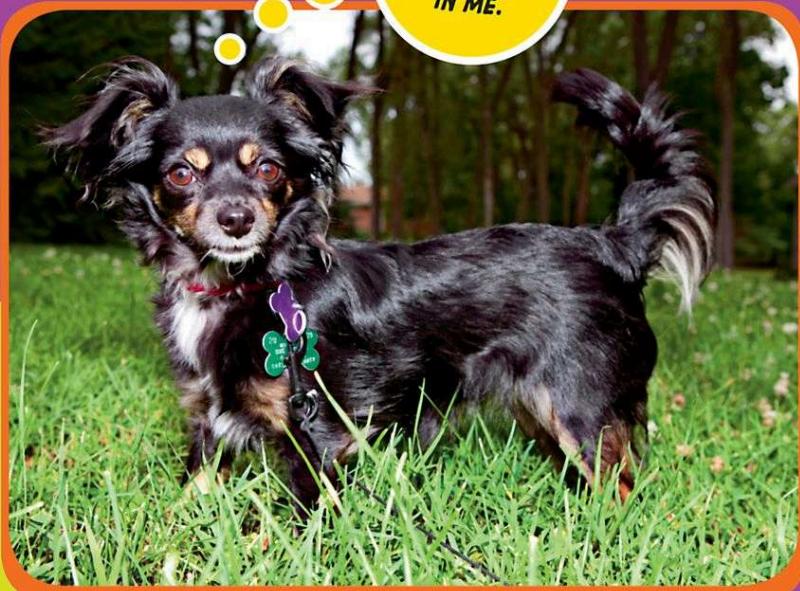
Tinkerbell the Chihuahua was relaxing with her owners at an outdoor market when a 70-mile-an-hour blast of wind tore through the area. Tables and chairs flew into the air—and so did the six-pound Tinkerbell. Her frantic owners chased after her, but the wind carried her away like a furry paper airplane.

For two days owners Lavern and Dorothy Utley searched the area. But the only sign of Tinkerbell was her leash, found about a quarter of a mile away. Desperate, the Utleys wandered along an old trail calling the dog one final time. She came running!

No one is sure how Tinkerbell survived her journey—or her landing. "She was probably only six or eight feet off the ground," meteorologist Dave Rexroth says. "I suspect she was tossed around like a tumbleweed until she got caught in small trees." Her owners, however, don't care how she managed to survive. "We're just tickled to death to have her back," Lavern Utley says.

—Kitson Jazynka

See more photos of Tinkerbell online.  
[kids.nationalgeographic.com/Photos](http://kids.nationalgeographic.com/Photos)



## GOAT IN CHARGE OF RHINO

### Dubbo, New South Wales, Australia

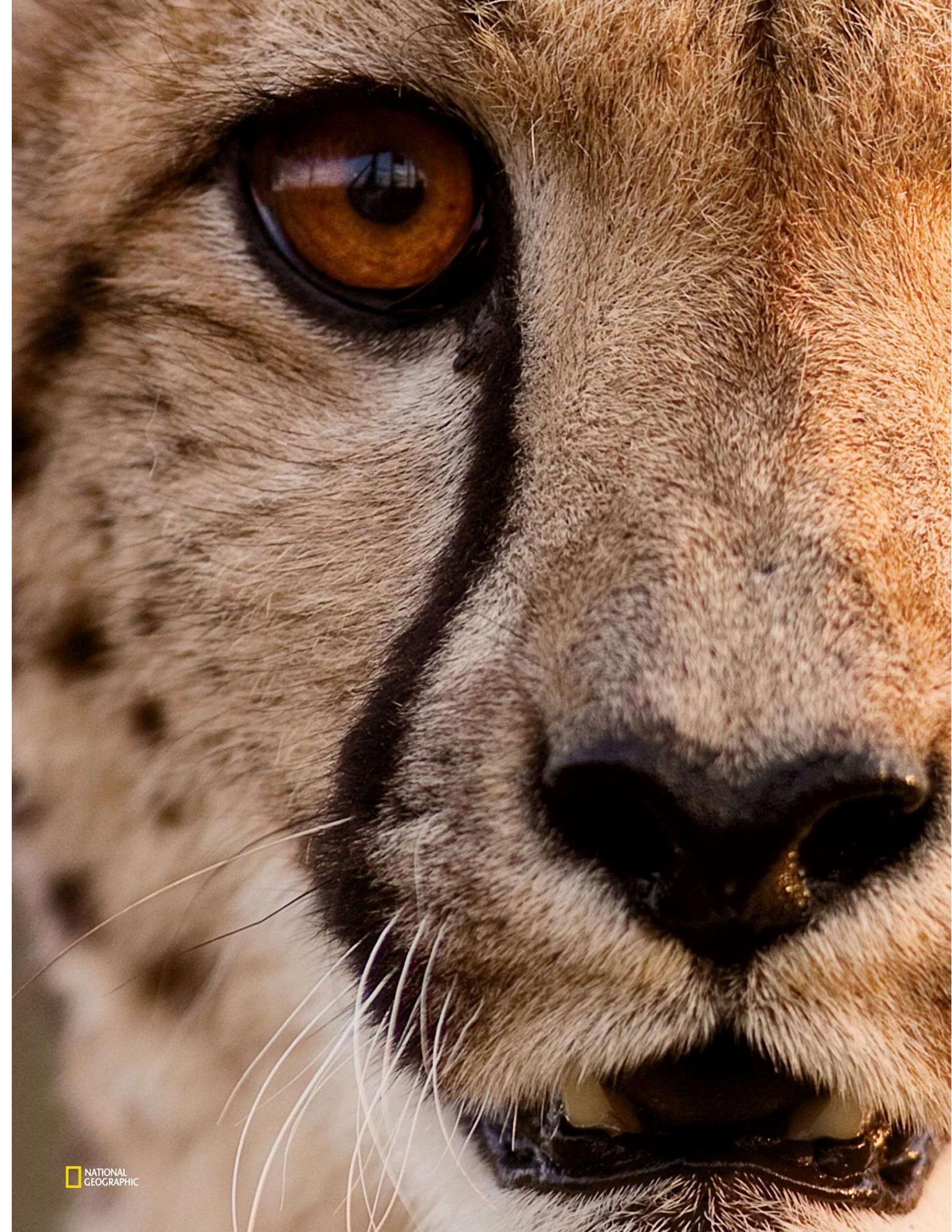
Amira the white rhino calf didn't have a clue how to behave. Her mother at the Western Plains Zoo had gotten sick, and there was no one to teach her animal ways. Luckily, Gertie the goat took over. "Gertie was the boss," says veterinarian Benn Bryant. The older of the two, Gertie taught Amira things like "stable" manners and how to graze for hay. They played chase and butted heads in make-believe fights. Once Gertie nudged the rhino toward a tree. When Amira lay down, Gertie climbed on her back to reach leaves to eat.

