



Readers will “reach new heights” with this exciting theme that explores nature’s wonders and the lure of testing ourselves against the challenges of the untamed out-of-doors.

### SETTING THE SCENE

**Campsite Corner:** Bring the great outdoors inside by creating a campsite corner. Set up a simple tent with a sleeping bag inside. Make a campfire of artificial logs and tissue paper or foil flames, surrounded by a rock fire ring. Add a backpack, a lantern, and an inexpensive compass for children to handle. Place a few cardboard trees around your campsite.

**Reach New Heights Bulletin Board:** Use the “Reach New Heights: Read!” Bulletin Board Decorator to promote a reading challenge. Set a collective goal for books read while you feature this theme. Use colored paper to create a stair-step trail of stacked books as shown on the “Reach New Heights” poster. Each book represents an increment toward your goal. For example, if your goal is 50 books, you could angle a 10-book trail up your board, with each step representing five books. Use a “Reach New Heights” Reading Record to track the group’s progress. As the total grows, place a Bulletin Board Decorator animal character or sticker on the appropriate trail step.



**Trail Markers:** Mount signs on the end caps of your nonfiction collection directing readers to Dewey numbers for theme-related subjects like famous mountain ranges, animals you might encounter in the wild, outdoor sports like hiking or orienteering, camping recipe, etc. Animal characters from the “Reach New Heights” Bulletin Board Decorator will cheerfully draw attention to your signs.



**Mountain Book Display:** Stack cardboard boxes, in varied shapes and sizes from copy paper boxes to oatmeal boxes, and at different angles, to create a mountain with peaks, valleys, and plateaus. Make many plateaus to maximize display space. Attach the boxes with duct tape and drape the form with a brown or gray cloth. Adjust the cloth to sit flat over the plateaus. Try some spray craft snow or cotton to cap the higher peaks. Display books on camping, mountaineering, backpacking, etc. on the plateaus. Scatter a few toy trees among the books.

**Adventuresome Prizes:** Gather these items to use as prizes for winning games, achieving

# Reach New Heights—READ!

reading goals, or participating in activities: Individually wrapped energy bars, beef jerky, inexpensive toy compasses or flashlights, and “Reach New Heights: Read!” stickers or bookmarks.



## GAMES

**“I’m Packing My Backpack...”:** Try this alphabet game with younger children. Sit in a circle. Explain that you’ll take turns thinking up items to take on a camping trip, in alphabetical order. You set the pattern: “I’m packing my backpack, and in it I’ll put ... *an apple*.” The next person in the circle supplies a “B” word, and so on. To add a memory challenge, have each child repeat the items already named, in order: “I’m packing my backpack, and in it I’ll put ... *an apple, binoculars, a canteen, and drawing paper*.” It’s okay if the items won’t fit in a backpack. Encourage creative thinking!

**Camping Bingo:** Print out caller cards and individual bingo cards from this Scouting Web site: [www.making-friends.com/scouts/camping\\_bingo.htm](http://www.making-friends.com/scouts/camping_bingo.htm). Prepare materials, gather a group, assign a caller, and play a game. Award small prizes to the winners.

**Animal Track Match-ups:** Copy the reproducible master on page 6 and challenge kids to match animals to the tracks they leave. Answer Key: page 7.

## ARTS/CRAFTS

**Hiking Sticks:** Make hiking sticks with a personal flair. Provide a selection of sturdy sticks. (Gather fallen branches from a wooded area or buy lengths of bamboo.) Sticks should be long enough to stand between the user’s elbow and shoulder. Remove small twigs from the sticks and scrape off the outer bark using putty knives as needed. Smooth the surface with a light application of sandpaper. Wipe with clean cloths. Wrap strips of leather or chamois cloth around the top for handgrips and secure with glue. Decorate around the



grip with beads or feathers. Don’t forget bells to scare away bears! For fancier, more durable sticks, add varnish after cleaning, and trim the bottom until you can force it into a short section of  $\frac{3}{4}$ " copper pipe to reinforce and protect it.

**Nature Journals:** Have children decorate spiral notebooks, small enough to fit in a pocket or backpack. Create personal cover designs with crayons, markers, stamps, or stickers. Tie pencils to the spiral binding. Kids can draw maps of their routes, log hiking dates and the flora and fauna they see along the way, and sketch interesting discoveries.

**Nature Art:** Set up a table with basic art supplies including different kinds of paper, glue, crayons, colored chalk, scissors ... Invite children to bring interesting nature finds like rocks, leaves, twigs, or bits of bark. They will use the materials to create works of art. They might use crayons or chalk to make rubbings of textured rocks, leaves, or bark; arrange natural objects on paper as mixed-media collages; or assemble their treasures into sculptures. Display interesting examples and let the creativity flow!

