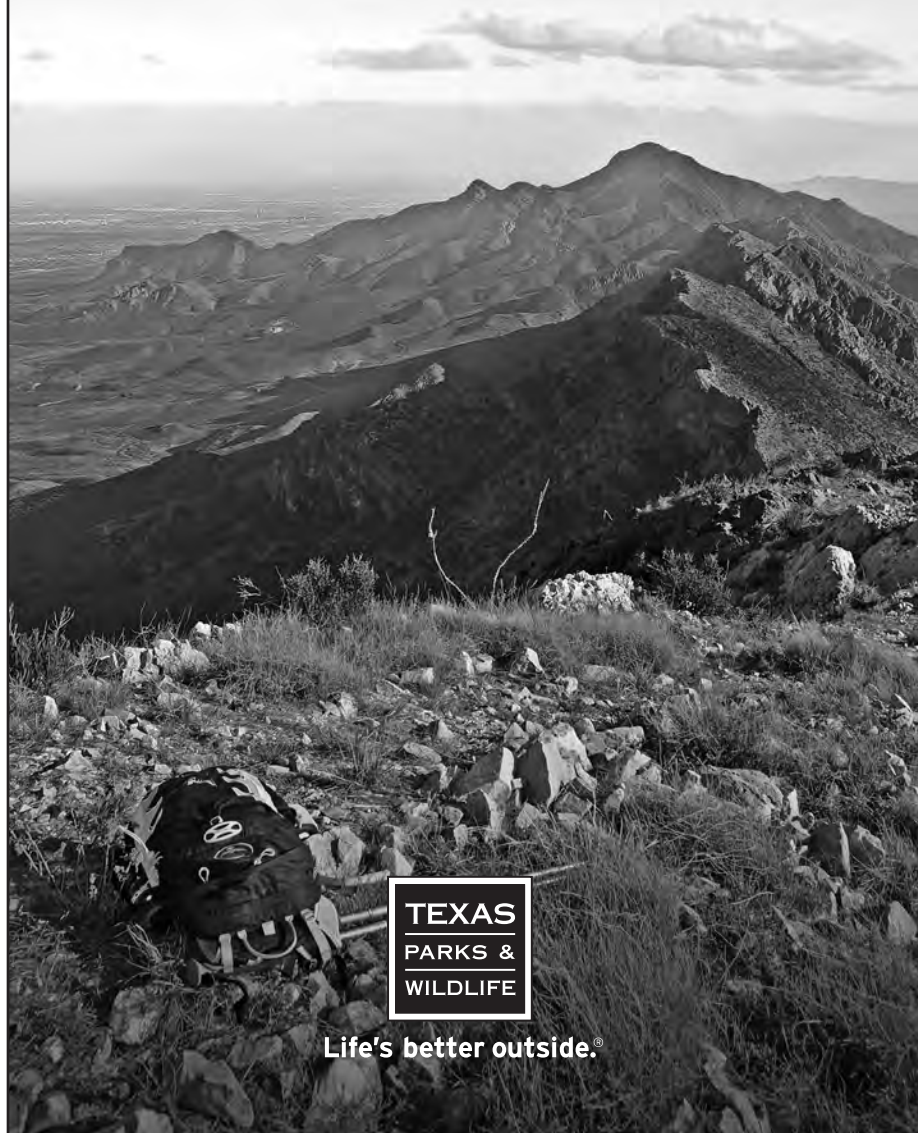


FRANKLIN MOUNTAINS STATE PARK

JUNIOR RANGER PROGRAM



TEXAS
PARKS &
WILDLIFE

Life's better outside.®

Developed by Lydia Pagel for Franklin Mountains State Park

Special thanks to

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Kelly Serio and Jack Bargemann for inspiration

And all the Park Rangers who gave their comments and feedback

Junior Ranger Program

At Franklin Mountains State Park



This journal belongs to _____

Welcome to Franklin Mountains State Park!

You are about to explore a place that is near and dear to our hearts, and we hope it will soon be a special place for you too. As a Junior Ranger, we expect you to do a few things.