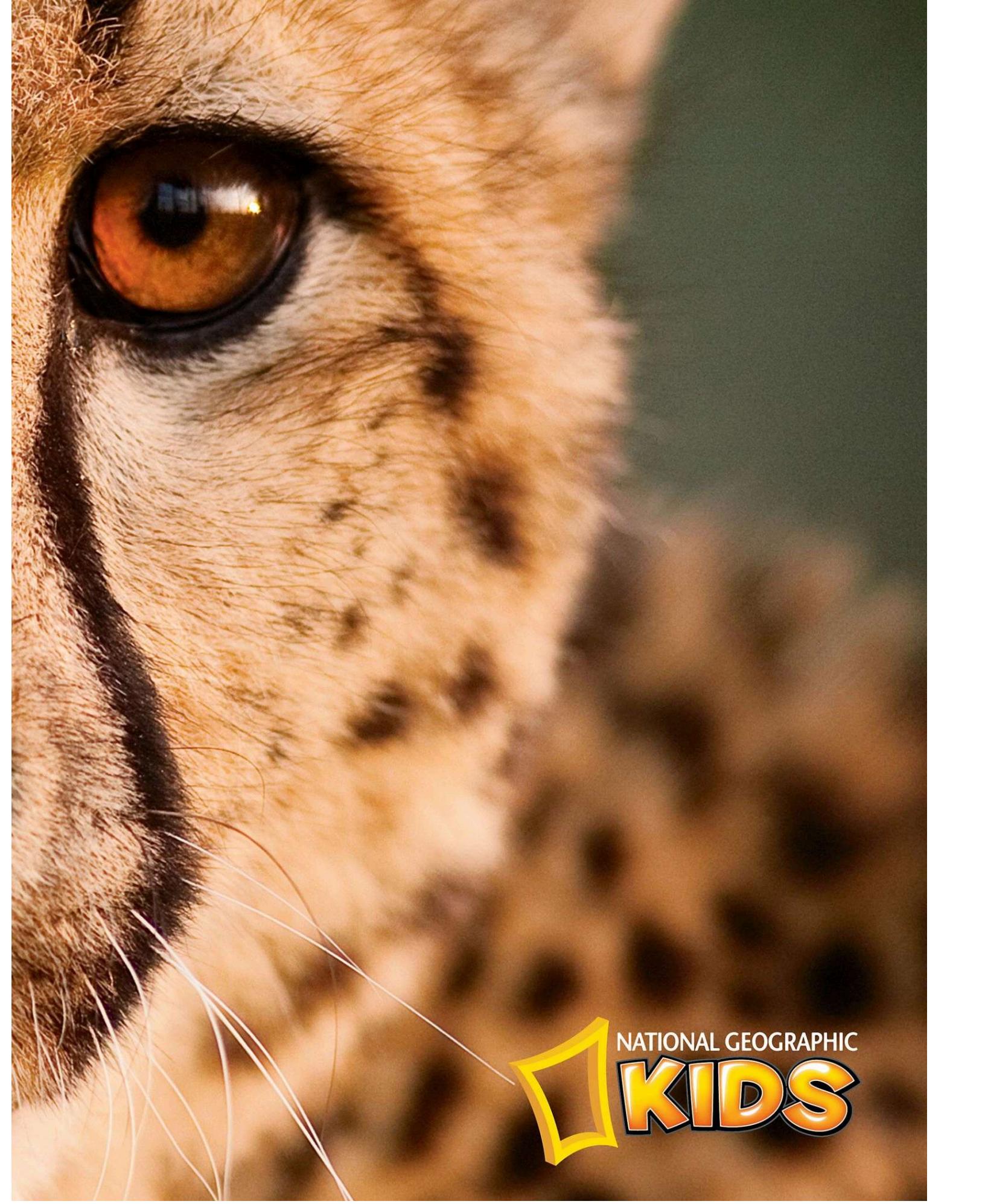
Soon Amira grew up and joined her own species. Today she lives with other white rhinos at the zoo, and Gertie lives on a farm. "Amira is well adjusted and happy," Bryant says. He gives Gertie credit for "goating" Amira into becoming a real rhino.

—Aline Alexander Newman

GOOD THING SHE HAS THICK SKIN—I LIKE TO HEAD-BUTT!





