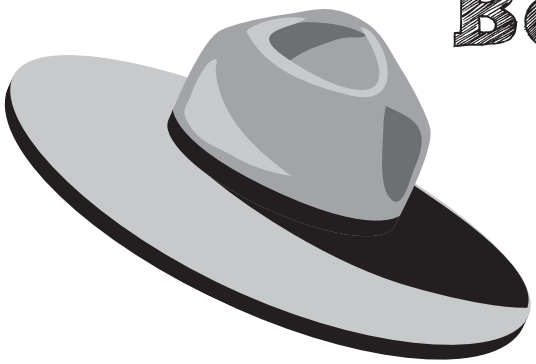
NORTH CAROLINA STATE PARKS

Be a Junior Ranger

- Explore
- Learn
- Help Out

This book belongs to: _____

Be a Junior Ranger



Junior Rangers play an important role in the North Carolina state park mission.

Collect All 39 Patches !

Natural Resource Protection.

Junior Rangers help park rangers take care of the parks's natural resources. Plants, wildlife and clean water are important natural resources.

Environmental Education.

Junior Rangers teach their family and friends what they learn about the park and how to take care of it.

Responsible Recreation.

Junior Rangers have fun at state parks! They follow park rules to stay safe and so the natural resources are here for the future.

Dear Adult Leaders

We are delighted that you are joining our Junior Ranger Program. The activities in this book offer a special opportunity to explore your state parks. The goal of the Junior Rangers Program is for children to gain an appreciation of nature, parks and natural resources careers.

We recommended these activities for children ages 6 - 12. The goal is for the child to learn by doing. Please read the introduction to each activity and discuss it with the child to be sure he/she understands it. If you need assistance with an activity, feel free to ask a park staff member.

This book may be used at any of the state parks and recreation areas to earn a Junior Ranger patch.

How to Become a Junior Ranger

- ❑ Attend a ranger education program at the park.. Check with park staff or the web site for program schedules. The activities "What Does a Park Ranger Do?" (page 3) and "Get Outside!" (page 4) may count as an education program if one is not available during your visit.
- ❑ (6 - 8 year-olds) complete at least three activities in this book
- ❑ (9 – 12 year-olds) complete at least five activities in this book
- ❑ Complete one stewardship project.
  (A stewardship project is where you help the rangers take care of the park. See page 13)
- ❑ When you complete the activities listed above, ask a park ranger to review this book with you. Repeat the junior ranger pledge after the park ranger.

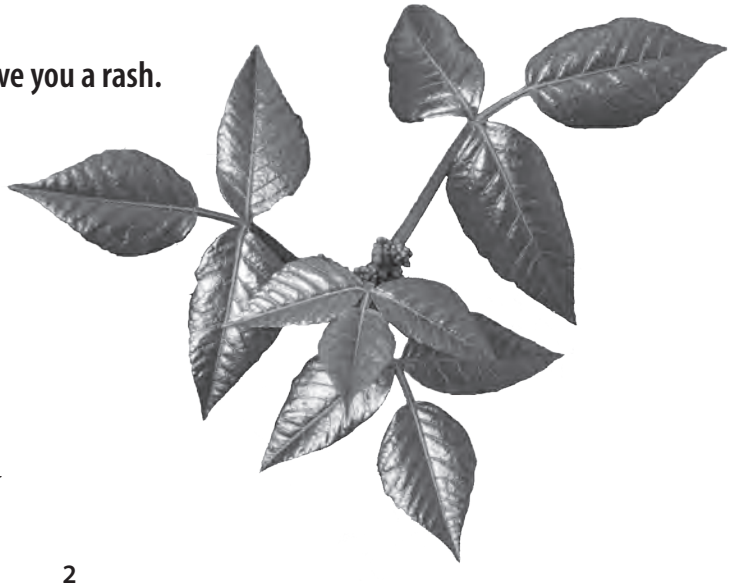
Fill In Educational Programs Completed:

#1 _____ _____ _____
Name of Program Date Ranger Signature

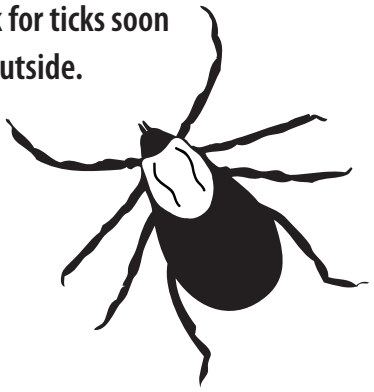
#2 _____ _____ _____
Name of Program Date Ranger Signature

Junior Ranger Safety Tips

- **Always have an adult with you.**
- **Stay on park trails.**
- **Wear sunscreen and drink plenty of water. Wear a hat and shoes.**
- **Do not feed wildlife. Report sick animals to park rangers.**
- **Remain quiet as you look and listen. You will have a better chance of seeing wildlife.**
- **Learn what poison ivy looks like.**
  It is in most parks and touching it may give you a rash.
  Leaves of three, let it be.



- **Always check for ticks soon after being outside.**



What Does a Park Ranger Do?

Being a park ranger is an exciting job. Park rangers protect habitats, teach people about interesting animals in the park and make sure the park is safe. Find a park ranger and interview them. Ask them these questions.

1) What do you like best about being a park ranger? _____

_____

_____

2) What is the most difficult part of being a park ranger? _____

_____

_____

3) What is something strange or something funny that you have seen at the park? _____