1. **Explore.** There are many hidden wonders tucked away in this mountain range; if you are going to find some of them, you need to keep your eyes and ears open.
2. **Wonder.** Did you hear that noise? What do you think made it? Why do you think that tree grew up on the side of the mountain? How do you think that rock got there?
3. **Protect.** Many people don't think about how their actions affect the park and its visitors. You may see litter and vandalism such as graffiti during your visit. We want you to learn why this can be harmful and to help us demonstrate a proper way of caring for the natural and cultural resources of our park.
4. **Learn.** Biology, ecology, geology, archeology. There are so many "ologies" here in the park! But don't let that scare you; the plants, animals, and even the rocks of this place have some great stories to share.
5. **Share.** Tell someone about all the cool stuff you saw and learned while you were at the Franklin Mountains. Maybe you can even bring them to the park and show them some of your favorite spots.

Last, but not least, have a great time and enjoy yourself!

Sincerely

Franklin Mountains State Park Rangers

How to become a Franklin Mountains State Park (FMSP) Junior Ranger

Becoming a FMSP Junior Ranger is easy! Just go through this workbook and complete the activities. We challenge you to complete as many of the activities as you can, but in order to earn your badge you will need to meet the following requirements.



Ages 5-7

Must complete **5**
activities



Ages 8-10

Must complete **7**
activities



Ages 11-13

Must complete **9**
activities

Once you have completed the activities, bring this journal to one of the FMSP Rangers. Be prepared to answer any questions they may have. Once they have looked over your work, you will recite the Junior Ranger Pledge at the back of this book and receive your badge and pin.



Activity 1: Take a Hike



Complete one of the following hikes.

1. The Nature Walk Trail
2. Upper Sunset Trail
3. Aztec Caves Trail
4. West Cottonwood Spring Trail
5. Schaeffer Shuffle

Keep a brief journal of the hike you take. Describe the trail, what you saw, and even what the weather was like. Feel free to draw any interesting objects you see too!

for younger children (who can't write yet), document your hike in pictures



Fun Fact: El Paso's full name is "El Paso del Norte" which roughly translates to "the pass of the north." This is where Juan de Oñate crossed the Rio Grande and passed between the mountains in route to settle New Mexico in 1598.

Trail Name _____

Date _____ Time _____

Your Observations

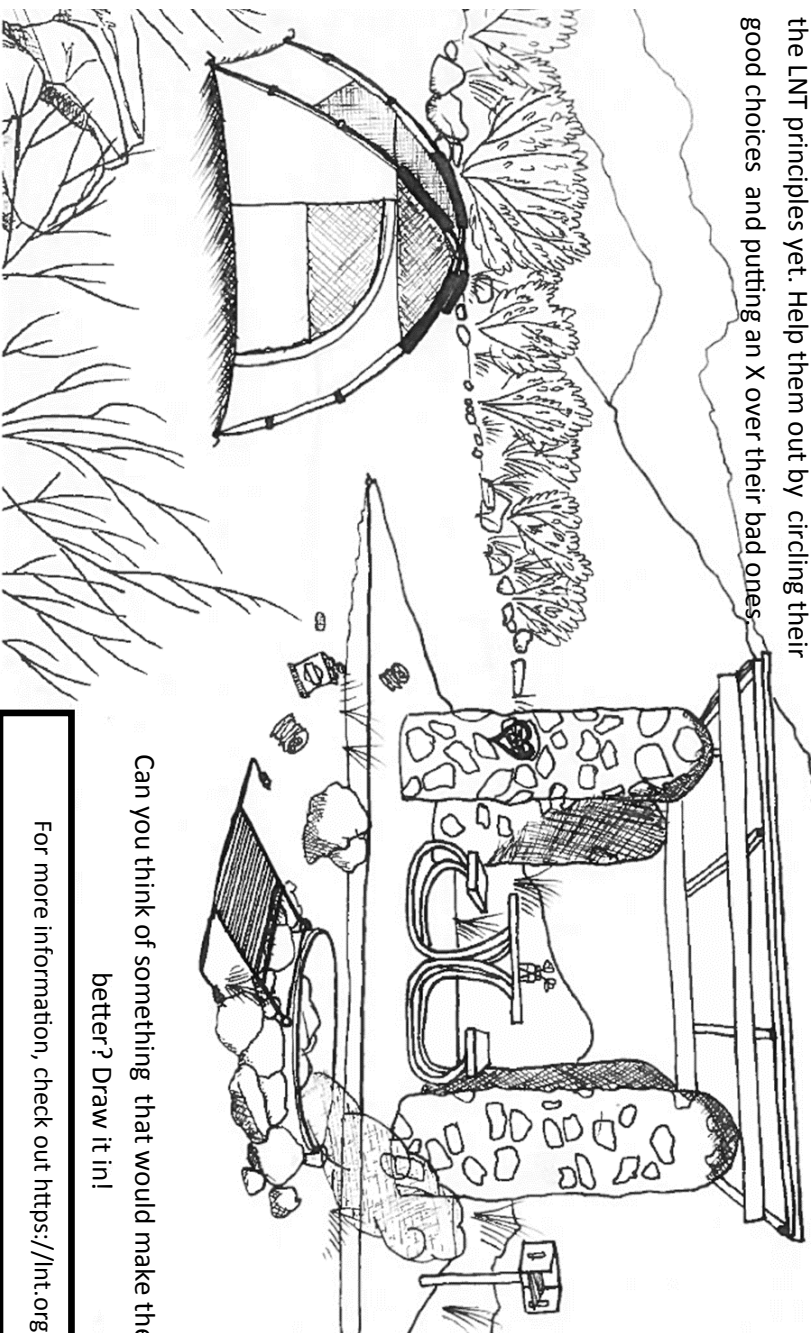
Activity 2: Leave No Trace (LNT)