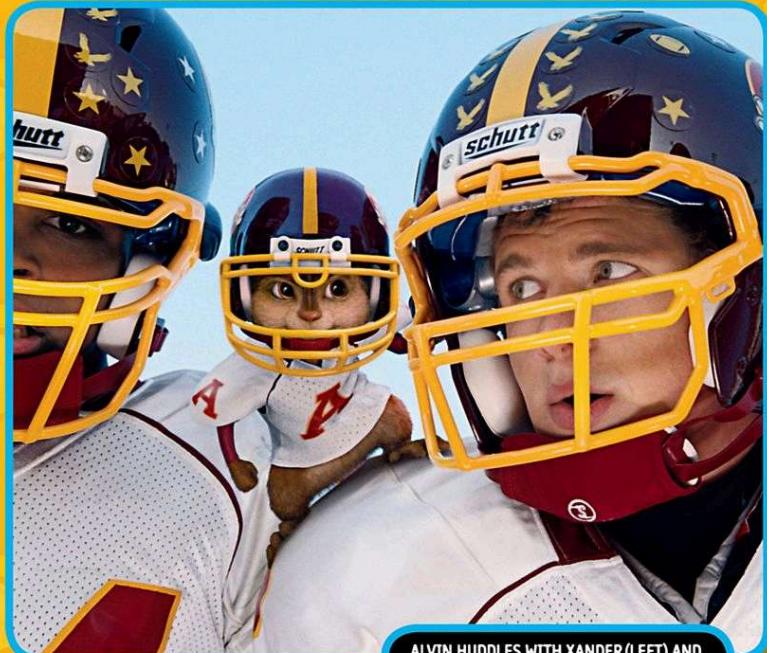


The Truth Behind the New Movie

# ALVIN AND THE

BY JOHNNA RIZZO

In the new movie *Alvin and the Chipmunks: The Squeakquel*, Alvin, Simon, and Theodore are having a blast living the rock-star life. That is, until an Alvin-induced mishap lands their band manager in the hospital—and the chipmunks back in school. The chipmunks were digitally created on a computer, but the rest of the flick is live action. So how did the fake furballs interact with real people? NG KIDS squeaks around to get the behind-the-scenes secrets.



ALVIN HUDDLES WITH XANDER (LEFT) AND RYAN DURING A BIG FOOTBALL GAME.

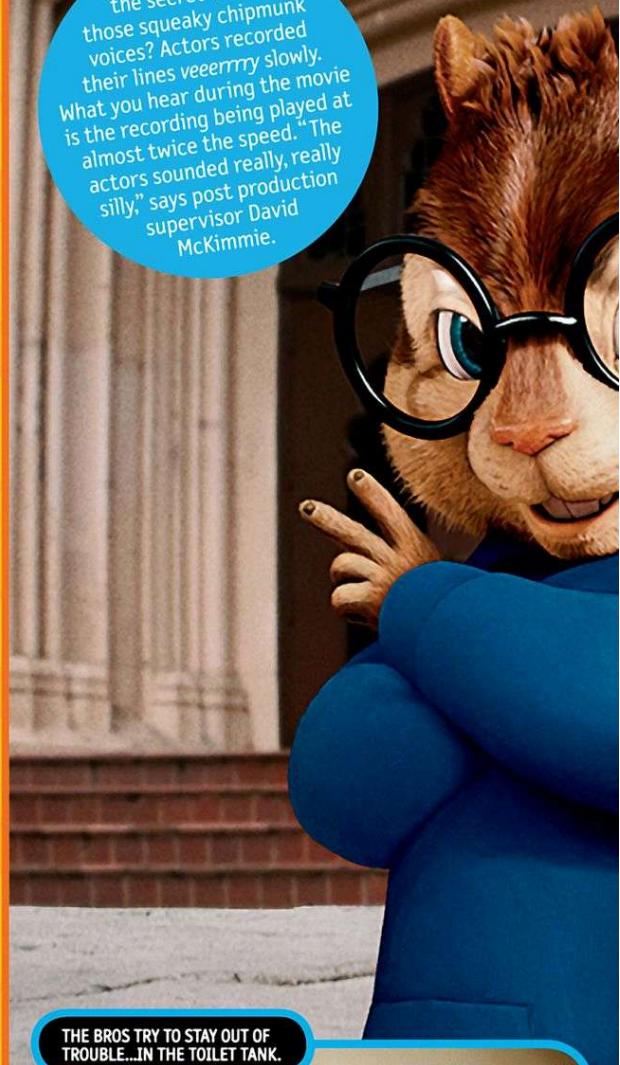
## STAGE FRIGHT

Alvin is rockin' so hard at a concert that he accidentally knocks loose a giant cardboard cutout of himself. It hurtles right toward his manager, Dave, who goes flying off the stage. Stunt coordinators yanked the actor out of the way right before contact, so he's just pretending to get smacked. But the flying part is real. The crew tied a cable around the actor's waist then pulled—hard!—to whisk him through the air. He landed safely on soft cushions just offscreen.

## PITTER-PATTER

Alvin, Simon, and Theodore think they're ready for school—until the morning hallway rush begins and the brothers nearly get trampled by stampeding feet. To create the scene, filmmakers shot real kids' feet running every which way along set paths. Then animators filled in the empty spots with the digital chipmunks weaving their way between the shuffling shoes.

What's the secret behind those squeaky chipmunk voices? Actors recorded their lines veemrry slowly. What you hear during the movie is the recording being played at almost twice the speed. "The actors sounded really, really silly," says post production supervisor David McKimmie.



THE BROS TRY TO STAY OUT OF TROUBLE...IN THE TOILET TANK.



# CHIPMUNKS: THE SQUEAKQUEL

## MORE ABOUT CHIPMUNKS

A chipmunk family's burrow—a series of rooms connected by tunnels—can be as long as 30 feet. To build it, chipmunks push all the dirt to the surface with their paws, then they carry it inside their cheeks away from the "doorstep."

To confuse predators, a species called the least chipmunk can play ventriloquist. It throws its voice, sounding as if it's coming from somewhere else.

Chipmunks store fruits and nuts to feed on in winter, but they'll eat plenty of other goodies—even pizza!

Chipmunks have four toes on their front paws and five on the back.

A chipmunk's cheek pouches can expand to the size of its head.

### BALLOON ANIMAL

When Alvin blows off band practice with his brothers to play in a football game, he feels guilty. After the game, he crawls into bed and heaves a big, sad sigh. To make the blankets rise as if Alvin were taking a real breath, the special effects team filled and deflated a balloon under the covers. Then Alvin's arms were drawn in over the sheets on the computer.