**Plaster Tracks:** Is there a place nearby where you can find distinct animal tracks in mud or sand? Take children there to demonstrate making plaster casts. You’ll need strips of cardboard to make frames for your casts, tape to hold them together, plaster of paris (1–1½ cups per cast), a mixing bowl and spoon, and enough water to make a smooth, runny plaster mix. Follow these steps:

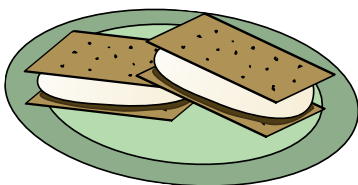


- Form a cardboard ring around the animal print. Secure it with tape, and press it into the mud or sand.
- Pour an inch of runny plaster over the print.
- Let the plaster harden for 15 minutes.
- Remove the frame, and gently lift the plaster from the ground.

See how many different animal tracks you can cast and display in your classroom or library.

## RECIPES

**S'mores:** Nothing tastes better than this delicious treat featuring marshmallows toasted over an open fire. Tuck one into the middle of a “sandwich” made of pieces of a Hershey’s chocolate bar with half a graham cracker on either side. You can approximate the experience indoors, like this: Cover half a graham cracker with miniature marshmallows; spread the other half with chocolate frosting. Cook the marshmallow half in the microwave for 10 seconds, then another 7–9 seconds. Top the puffed marshmallows with the frosted graham cracker. Yummy!

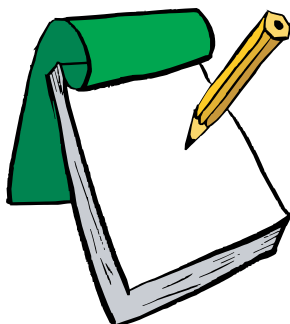


**GORP (Good Old Raisins & Peanuts):** Start with a mix of nutritious raisins and peanuts, and add your favorites from these or other options: dried fruit, shredded coconut, M&Ms, sunflower seeds, pretzels, dry cereal, jelly beans, licorice bits ... Provide several options and let children mix their own concoctions in small plastic bags. Use scoops or plastic gloves when handling ingredients.

**Cooking on a Stick!** Check out the book in the bibliography by the same name for interesting recipes cooked over a campfire on sticks, in foil pouches, or on grills. Serve a few at a special event or invite families to bring favorite campfire foods for a potluck picnic and exchange recipes.

## WRITING PROJECTS

**A Day in the Life ...:** Encourage children to quietly watch a wild animal—perhaps a toad or squirrel—for at least 30 minutes. Have them imagine what life is like for that animal, and then write 1–2 pages describing a day in its life, from the animal’s point of view.



**Letters from Camp:** Introduce this activity by reading *Hello Muddah, Hello Faddah* from the bibliography or placing it on a table with writing materials. Have kids pretend they are at a wilderness camp. They will write two letters home; one after a terrible day at camp and one after a great day.

**How To...:** There’s so much to learn about exploring the great outdoors as a camper, hiker, or climber! Have children use personal experiences and classroom or library resources to write step-by-step instructions for completing a specific task related to adventuring in the wild. They should include enough detail so that someone with no experience could complete

the task. Here are some subjects to suggest:

- How to dress for a mountain hike
- How to build a campfire
- How to pack a first-aid kit for the trail

## SPECIAL EVENTS

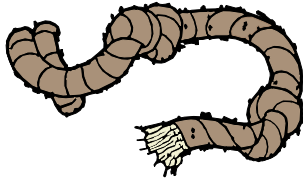
**Wilderness Camping Story Time:** Share your favorite stories about exploring the great outdoors. Include a poem or two from *Toasting Marshmallows...* from the bibliography. Play “I’m Packing My Backpack ...” and sing “The Bear Went over the Mountain” or your favorite campfire ditties. Make rubbings of leaves and bark with crayons, and serve GORP in individual containers.



**Nature Hike:** Take a group of children on a nature hike through a park or wooded area. Could a park ranger or naturalist be your guide? Use the hike to test skills and celebrate what you’ve learned. Take along the hiking sticks and nature journals you’ve made, camping treats like GORP, and a camera to document your adventure. Practice outdoor safety by dressing appropriately, using sunscreen and insect repellent, staying on marked trails, taking a map and

compass, drinking plenty of water, and letting parents know exactly where you're going and when you'll return.

**Knot Tying:** Invite an expert to demonstrate different kinds of knots and explain how they might be used on a mountain climbing, camping, or backpacking expedition. Provide lengths of rope and let children practice tying.



