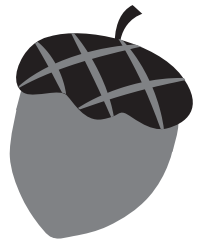


North Carolina State Parks

# JUNIOR RANGER

## ACTIVITY GUIDE





# HOW TO BECOME A JUNIOR RANGER

Protect, Explore, Learn

## COLLECT OR "CACHE" ACORNS

To be a **Basic Junior Ranger**: cache **20** acorns

*Earn an official Jr. Ranger patch for the park and a certificate.*

To be an **Expert Junior Ranger**: cache **40** acorns

*Earn an expert patch along with the park's patch and a certificate.*

***Becoming an expert Junior Ranger may take multiple days to achieve.***

## HOW TO CACHE ACORNS

**PROTECT:** Complete a community service project in the park to cache 5 acorns. Call the park before your visit to see if they have any projects available. See page 24 for more information.

**EXPLORE:** Cache 3 acorns for each mile you hike in a park and record your mileage on page 6. Write about your experience in your Junior Ranger Journal (page 26). Kids In Parks Track Trails are a great option. To learn more, visit [www.kidsinparks.com](http://www.kidsinparks.com).

**LEARN:** Cache from 1-3 acorns by completing the activities in this guide. Record your cache in the space provided at the end of each activity.



= **1** acorn for  
this activity



= **2** acorns for  
this activity



= **3** acorns for  
this activity

Cache 5 acorns for attending any park event or program and answer the questions about it on page 23.

When you complete your cache, take this guide to a park staff member to receive your Junior Ranger patch and certificate!

# PARK SAFETY TIPS

- Always have an adult with you
- Bring water and snacks
- Stay on trails
- Dress in layers. Wear a hat and closed-toe shoes
- Apply bug spray and sunscreen
- Check for ticks when you get home
- Don't feed wildlife. Report sick or injured animals to park staff.
- Learn what poison ivy looks like - leaves of three, let it be!

# ABOUT

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Name of State Park or State Recreation Area*

Did you know that you would have to travel all the way from Canada down to Florida to experience all the ecosystems that you can find right here in North Carolina? There are 41 N.C. State Parks where you can explore all of these beautiful ecosystems. Each park has features that make them special and unique. As you are exploring your park, find out what makes it special.



## ANSWER THE QUESTIONS ABOUT YOUR PARK BELOW TO CACHE 5 ACORNS!

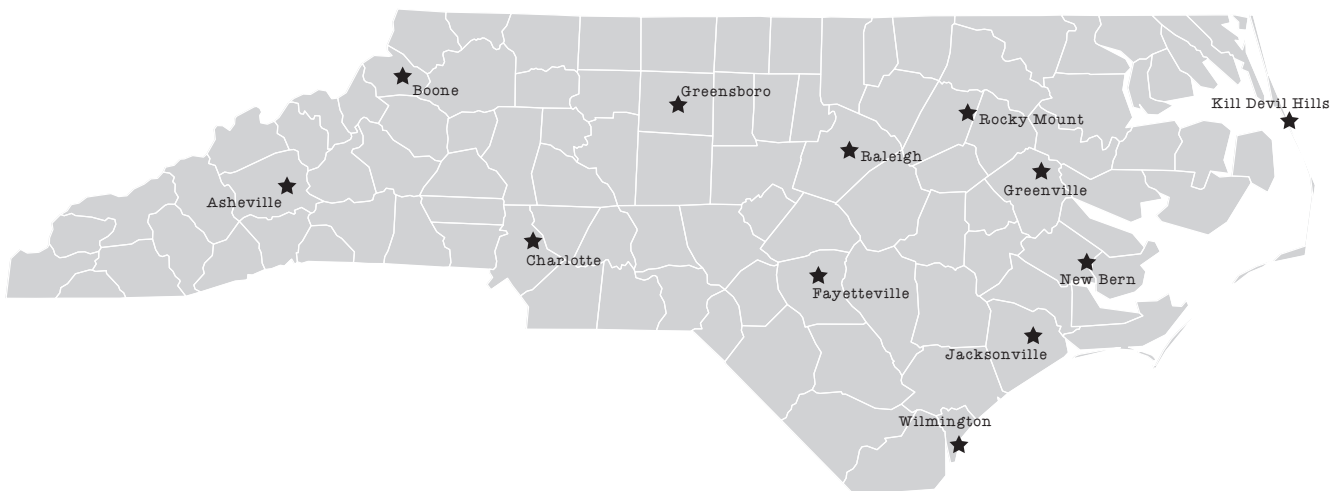
What are three things that make this park special?