### PAPER CUT

Alvin puts on his football uniform and leads the team onto the field, bursting through the school banner. But because a digital chipmunk can't tear real paper, a machine launched a tennis ball through the banner to bust it apart. The digital Alvin was added later.

### "STAIR-ING" CONTEST

When she's picking up the chipmunks at the airport, Aunt Jackie is accidentally bumped while sitting in her wheelchair—and rolls backward down two flights of stairs! To make sure the actress playing Aunt Jackie stayed safe, stunt coordinator John Moio and his team attached cables to the wheelchair so it thudded down the stairs in the right direction and at the right speed.

COURTESY 20TH CENTURY FOX (ALL)

# 10 Cool Things About Harp Seal

BY SHARON THOMPSON

**I**t's breeding season on the ice off the eastern Canadian coast, and a million harp seals have gathered together. Some males bask in the sun; others growl at each other as they swim between ice floes. Female seals tend to their pups, which are born from late February to early March. It's a busy time of year. Check out ten amazing facts about these cool marine mammals.

## INDEPENDENT AT TWO WEEKS

2

Talk about growing up fast: A harp seal pup is on its own at only two weeks old! By then the baby does fine without Mom. The newborn quickly fattens up during nursing because its mother's milk is so rich—ten times richer than a cow's. A pup can quadruple its weight within the first couple of weeks, adding inches of blubber, or fat, to its body. When the mother harp seal leaves her baby forever, the pup's blubber provides all the energy and warmth it needs. Over the next few weeks it figures out how to swim and find food. Then it's ready for life at sea.

### SEE-THROUGH COAT

1

When a harp seal pup is born, its coat has a yellow tint. But it turns completely white within a couple of days. The fine, silky fur is almost transparent. This allows the pup's skin to absorb the sun's rays, which helps it stay warm. People often picture white pups when they think of harp seals. But the whitecoats, as they are called, look like this only for about two weeks. Then they molt, or shed, their white fur. Their new coats are gray.





1

S

### 6,000-MILE JOURNEY

3

Each year, harp seals migrate more than 6,000 miles, spending summers feeding in northern Arctic coastal waters and heading back south in the fall to breed. They migrate in small groups of up to 20 individuals. By late February harp seals gather in large herds. As many as one million form an enormous herd found on the floating mass of pack ice in the Gulf of St. Lawrence in Canada. Once breeding season is over, the seals travel back north for the summer.

4

Between about midnight and 5 a.m., the hot spot is under the ice. That's where adult harp seals hang out to "chat." Scientists have figured out how to eavesdrop on harp seals to learn about their communication. To listen in, they drill holes through the ice and lower recording devices into the water. "It sounds like one big loud party, with tens of thousands of seals competing to make themselves heard at the same time," says harp seal expert John Terhune. "The seals use long-distance calls to help form herds. Short-range calls are for chatting with seals nearby."

### PARTY UNDER THE ICE

**DID YOU KNOW?**  
A newborn harp seal pup can gain up to five pounds in just one day. On average, it takes a whole year for a 10-year-old kid to gain five pounds!

**5**

## HEART TRICK

When a young harp seal sees a polar bear, instinct takes over. The pup can't escape the predator by running away, so it hides—in plain sight. The ball of white fur plays possum. The seal lies motionless with its head tucked into its chubby neck, looking like a heap of snow. The pup's heart rate slows from about 80 to 90 beats a minute to only 20 to 30 beats. If the trick works, the bear doesn't see the seal and moves on. Then the harp seal can stretch out and relax. *Whew!*

**6**

## DEEP DIVERS

It's not unusual for a harp seal to hold its breath for five minutes. But when it needs to, the seal can stay underwater for as long as 20 minutes and dive more than 800 feet down. That's six times deeper than a scuba diver can go safely. Harp seals can get places fast, too—100 feet down in 15 seconds. As the seals zip through the water hunting for fish, they also stay alert for orcas and sharks that might eat them.

**7**

## QUICK-CHANGE ARTISTS

By the time a harp seal is 14 months old, it's changed coats—and nicknames—five times. A whitecoat at first, it then becomes a graycoat, a ragged jacket, a beater, and finally a bedlamer. At four years old a harp seal has a silvery gray coat with a few spots—and it's called a spotted harp. Some females look like that the rest of their lives. But males, as well as many females, develop a distinctive black pattern that is shaped like a harp (right), which explains the name of the species.





# BEAR Rescu

BY SCOTT ELDER



ADAM DEEM HOLDS THE CUB HE SAVED.

After two months, the bandages and booties come off for good.

LI'L SMOKEY IS HEALED.

# A determined firefighter saves a badly burned cub.



Li'L SMOKEY IS ON THE MEND.

SAFE AT LAST, Li'L SMOKEY TAKES A NAP.

**A** powerful summer thunderstorm hits northern California with crackling lightning bolts. They strike the dry forests and spark more than 2,000 fires. In one burning forest, a mother black bear and her cub flee for their lives, but in the heat and smoke they are separated. Scared and alone, the young cub doesn't know which way to go. After making a wrong turn, he is trapped by the fire. He can either stay and surrender to the flames or make a run for it across smoldering ground. The cub runs.

**LATER, FIREFIGHTER** and forester Adam Deem drives his pickup into the charred wilderness to assess the damage. As he turns a corner on a narrow dirt road, he is surprised to see the tiny bear cub in his path. Deem expects the cub's mother to appear any second and then they'd scamper off together. But minutes pass and she doesn't show up.

The cub realizes he's being watched. As Deem drives closer and gets a better look at the cub's burns, he cringes. "His paws are just melted...down to the raw flesh," he says. "I can't imagine the pain he must be in." But then the cub scurries off. Deem realizes that if the cub gets away, he'll never survive in the wild with those injuries, even if his mother joins him.