## CONTEST

**Map Reading/Orienteering:** Prepare a course for children to follow to develop map-reading and orienteering skills. Provide maps, compasses, and stickers as needed. Design increasingly challenging courses for growing skills. Choose or adapt one or more of these levels as appropriate. Sport orienteering includes a speed component. Make it a contest by timing individuals or teams and awarding first-, second-, and third-place prizes.

- **Level 1 string course.** Lay out a short course with twists and turns in a small area, clearly marked by string or yarn on the ground. Place about six stakes along the route. Number them and attach a plastic bag of matching stickers to each. Use a different sticker design for each stake, so you can check that kids match the course to the map accurately. Stakes should be tall and



easily visible. Provide a map showing the course with numbers indicating the location of the stakes. Include and explain a directional arrow, scale indicator, and key for landmarks shown on the map. Kids will walk the course, take a sticker from each bag, and place it on the matching number on their maps.

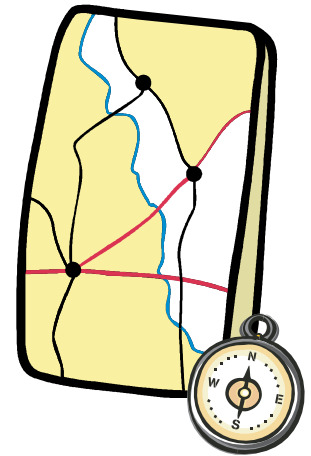
- **Level 2 string course.** Set up a longer string course, and leave stake locations off the map. This time kids will walk the course and figure out where the stickers from each stake should go on their maps.
- **Level 3 course.** Using a larger area, set up a course with 10–12 numbered stakes with sticker bags. No string this time, and stakes can be shorter and harder to spot. Kids will find their way from stake to stake

using map and compass, and mark their progress by attaching stickers to the appropriate numbers on the map. Add another dimension to the experience by using standard tracking symbols, made of sticks or stones, to mark the route. You'll find samples in *Follow the Trail...* from the bibliography.

## MATH/SCIENCE ACTIVITIES

**Mhirping Crickets:** Did you know that crickets can tell you the temperature? During cricket season, go outside and find a nice, noisy cricket to listen to. Using a watch with a second hand, count how many times it chirps in 15 seconds. Have several people count, since crickets chirp rapidly on hot days! Add 40 to that number, and you'll get the approximate temperature in Fahrenheit! Compare your results to an outdoor thermometer and see how close you come.

**Map Scale:** Find a map of your town or a nearby park showing streets, trails, and landmarks. Talk about map scale, and read the legend to find the scale of your map. Start with simple math problems that translate map distances to actual distances, like this: "If one inch represents five miles, how far would you walk to cover a three-inch path on the map?" Next, use a string to trace routes between points on the map and measure the distance on a ruler. Convert map distances to actual distances. Finally, try more complex questions: "Is the school closer to city hall or the public library?" "How much farther is it to walk from the ranger station to the pond on the trail than it would be 'as the crow flies'?"



**Nocturnal Animals:** Talk about nocturnal animals you might see or hear on a camping trip. Use books about species native to your area. Show pictures of the animals, and talk about how to watch and listen

for these night-loving creatures. Find a recording of night sounds and see how many animals children can identify using only their ears.

## INTERNET ACTIVITIES

**Cybercamp**, [www.gocybercamp.org/login.php](http://www.gocybercamp.org/login.php). Register as a Caregiver for a free account and let kids explore aspects of camping including ecosystems, camp-related science concepts, games, stories, songs, and art projects.

**Geocaching**, [www.nailedtotheweb.com/geocaching.htm](http://www.nailedtotheweb.com/geocaching.htm). Bookmark this site for a brief, kid-friendly introduction to geocaching.

## "REACH NEW HEIGHTS" RESOURCES

- *Bear Hug* by Laurence Pringle, illustrated by Kate Salley Palmer. Boyds Mills Press, 2003. ISBN 1563978768. K–3.
- *Blind Mountain* by Jane Resh Thomas. Clarion Books, 2006. ISBN 0618648720. 4–6.
- *Campfire Tales: The Most Terrifying Stories Ever Told* by Sean Dresden. Lowell House, 2000. ISBN 0737304367. 4–6.
- *Cooking on a Stick: Campfire Recipes for Kids* by Linda White. Gibbs Smith, 1996. ISBN 0879057270. 2–6.
- *Do Princesses Really Kiss Frogs?* by Carmela LaVigna Coyle, illustrated by Mike Gordon. Rising Moon Books, 2005. ISBN 0873588800. Pre–3.
- *Ellie McDoodle: Have Pen, Will Travel* by Ruth McNally Barshaw. Bloomsbury Publishing USA, 2007. ISBN 158234745X. 3–6.
- *Follow the Trail: A Young Person's Guide to the Great Outdoors* by Jessica Loy. Henry Holt & Company, 2003. ISBN 0805061959. 2–5.