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

How did the park get its name? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Draw a star on the map of N.C. to show the location of the park you're visiting:



Acorns cached on this activity: \_\_\_\_\_

# EXPLORE THE PARK

Get a copy of the park's map. Use the map's legend to help you locate the hiking trails, water, picnic areas, bathrooms and roads.

**Hike a Trail! Cache 3 acorns for each mile you complete!**

\_\_\_\_\_ MILES X 3  = \_\_\_\_\_



As you explore, find one special spot. Draw a picture of your spot in the box below.



Answer the questions below about your spot:

1. Describe your spot. What makes it special? Is it sunny or shady? What do you see? What do you hear?

2. How did you get to your special spot? What trails did you take? What was the color and shape of the trail blaze? How long was the hike?

3. What are your first impressions of your spot? How does being in your special spot make you feel?

Acorns cached on this activity: \_\_\_\_\_

# ABOUT PARK RANGERS



North Carolina Park rangers do a variety of jobs in the park and use many tools to help them complete their daily tasks. Draw a line from the picture of the tools to the name of the tool and then to the job they help complete.

**CHAINSAW**



**FORESTER**

**BADGE**



**TEACHER**

**BINOCULARS**



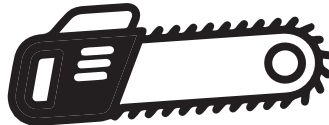
**BIRD WATCHER**

**HIKING BOOT**



**PARK CLEANER**

**TRASH GRABBER**



**POLICE OFFICER**

**FIRST AID KIT**



**PARK DOCTOR**  
(first Responder)

**CHALKBOARD**



**PATROLLER**

Continue this activity on the next page



## INTERVIEW A RANGER - FIND A PARK RANGER AND ASK THEM THESE QUESTIONS:

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

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

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

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4. What is your favorite season at your park and why?

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5. How did you become a park ranger?

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6. Come up with your own question to ask:

Question: \_\_\_\_\_

---

Answer: \_\_\_\_\_

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# PARK HISTORY

Go to the park's museum, a park historical program, or visit their website to learn about the history of the park. You may learn about American Indians that once lived there. Or you may learn about old cabins, farms, or the park's opening.



Artifacts are things that people made a long time ago and left behind - like arrowheads, tools or old fence posts.

Draw a picture of an artifact that you think might have been found in the park in the box below.

A large, empty rectangular box with a black border, intended for drawing an artifact.

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

A long, long time ago...

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Acorns cached on this activity: \_\_\_\_\_

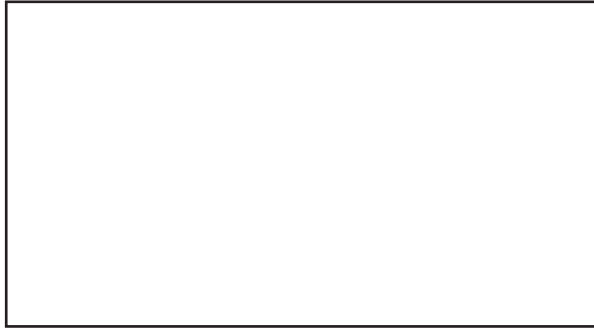


# GEOLOGY

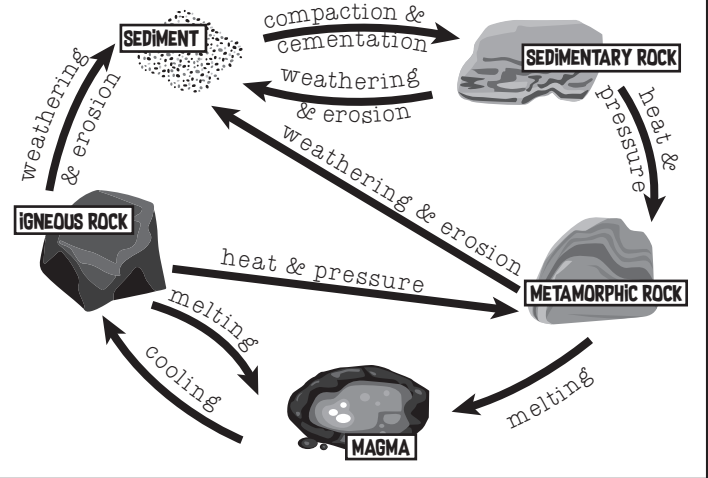
Take a look at the ground next to the trail. Soil can come in many different sizes.