**"I CAN'T TURN AWAY FROM HIM,"** says Deem. "I can't let him die." Deem chases the cub through the charred brush on foot. When the house-cat-size bear begins climbing a tree, Deem grabs it by the scruff of the neck. He protects himself by pinning the cub under his arm.

Deem radios his base and is told to drive the cub to headquarters, where a warden from the Department of Fish and Game will take over. With one hand on the steering wheel and the other clamped on the screaming and struggling baby bear, he drives his pickup back down the dirt road.

**DURING THE LONG DRIVE** Deem decides to call the cub Li'L Smokey. At the firefighter headquarters, the game warden loads Li'L Smokey into a pet carrier and rushes him to a state wildlife facility for preliminary treatment. The next day, the cub is taken to Lake Tahoe Wildlife Care, a wildlife rehabilitation center. The eight-and-a-half-pound cub, estimated to be six months old, weighs less than half of what he should. All of Li'L Smokey's paws have severe burns, and all of the paw pads and claws are gone—in some spots, bone is visible. The center's staff thinks they can save his life, but they worry about his future. "We are concerned that the paws won't heal satisfactorily for us to be able to release him back into the wild," says Tom Millham, one of the center's rehabilitation specialists.

Li'L Smokey is given painkillers, antibiotics to fight infection, and fluid to rehydrate his body. Soothing ointments are applied to his tender paws to help them heal. Foods that he'd eat in the wild are added to his fruity diet of grapes, peaches, and strawberries, and local residents donate freshly caught whole fish.

After three months, the bandages finally come off for good. "He's got all 20 claws and all 20 toes," says Millham. "Everything is fantastic!"

Late in the winter, Li'L Smokey is given a tranquilizer and placed in an artificial den near where he was rescued. Then Li'L Smokey awakes, emerges from his den, and becomes a wild bear again.

How does Deem think Li'L Smokey will react if they run into each other again in the forest? "I hope he runs away," he says. "He should be afraid of me. He needs to live as a wild animal does."

# WORLD'S WACKIEST HOTELS

BY JAMIE KIFFEL-ALCHEH

CHECK OUT  
THESE AMAZING  
PLACES TO STAY  
ON VACATION.

**F**orget your standard hotel. From rooms built in the treetops to suites dug into caves, vacation spots are becoming way more than just a place to sleep. Once you check in at these weird-but-fun hotels, you may never want to check out!

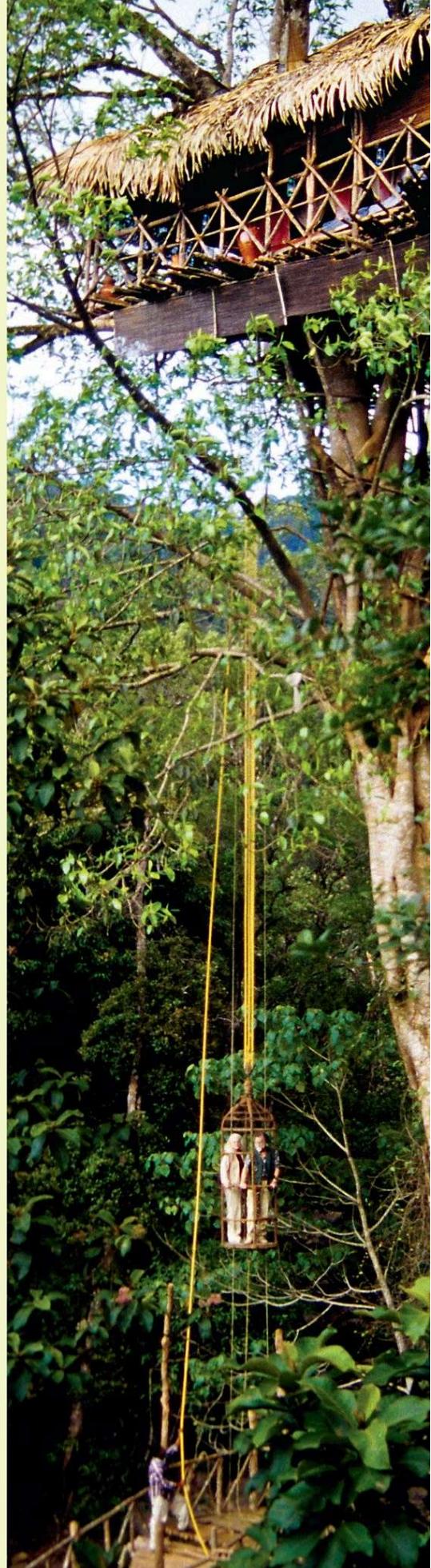
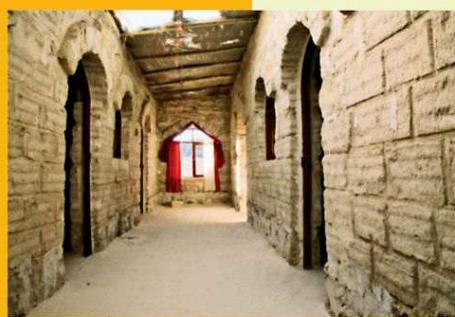
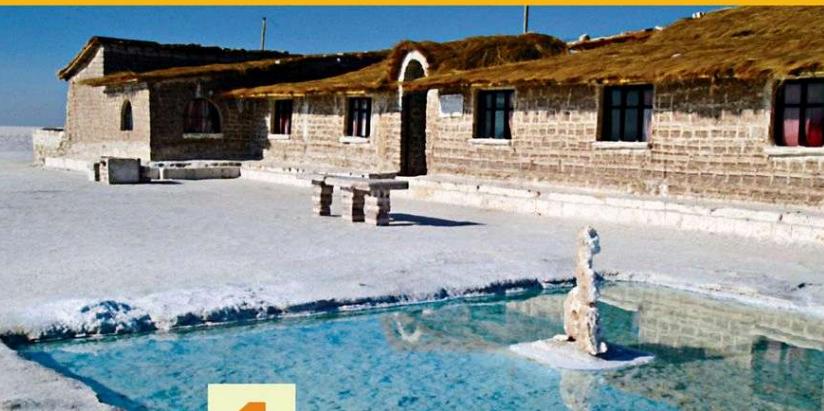
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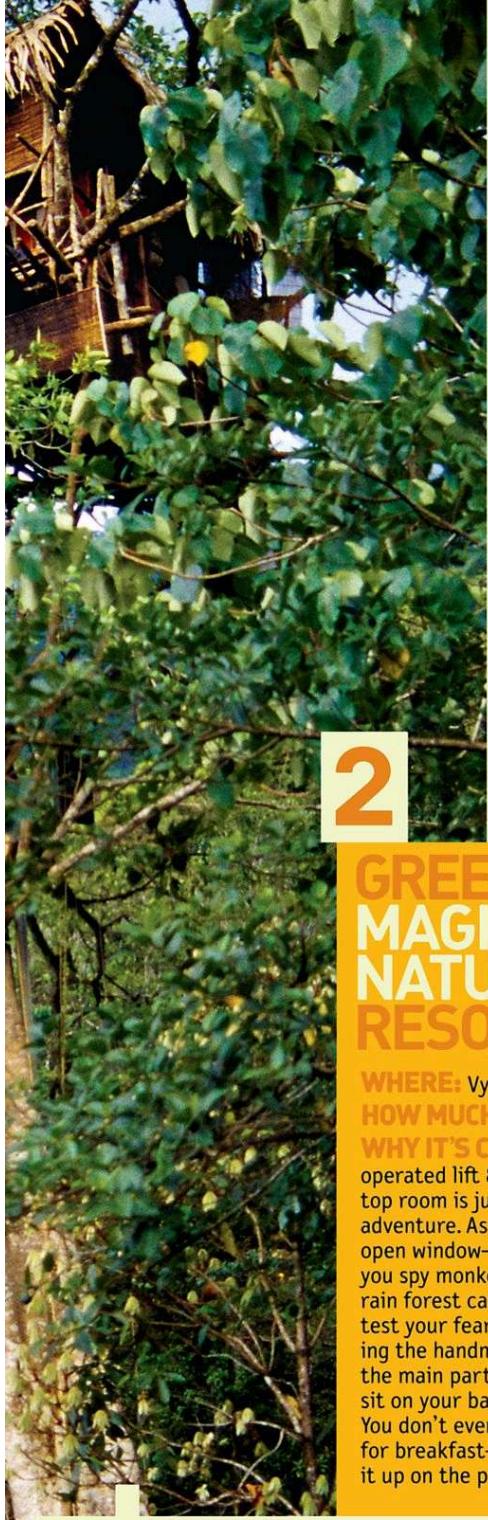
## TAYKA HOTEL DE SAL