_____

4) What is your favorite time of year at the park and why? _____

_____

_____

5) What did you have to do to become a park ranger? _____

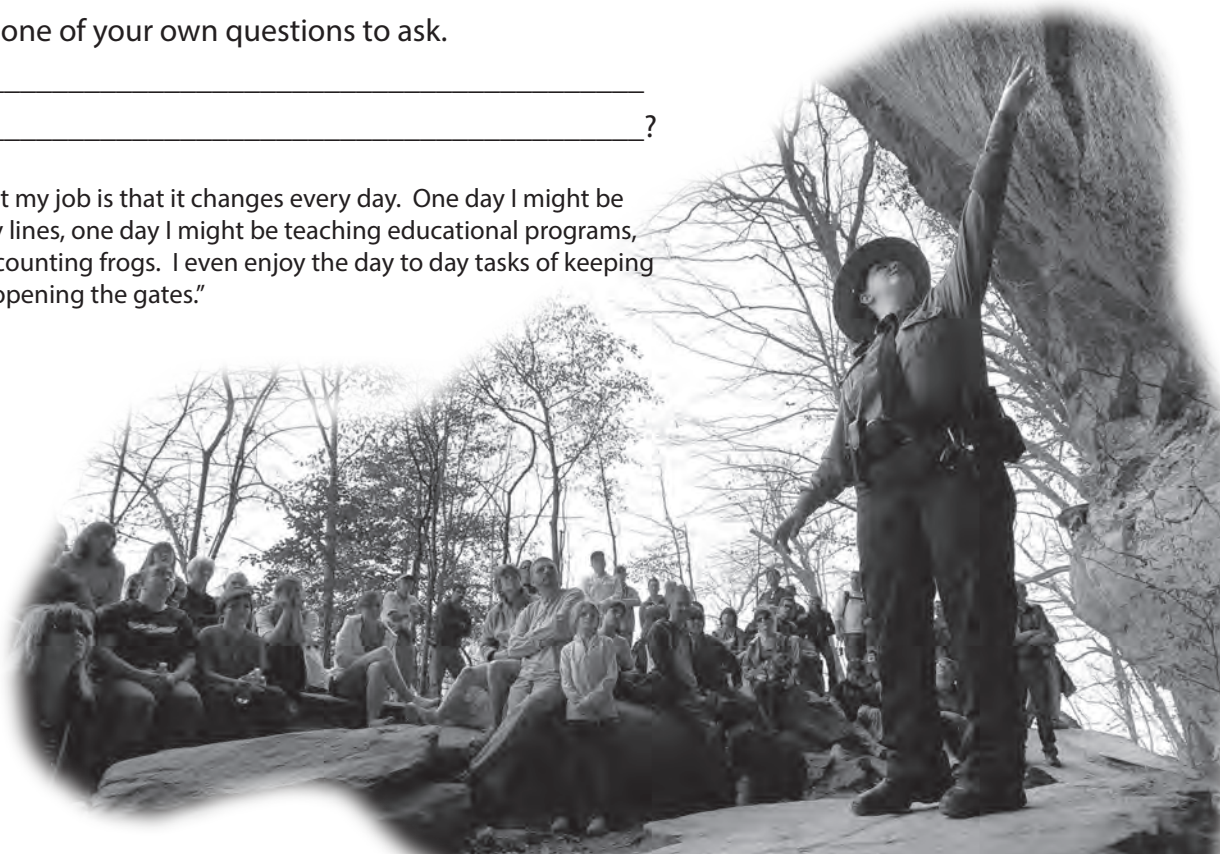
_____

Come up with one of your own questions to ask.

6) _____

_____?

"The best part about my job is that it changes every day. One day I might be patrolling boundary lines, one day I might be teaching educational programs, one day I might be counting frogs. I even enjoy the day to day tasks of keeping the park clean and opening the gates."



_____

Signature of a park ranger Date

Get Outside!

Each park has a Get Outside! Kit that families and groups can borrow at the park office. The kit has books, magnifying glasses and lots of fun games you can do in nature.

Sign out a Get Outside! Kit and play some of the outdoor games.

Which was your favorite?

Activity 1

Culture and History

Ages 9-12

Go to the park's museum, go to a park ranger program or visit the park web site. You may learn about American Indians that once lived in the park. You may learn about old cabins, farms or when the park first opened for people to visit.

What did you learn? What was the land like before it was a park? Imagine that you are traveling here many years ago. Write about what you might see…

A long, long time ago...

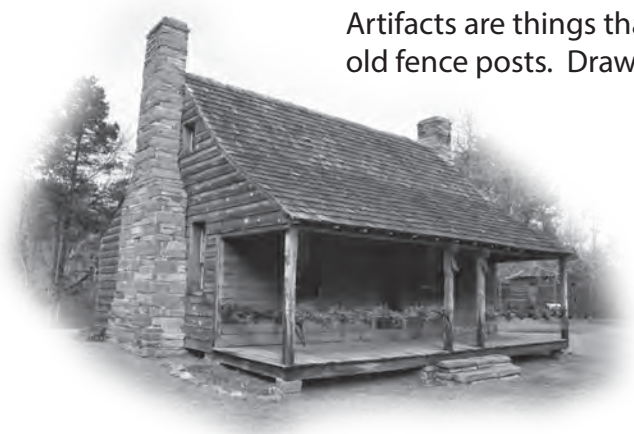
_____

_____

_____

_____

_____



Artifacts are things that people made and left behind - like arrowheads, tools and old fence posts. Draw a picture of an artifact that might be found in the park.

Activity 2

Senses Hike

Take a hike on any of the park's trails and use your senses to discover the natural world around you. Listed below are four of our five senses: sight, sound, smell and touch. We have not included taste in this activity because there are many plants that grow in the park that are harmful if eaten. Use each one of your senses to learn about something along the trail and describe it below.

Example:
Sound: I heard a bird singing. It had a high squeaking sound that repeats over and over.

Sight: _____

_____

Sound: _____

_____

Smell: _____

_____

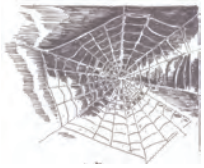
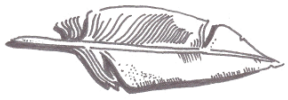
Touch: _____

_____

Activity 3

Wildlife Detective

Hit the trails or the beach and explore the park to see what wildlife you may encounter. Many animals are shy. We sometimes find clues that they leave behind in their habitat. Check off the clues below as you find them. Walk quietly, listen closely and stay alert. You never know what animal may cross your path. Carefully look under logs - be sure to place them back as you found them. Good luck wildlife detective!