If possible, smear a small amount of soil into the box below.



## ROCK CYCLE

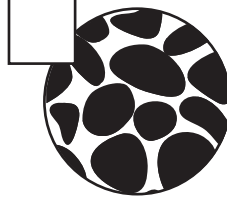


What color is it? \_\_\_\_\_

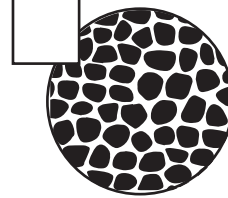
What does it smell like? \_\_\_\_\_

Check the box of the size of the soil.

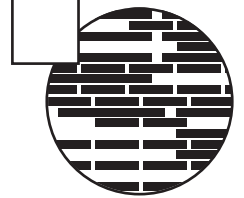
**GRAVEL**



**SAND**



**CLAY**



Be a “rock hound” and try and find some of these common rocks! If you find one, draw it under it’s picture below. Then, using the information on the above graph, label whether you think the rocks are igneous, metamorphic, or sedimentary.

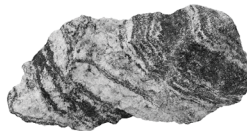
**SANDSTONE**



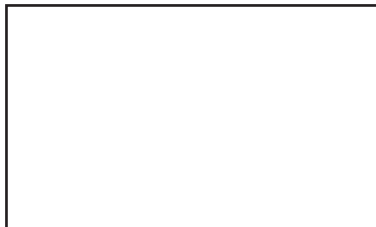
This rock is made of sand-size pieces of minerals or sediment that are stuck together by natural cement.



**GNEISS**



This rock was changed from its original form by heat and pressure to create this new type of rock. If you see a rock with black and white bands or stripes, it is probably gneiss.



**GRANITE**



Photo courtesy of North Carolina Granite Corp.

This rock was once totally molten magma (hot, gooey rock) that slowly cooled underground. It has blotches of different colors including black, pink, gray, white and others.



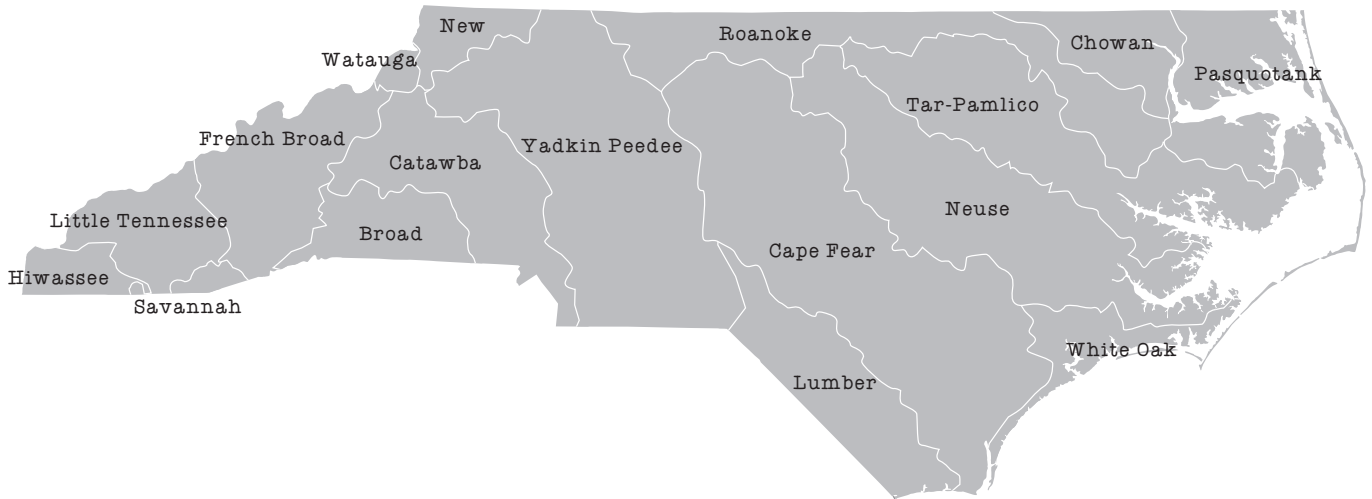
Acorns cached on this activity: \_\_\_\_\_

# WATER

You are always inside of a river basin even if you're not near water. All the water within the park eventually drains to a river, estuary, or lake and finally ends up in the ocean. Our actions in the park affect both water quality and quantity downstream.