**WHERE:** Tahuia, Bolivia

**HOW MUCH:** About \$95 a night

**WHY IT'S COOL:** You've stayed at hotels made of brick or wood, but salt? That's something few can claim. Tayka Hotel de Sal is made totally of salt—including the beds (though you'll sleep on regular mattresses and blankets). The hotel sits on the Salar de Uyuni, a prehistoric dried-up lake that's the world's biggest salt flat. Builders use the salt from the 4,633-square-mile flat to make the bricks, and glue them together with a paste of wet salt that hardens when it dries. When rain starts to dissolve the hotel, the owners just mix up more salt paste to strengthen the bricks.





2

## GREEN MAGIC NATURE RESORT

**WHERE:** Vythiri, India

**HOW MUCH:** About \$240 a night

**WHY IT'S COOL:** Riding a pulley-operated lift 86 feet to your tree-top room is just the start of your adventure. As you look out your open window—there's no glass!—you spy monkeys and birds in the rain forest canopy. Later you might test your fear of heights by crossing the handmade rope bridge to the main part of the hotel, or just sit on your bamboo bed and read. You don't even have to come down for breakfast—the hotel will send it up on the pulley-drawn "elevator."

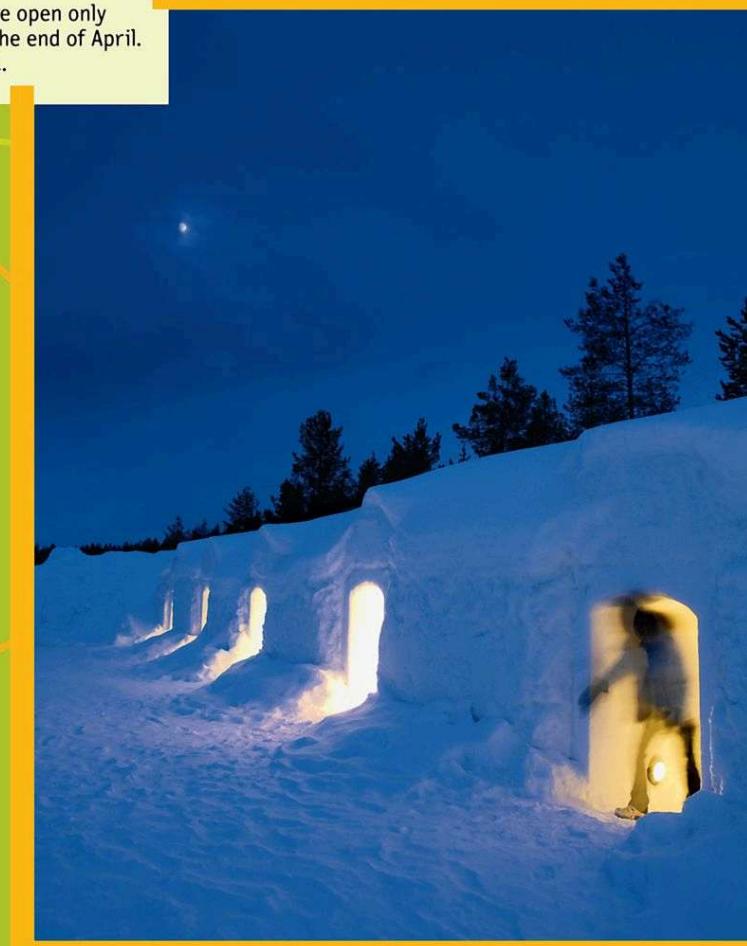


## 3 HOTEL & IGLOO VILLAGE KAKSLAUTTANEN

**WHERE:** Saariselkä, Finland

**HOW MUCH:** Between \$190 and \$230 a night per person

**WHY IT'S COOL:** If you like snow, then this is the place for you! Being able to make it through the night at this chilly igloo hotel definitely ups your personal cool factor (in more ways than one). But even the most adventurous travelers will be glad the hotel provides cold-weather sleeping bags and wool socks: The inside temperature hovers around 25°F. Just hope that you don't need the bathroom—it's outside. The igloos are open only from December till the end of April. After that, they melt.



**Did you know?**

The oldest hotel in the world is the Hoshi Ryokan in Japan. The 100-bedroom inn dates to A.D. 717.

© DIEGO GIUDICE / CORBIS (SALT HOTEL EXTERIOR), © JASON FRIEND / ALAMY (SALT HOTEL INTERIOR), © HORNBIL IMAGES / ALAMY (TREE HOTEL, BOTH), COURTESY HOTEL KAKSLAUTTANEN (SLEEPING BAGS); ARCTIC-IMAGES / GETTY IMAGES (IGLOOS)



# FunStuff

games, laughs, and lots to do!



## Sweet Find

Valentine's Day is February 14. Find 14 items in this classroom that start with the letter v. Then find 14 hearts hidden in the picture. **ANSWERS ON PAGE 35**

JAMES MARSHAK

## Family Project



### TO MAKE A ROBOT, YOU WILL NEED

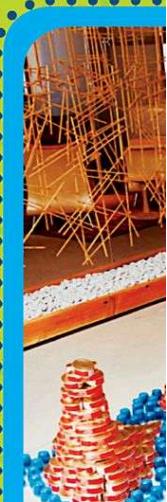
- A VARIETY OF CANNED GOODS AND NONPERISHABLE FOOD ITEMS
- TWO RECTANGULAR PIECES OF PLYWOOD AT LEAST A HALF-INCH THICK (ONE LARGE AND ONE SMALL, AS SHOWN)
- CLEAR PACKING TAPE

### WHAT TO DO

1. Sort the cans by size.
2. Stack the largest cans on top of each other to create two legs. (Line up the round edges of the cans so they are stable.) Rest a smaller can on its side in front of each leg to look like feet.
3. Place the larger piece of wood evenly on top of the legs. Working from the middle to the outer edges of the plywood, make a torso by lining up rows of same-size cans. Continue to build the robot's upper body by stacking more rows of cans. Make sure each row is steady and balanced before adding the next one.
4. For the arms, place a stack of cans along both sides of the torso. Rest cans on their sides to look like forearms and hands. Tape down the cans so they don't roll off.
5. Place the smaller piece of plywood on top of the torso in the middle. Create a neck using one layer of cans that is slightly narrower than the robot's torso.
6. Use a box-shaped container for the robot's head. The head on our robot is a red licorice container. With tape, attach two small cans for eyes and another small can as a mouth. Rest two cans on top of the head to make antennae.

Add a "control panel" to the front of your robot using packaged crackers.

Use noodle packets to create knees for your robot.





# What in the World?

Play interactive "What in the World?" and other games online.  
[kids.nationalgeographic.com](http://kids.nationalgeographic.com)



## HEART-TO-HEART

These images show close-up and faraway views of things that are heart-shaped. Unscramble the letters to identify what's in each picture. Not feeling the love?