When we are in the outdoors, we use an “outdoor ethic.” This is simply a way you ought to act while outdoors.

Here are the seven principles to our outdoor ethic.

1. **Plan ahead and Prepare.** Be prepared! This could mean checking the weather, studying a trail map, and looking up park entrance fees.
2. **Travel and Camp on Durable Surfaces.** Stay on the trail to prevent damage to some of our delicate plant species. If you are camping, set up your tent on a designated tent pad.
3. **Trash your Trash!** Eating an energy bar as you hike? Keep the wrapper in your pocket and throw it in a trashcan when you find one. If you find trash that other people have left, pick it up too. Help us keep the park clean!
4. **Leave What you Find.** Many people are tempted to take home flowers, rocks or other cool finds. What would happen if every visitor took home a flower, though? That’s right, no more wildflowers. Take a picture instead!
5. **Be Careful with Fire.** If you are building a campfire or using the grills, make sure to be safe and don’t let the fire get out of hand.
6. **Respect Wildlife.** Keep wildlife wild! This means not trying to feed them or touch them. Also, keep your dog on a leash so it doesn’t get into any fights with the local fauna.
7. **Respect other Visitors.** Many of our visitors want to escape from the noise and bustle of the city, so respect that. You will also see more wildlife if you are quiet!

The campers at Campsite # 37 haven't mastered all the LNT principles yet. Help them out by circling their good choices and putting an X over their bad ones.



Can you think of something that would make their site better? Draw it in!

For more information, check out <https://lnt.org/>

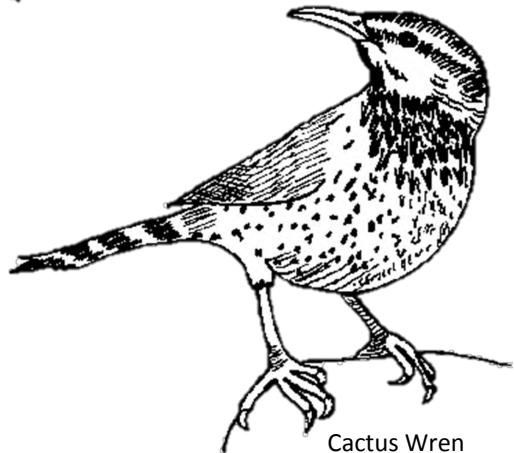
Activity 3: Visit the Bird Blind



The Bird Blind is a great place to see wildlife! Take some time to sit quietly watching the birds. Can you identify some of the common birds depicted below. Color in the ones you see.