☐	Leaf chewed by an insect	☐	Animal tracks
☐	Insect buzzing	☐	Scat (droppings)
☐	Bird tracks	☐	Spider Web 
☐	Animal tunnel	☐	A nest in a tree
☐	A feather 	☐	Add your own

EXTRA:

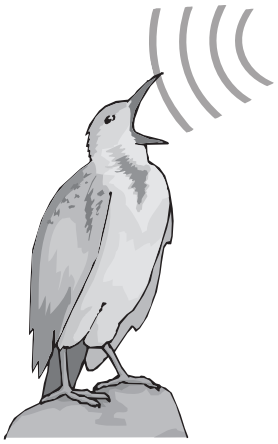
Now sketch the most interesting sign of wildlife you found today. Thanks for the hard work detective.

Activity 4

Make A Sound Map

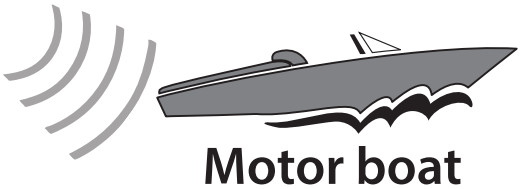
Find a comfortable and quiet place to sit outdoors. The X in the center of the map is you! Listen carefully to the sounds around you. Listen for birds, animals, blowing trees and even sounds made by people. Now draw pictures on the map showing the sounds you heard and where you heard them.

Bird singing



X

Did you hear sounds coming from all directions?



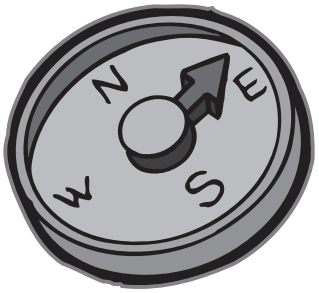
Motor boat

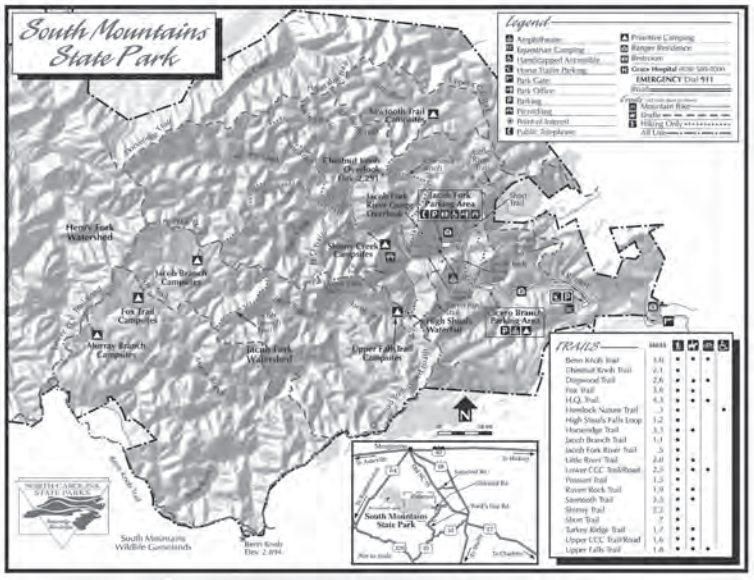
EXTRA:

Did you know all of the sounds, or were there some sounds you could not identify?
Would your map look different if you sat here at night or very early in the morning?

Activity 5

Map It Out





Get a copy of the park's map and take a close look. Use the map legend to find hiking trails, water, picnic areas and roads. Find a special spot on the map that you think would be interesting to visit. Make sure it is someplace that you have time to visit and that there is a safe way to get there.