Using the map of the river basins in North Carolina below, figure out what river basin the park is in and circle it.



## ANSWER THE QUESTIONS BELOW:

1. Using your park map, find a major body of water in the park (river, lake, stream, estuary). What is it called?

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2. How do people use this water?

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3. Other than lakes or streams, where do you think the plants and animals in the park get their water?

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Acorns cached on this activity: \_\_\_\_\_

# ANIMAL SIGNS

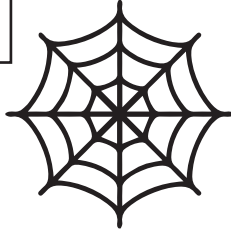
Often it's difficult to find animals in the park, so how do we know they are there? By the things that they leave behind, called "animal signs."



Be a wildlife detective! See how many animal signs you can find from the list below.

☐

**ANIMAL TUNNEL**

☐

**SPIDER WEB**

☐

**SCAT/DROPPINGS**

☐

**INSECT CHEWED LEAF**

☐

**FEATHER**

☐

**BIRD'S NEST**

☐

**ANIMAL CHEWED  
PINECONE**

☐

**ANIMAL TRACKS**



Draw two of the signs you found in the space below and make an educated guess what animal or insect left them behind.

**1**

*Animal that you think left the sign*

**2**

*Animal that you think left the sign*

Acorns cached on this activity: \_\_\_\_\_

# PLANTS

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

In addition to the common name, all living things also have a universal name called the "scientific name," and no matter what language you speak, it's the same. These names are often based off of Latin and the first part of the name refers to the species' genus which is similar to your last name. The second part is the specific species' name, like your first name.



Find two interesting plants or mushrooms and examine them closely. Take a photo or sketch them below. Write a description of it and come up with your own creative name for it.

**1**

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Your creative name*

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**2**

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Your creative name*

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



Ask park staff or look up the plant in a field guide or online using your description, make an educated guess on the two plants from your sketches.

## PLANT #1

Common Name:

\_\_\_\_\_

Scientific Name:

\_\_\_\_\_

## PLANT #2

Common Name:

\_\_\_\_\_

Scientific Name:

\_\_\_\_\_

Acorns cached on this activity: \_\_\_\_\_

# BIRDWATCHING

Birds are one of the easiest animals to find in parks because parks help to protect their habitats. There are more than 400 different kinds of birds in North Carolina! There are many ways we can tell different species of birds apart. We can look at the colors of their feathers, the shape of their bill, or listen to their call.



Use the chart below to take notes on two different bird species.

	BIRD #1	BIRD #2
LOCATION - Where is it - beach, forest, parking lot?		
BILL - Shape and color?		
COLOR - Head, back, chest?		
BEHAVIOR		
OTHER NOTES		
SKETCH		



Ask park staff or look up the bird in a field guide or online using your description, make an educated guess on the two birds from your chart.

## BIRD #1

Common Name:

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Scientific Name:

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## BIRD #2

Common Name:

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Scientific Name:

---

Acorns cached on this activity: \_\_\_\_\_

# SENSES



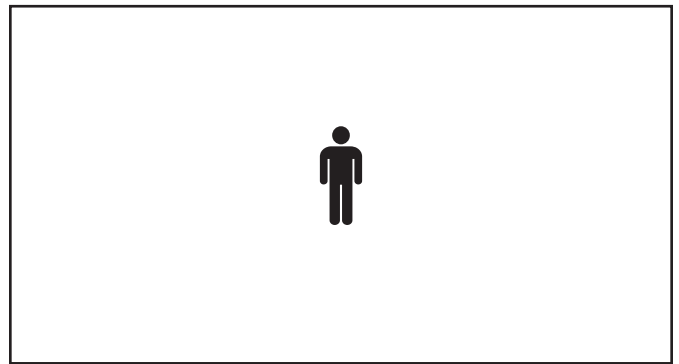
While out in the park, use your senses to discover the natural world around you. Listed below are four of our five senses. We have left off taste because there are many plants in the park that are harmful if eaten.



Spot something beautiful and draw it here.



Sit in one spot and listen to the sounds around you for a few minutes. Afterwards create a sound map - the person in the middle is you. How many sounds were man-made versus natural?