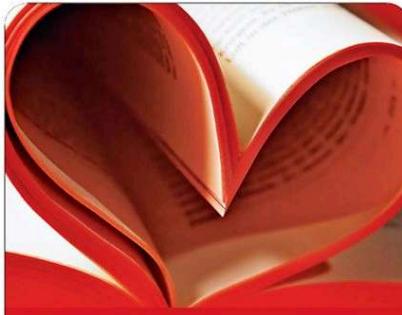
ANSWERS ON PAGE 35



ANSWS



SDNILA



OKBO



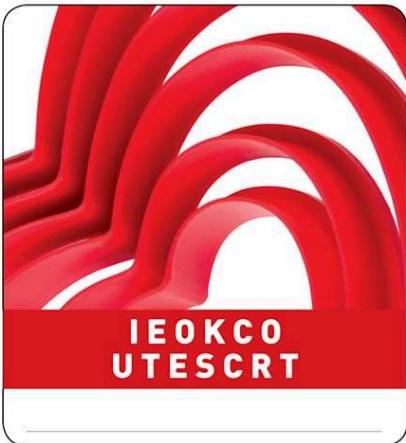
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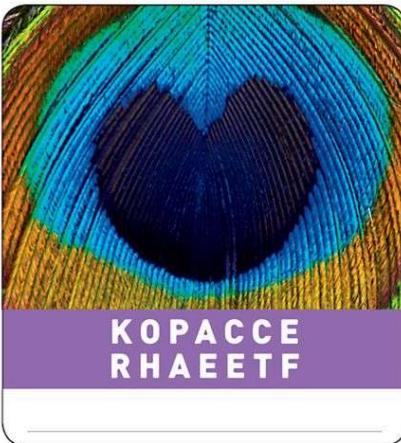
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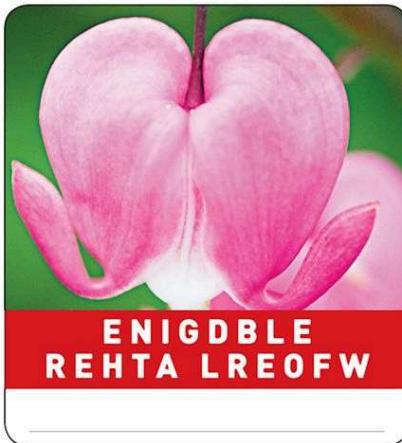
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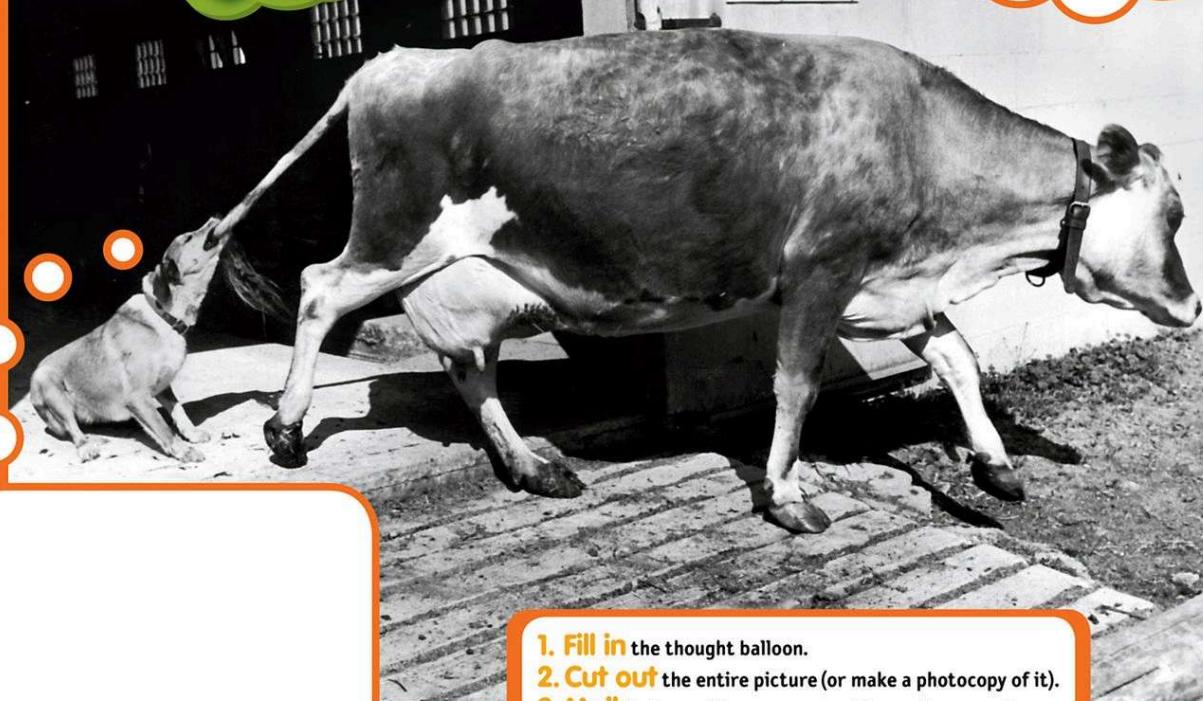
TOP ROW (LEFT TO RIGHT): © CHINA PHOTOS / REUTERES / CORBIS VISION / AMERICA / JOE SCHMID / GETTY IMAGES; © MARGOEE PHOTOGRAPHY / ALAMY  
MIDDLE ROW (LEFT TO RIGHT): © GABRIEL JELAN CARRAS / ES STOKER / PHOTOLIBRARY / FRANK KRAMER / GETTY IMAGES  
BOTTOM ROW (LEFT TO RIGHT): © HURST / ALAMY; AMERICAN MAGES, INC / GETTY IMAGES; DAVE ZUBRASKI / GAP PHOTOS / GETTY IMAGES



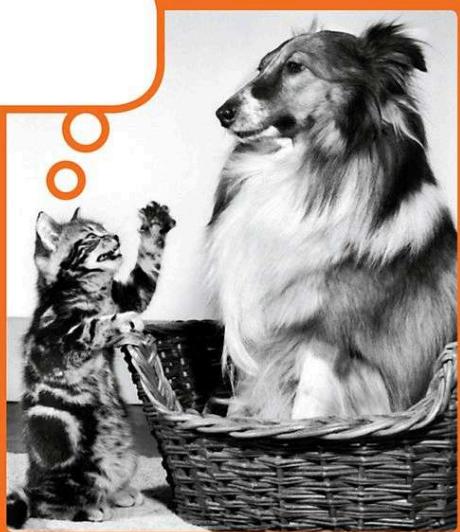
# Back Talk

Let's play  
tug-of-war!

What do  
YOU think  
the dog is  
thinking?



1. Fill in the thought balloon.
2. Cut out the entire picture (or make a photocopy of it).
3. Mail it along with your name, address, phone number, and date of birth to NG KIDS, Back Talk, P.O. Box 96000, WASHINGTON, DC 20090-6000. Selection for publication in a future issue will be at the discretion of NG KIDS.



## From the April Issue

Let's arm wrestle  
for the bed.

Sean M., 11  
East Patchogue, New York

Do you think I need  
a "pet-icure"?

Asia L., 13  
Aurora, Ohio

I swear to tell the whole  
truth and nothing but  
the truth.

Rachel W., 13  
Elkhorn, Wisconsin

Talk to the claws.

Michael V., 11  
Milford, Massachusetts

You have five seconds  
to give me the catnip!

Brandon M., 13  
Clemmons, North Carolina

I'm telling you, the  
fish was this big!

Clara S., 9  
Hudson, Wisconsin

You better watch what  
you're doing, because I'm  
ninja kitty!

Ginette A., 13  
North Reading, Massachusetts

'Sup, dawg?

Ryan R., 11  
Hagerstown, Maryland

## **Full Citation**

- Title National Geographic Kids
- Publication Date Monday, Feb. 2010
- Pages 1
- Language English
- Document Type Cover
- Source Library National Geographic Society
- Gale Document Number GALE|GOLAIP706424592