Mourning Dove



Cactus Wren



Black-throated Sparrow



House Finch



Fun Fact: Male birds tend to be more brightly colored than female birds. Male house finches have bright red heads while females are all brown.

Activity 4: Bird ID Extension

Find two additional types of birds, and draw them below.

What does it sound like?

What color is it?

What shape is it? Short and round? Pear-shaped? Long and thin?

How is it behaving? Running along the ground? Jumping from bush to bush? Perching in a high place?

Use the guide in the Bird Blind to figure out what it is.

This bird is a _____

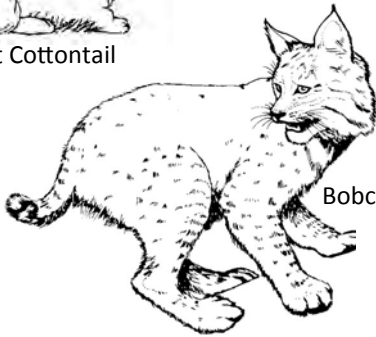
Activity 5: Tracking



Most of the wildlife in the Franklin Mountains is very secretive and good at hiding, so we don't often see them. What we do see are the tracks they leave behind. Look at the different tracks on the next page and try to match them with the animals they belong to below.



Desert Cottontail



Bobcat



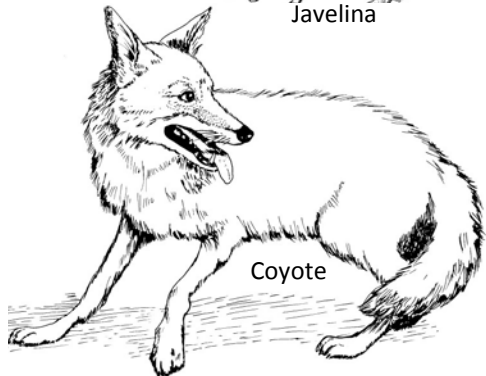
Greater Roadrunner



Mule Deer



Javelina



Coyote

Have you seen any of these today?

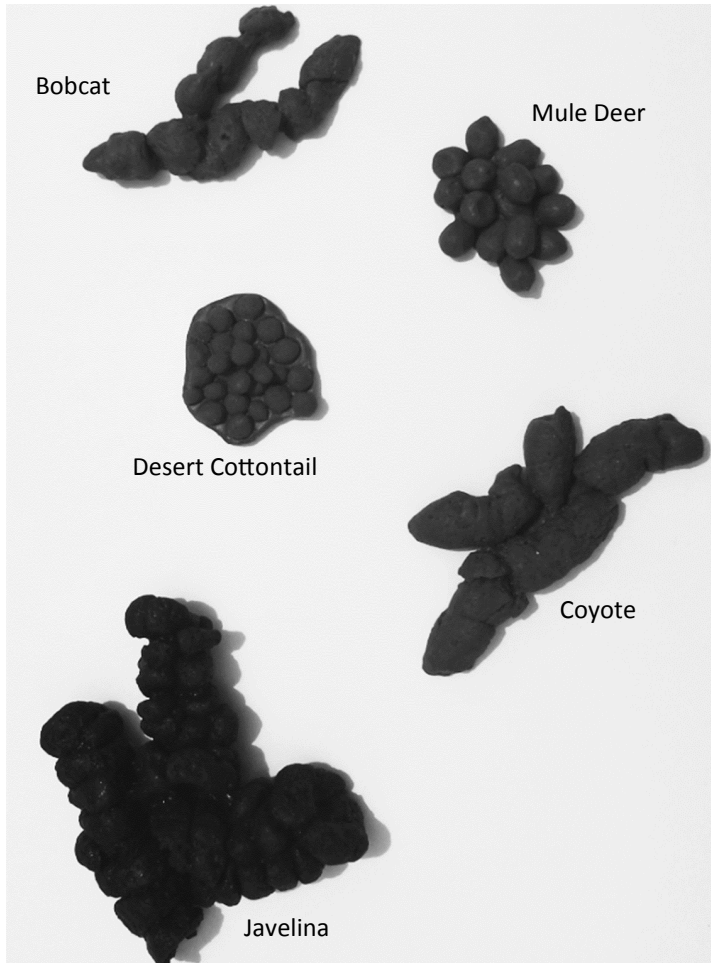


Fun Fact: Cats have retractable claws, while dogs do not. This will help you tell the difference between the bobcat and the coyote print. Which one leaves claw marks?