Man-made: \_\_\_\_\_ Natural: \_\_\_\_\_



Find a unique smell and describe it. What do you think you are smelling? What does the smell remind you of?

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See if you can find 4 things with very different textures. Draw them or do a rubbing of each item below.

Acorns cached on this activity: \_\_\_\_\_

# ECOEXPLORE

One way you can help scientists study the plants and animals in the park is through a partnership between N.C. State Parks and The North Carolina Arboretum. By joining ecoEXPLORE you can earn great prizes and badges. **Register online at [www.ecoexplore.net](http://www.ecoexplore.net).**



## REGISTER TO BECOME AN ECOEXPLORER AND CACHE 3 ACORNS!

### How To ecoEXPLORE:

- Register online at [www.ecoexplore.net](http://www.ecoexplore.net)
- Go outside to find wildlife species, including plants, reptiles, amphibians, insects and birds.
- Photograph your wildlife observation, noting the data, location, time, size, and species observed.
- Login to your ecoEXPLORE profile online and submit your observation.
- Arboretum staff will then review your observation and submit all approved submissions to the iNaturalist Network, which is used by real scientists!



Acorns cached on this activity: \_\_\_\_\_

# LEARN IN THE PARK



**ATTEND ANY PARK PROGRAM OR EVENT AND ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS TO CACHE 5 ACORNS!**

1. What was the name of the program or event?

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2. What is your favorite thing that you learned?

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3. What is the one thing you will never forget about it?

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4. What would have made the program even better?

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Acorns cached on this activity: \_\_\_\_\_



# PROTECT THE PARK

Now that you understand more about the park, help us protect it by doing something to make the park a healthier place for wildlife, plants and people. Ask a park ranger to help you plan your project. Be sure to call the park ahead of your visit. Depending on the time of year, you can pick up litter, plant trees, or remove an invasive plant.



## COMPLETE YOUR COMMUNITY SERVICE PROJECT AND ANSWER THE QUESTIONS BELOW TO CACHE 5 ACORNS!

1. What did you do to help the park?

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2. Why was the project important? Who or what did you help?

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3. What's one thing you will never forget about this community service project?

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4. What could you do to help the park in the future?

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Acorns cached on this activity: \_\_\_\_\_

# SHARE YOUR PARK EXPERIENCE



**BEFORE RETURNING HOME FROM YOUR VISIT AT THE PARK, ANSWER THE QUESTIONS BELOW ABOUT YOUR EXPERIENCE TO CACHE 5 ACORNS!**

1. What was your favorite thing you saw or did at the park? Why?

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2. What's your favorite thing you learned about the park? Why?

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3. Why do you think N.C. State Parks are important?

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4. What is one thing you did to help protect the park while you were there?

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5. How can you share your park experiences with others?

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Acorns cached on this activity: \_\_\_\_\_

# JOURNAL

Use this space for writing or drawing your thoughts and feelings on your journey to become a Junior Ranger. You can also use this space if you run out of room on another page.

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

# YOUR PLEDGE

Use this space for writing or drawing your thoughts and feelings on your journey to become a Junior Ranger. You can also use this space if you run out of room on another page.

**Basic Junior Ranger:** cache **20** acorns

*Earn an official Jr. Ranger patch for the park and a certificate.*

**Expert Junior Ranger:** cache **40** acorns

*Earn an expert patch along with the park's patch and a certificate.*

*Add up the acorns you cached from each activity.*

**MY ACORN CACHE:** \_\_\_\_\_

*Find a park staff member and recite the following pledge with them:*

I (your name),  
recognize that this park is MY park too.

I promise to help take care of my park.  
I will do what I can to help keep the park clean.

I will treat animals and plants with respect  
and leave them in their park home.

I will learn about the importance of nature  
and our duty to protect it,

and I will share what I learn  
with my friends and family.

*Once you have recited the pledge and cached the required points you will receive a certificate of completion and park patch – or a pair of patches if you've reached the expert level!*

**CONGRATULATIONS! YOU ARE NOW  
AN OFFICIAL JUNIOR RANGER!**

# Official Junior Ranger

*This certifies that*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Your name*

*Has successfully met the requirements of becoming an  
Official Junior Ranger at \_\_\_\_\_  
for the North Carolina Division of Parks and Recreation.*

*Park name*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Date*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*N.C. State Parks Staff Member*