What is it? (examples: a picnic area, waterfall, peninsula on the lake, a creek) _____

How can you get to this special place? Write directions. What roads would you drive on? Where would you park? What trails would you have to hike on?

_____

_____

Go find your special place. What are your first impressions of your spot? How does being at your spot make you feel? _____

_____

_____

Write about your spot or draw it below:

Activity 6

Be A Nature Artist

In this activity you can sketch pictures of nature's beauty in the park. You can also use a camera to take pictures and then paste some of your pictures to make a collage. Sketch or paste at least one picture of an animal and at least one picture of a plant up close. Look for interesting shapes and interesting colors.

Activity 7

What Would You Call It?

Sometimes the names we give to plants have to do with how they look. Scientists sometimes name plants after their interesting characteristics. These are called the plant's common name.

This plant is called lizard's tail because its flowers on a stalk look just like a lizard's tail.

This plant is called blue star. It has many small blue flowers that are shaped like stars.

Now it's your turn! Find two interesting plants or mushrooms and observe them closely. Take a photo or sketch them in the box. Then come up with your own creative name for them.

	Creative Name:	Description: What does it look like?
Sketch or Photo		

	Creative Name:	Description: What does it look like?
Sketch or Photo		

EXTRA:

Use a book or ask a park ranger to help you find out the actual common name for your plant. Scientists also give plants a scientific name. The scientific name for plants is the same no matter what language you speak. For instance, the scientific name for white oak is Quercus alba. There is even a scientific name for humans. Do you know what it is?

Activity 8

What's That Bird?

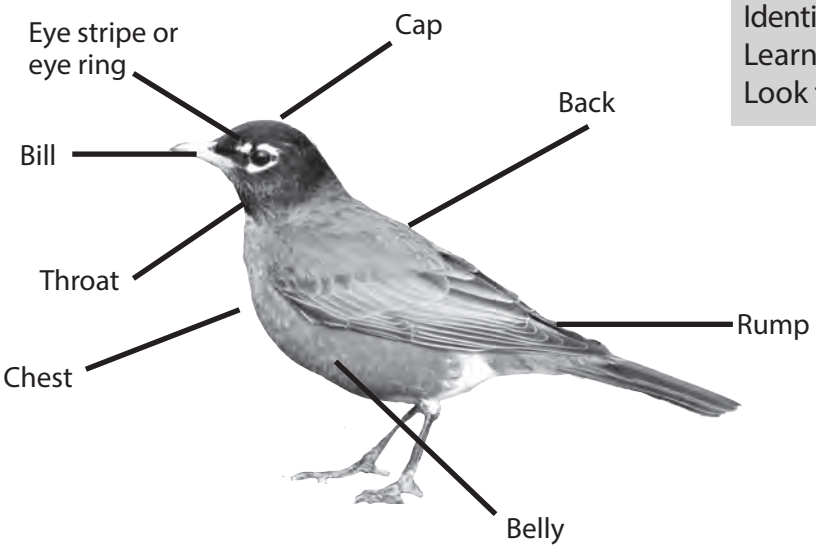
Birds are fun to watch!

They sing. They soar. Some of them hunt. Some of them even dance! More than 400 different kinds of birds can be found in North Carolina! State parks are some of the best places to look for birds because they protect so many of their habitats.
Each type of plant or animal is a unique **species**. There are many ways that we can tell different **species** of birds apart. We can look at the colors of their feathers. We can notice the shape of their bill. We can listen for their different songs. Go outside and look for two different species of birds. Keep notes to help you tell them apart.