- *Hello Muddah, Hello Faddah! A Letter from Camp* by Allen Sherman and Lou Busch, illustrated by Jack E. Davis. Puffin Books, 2004. ISBN 0142406384. K–3.
- *Henry and Mudge and the Starry Night* by Cynthia Rylant, illustrated by Sucie Stevenson. Simon &

Schuster, 1998. ISBN 0689811756. K–2.

- *Henry Climbs a Mountain* by D. B. Johnson. Houghton Mifflin, 2003. ISBN 0618269029. 2–5.
- *High as a Hawk: A Brave Girl's Historic Climb* by T. A. Barron, illustrated by Ted Lewin. Philomel, 2004. ISBN 0399237046. 1–4.
- *Map Mania: Discovering Where You Are and Getting Where You Aren't* by Michael A. DiSpezio, illustrated by Dave Garbot. Sterling, 2003. ISBN 1402705999. 4–6.
- *Maxwell's Mountain* by Shari Becker, illustrated by Nicole Wong. Charlesbridge Publishing, 2006. ISBN 1580892124. K–3.
- *No Way Out: The Hardy Boys Casefiles #75* by Franklin W. Dixon. Simon & Schuster Children's Publishing, 1993. ISBN 0671731114. 4–6.
- *Oh Yeah!* by Tom Birdseye, illustrated by Ethan Long. Holiday House, 2003. ISBN 0823416496. Pre–2.
- *Rock Climbing* by Pat Ryan. Smart Apple Media, 2000. ISBN 1887068570. 4–6.
- *S is for S'Mores: A Camping Alphabet* by Helen Foster James, illustrated by Lita Judge. Sleeping Bear Press, 2007. ISBN 1585363022. K–3.
- *Sammy Keyes and the Wild Things* by Wendelin Van Draanen. Knopf Books for Young Readers, 2007. ISBN 0375835253. 4–6.
- *Skunk Scout* by Laurence Yep. Hyperion Books for Children, 2003. ISBN 0786817143. 4–6.
- *Summer Camp Crack-Ups: And Lots S'More Knock-Knock Jokes to Write Home About* by Katy Hall and Lisa Eisenberg, illustrated by Stephen Carpenter. Harper Festival, 2001. ISBN 0694013579. K–3.
- *Toasting Marshmallows: Camping Poems* by Kristine O'Connell George, illustrated by Kate Kiesler. Clarion Books, 2001. ISBN 061804597X. K–6.
- *The Top of the World: Climbing Mount Everest* by Steve Jenkins. Houghton Mifflin, 1999. ISBN 0395942187. 3–6.
- *Trekking on a Trail: Hiking Adventures for Kids* by Linda White. Gibbs Smith, 2000. ISBN 0879059419. 2–6.
- *Triumph on Everest: A Photobiography of Sir Edmund Hillary* by Broughton Coburn. National Geographic Children's Books, 2003. ISBN 0792279328. 5–6.
- *A Week in the Woods* by Andrew Clements. Simon & Schuster, 2002. ISBN 0689858027. 3–6.

# Animal Track Match-Ups

Can you match these animal tracks to the animals that left them?



Deer



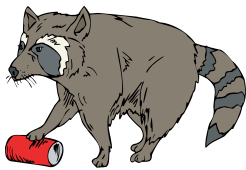
Bear



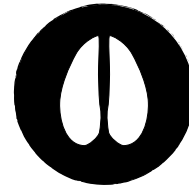
Rabbit



Fox



Raccoon



Coyote



Squirrel



# Animal Track Match-Ups

## Answer Key



Deer



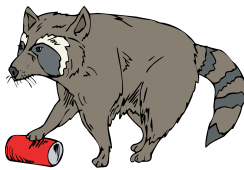
Bear



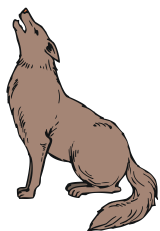
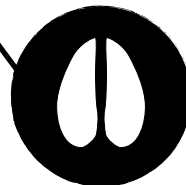
Rabbit



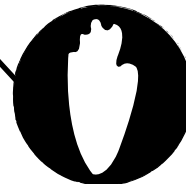
Fox



Raccoon



Coyote



Squirrel