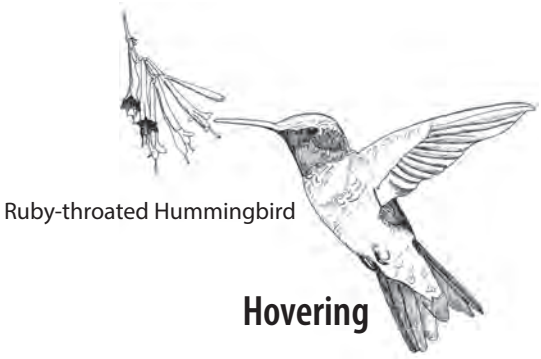
	Example	Bird #1	Bird #2
Location Where did you see it? Beach, forest, parking lot?	*On the ground along the River View trail.*		
Bill Long, curved, short, black?	*Straight, yellow beak.*		
Size and Shape Tall, skinny, larger than a crow, smaller than a robin?	*Medium sized. Long tail.*		
Colors on Head Brown all over, white throat, Black cap, white eye strip?	*Black on top. A little white around its eyes*		
Color on Back	*Dark gray.*		
Color on Chest	*Orange.*		
Behavior What was it doing? Soaring, perching, swimming?	*Hopping on ground, digging for worms.*		
Identify the Species (Optional) Try to learn what type of bird it is.	*American Robin*		
Other notes Were there more than one? Was it making noise? When did you see it?	*I also saw one in the camp-ground last night.*		

What's That Bird? Continued

American Robin



Identifying birds means being able to tell them apart. Learn how to identify different species of birds. Look for colors on all different parts of the bird.



Ruby-throated Hummingbird

Hovering

Belted Kingfisher

Perching

Notice how different birds act. Their behaviors can sometimes help us identify them.

Great Blue Heron

Wading

EXTRA:

Sketch a bird that you saw in the box.

Stewardship Project

Now that you understand more about the plants and animals of the park, it's time to do a stewardship project. This is where you do something to make the park a better place for wildlife, plants and people. Ask a park ranger to help you plan your stewardship project. Depending on the time of the year, you may be asked to pick up litter, plant trees or count the number of birds on a lake. Use this space to write about your experience. Why was your project important?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

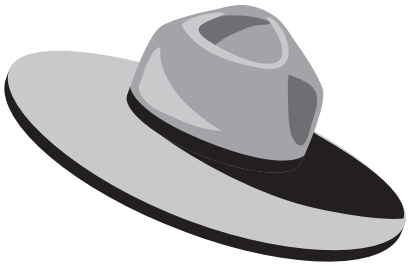
_____

Congratulations!

You have completed the Junior Ranger Program. Being a Junior Ranger is fun, but there are responsibilities. You now must take the Junior Ranger Pledge. Raise your right hand, have a park ranger read the Junior Ranger Pledge to you and repeat the pledge after the ranger.

"I, (your name), promise to help take care of the parks. I will not litter and will do what I can to keep the park clean. I will not harm or remove any plants or animals in the park. Instead, I will try to learn about them. I will encourage my family and friends to help protect the park and all our natural resources."

Once you have taken the pledge, you will receive your Junior Ranger certificate and patch. Each park has a unique patch. How many can you collect?



You are now an official Junior Ranger!

More Ideas For Our Junior Rangers

Practice setting up a tent!

Explore the night sky. Can you find the Big Dipper, the Little Dipper and the North Star. Can you find any planets?

Write a checklist of everything you need to bring when you go camping

Ideas for Adult Leaders of Junior Rangers

Subscribe to NC Wildlife Magazine. Wildlife in North Carolina magazine is the official educational publication of the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission. Subscribers to this magazine enjoy exceptional color photography and great articles about our state's natural resources. The magazine typically has a monthly children's article and activities. Call toll-free, 1-866-945-3746 or visit **www.ncwildlife.org.**

Join Friends of State Parks. The Friends of State Parks is a citizen's group dedicated to supporting the mission of North Carolina's state parks. The group publishes a newsletter and provides funding for the Junior Ranger Program. **http://ncfsp.org**

Take A Child Outside Week, is a weeklong celebration each September 24-30 to help parents and other caregivers engage children in outdoor discovery. State parks offer special programs during the week. A special web site offers suggestions of fun games and places to explore. **www.takeachildoutside.org**