Activity 6: Whose Scat is That?



Another kind of “track” animals leave behind is called scat. Take a look at the defining features of some of the scat pictured below. If you find some scat along your trail today, take some time and try to figure out “whose scat is that?” Circle all the kinds you find.



Fun Fact: FMSP is about 26,600 acres making it the largest urban wilderness park in North America!

Activity 7: Plant Search



Here are some common types of plants you may find in the park. As you explore today, look around and see how many you can find; check them off as you go.

- ☐ Prickly Pear— a kind of cactus with wide, pad-like stems. They are a favorite snack of Javelinas. People can eat them too after removing the spines.



- ☐ Cottonwood—If you see this tree growing in the desert, you have found water! It gets its name from the cotton-like material that surrounds its seeds.

- ☐ Yucca—there are several types of yucca in the park, but they all have fleshy leaves that grow in a spiral “rosette” shape and grow a flower stalk. They are the “multi-tools” of the desert. Flowers = edible. Leaves = rope, baskets, sandals, mats.

Roots = soap.



- ☐ Creosote—This is an evergreen bush with tiny yellowish-green leaves. Rub your hands on it and smell them. Do you smell rain?

Activity 8: Plant ID Extension



Find two additional types of plants and draw them below.

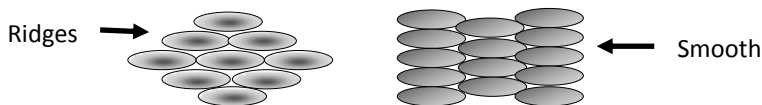
Make notes about their size, leaf shape, flowers, and/or fruit.

Activity 9: Build Your Own Reptile



Check out some of the features of reptiles below.

Scales—scales help protect the animal from predators and dehydration; the patterns can assist with camouflage or be a warning to other animals that they are dangerous.



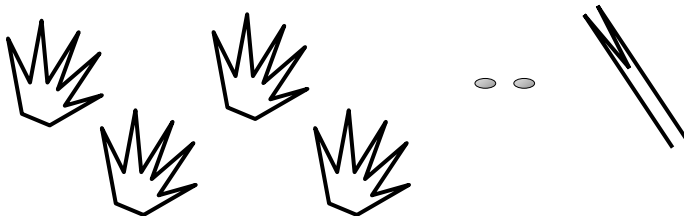
Eyes— “diurnal” animals (out during the day) usually have round pupils, while “nocturnal” predators (out during the night) usually have vertical pupils.



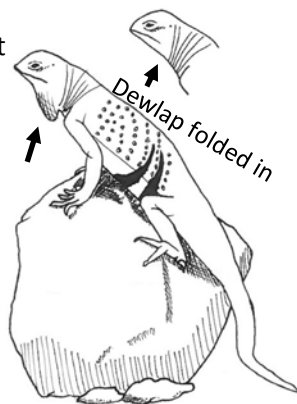
Defense mechanisms—These can either be “weapons” that help a reptile launch a counter attack, like fangs, or flashy displays that warn other animals to stay away, like horns and dewlaps.



Other special traits— Claws for digging, heat sensors, and forked tongue for “smelling”



“Dewlaps” are flaps of skin under the chin that some animals, like lizards, use as a display. Male lizards can extend their brightly colored dewlaps to impress a potential mate, warn off another male in his territory, or make himself look bigger to a predator.



Fun Fact: Reptiles cannot regulate their internal temperature like humans can. Instead they bask in the sun to warm up. This is called being endothermic, or “cold-blooded.”



Build your reptile here. Start by drawing an outline of your animal, then add some of the traits from the previous page. You can either cut out the pieces and glue them here, or draw them yourself.



Fun Fact: The tallest peak in the park is North Franklin Peak at 7,192 feet above sea level.

Levels 2 and 3 complete this page also. Not needed for level 1

What is your reptiles' name?

Describe your reptile: make sure to include its *habitat*, food source, when it is most active, and any other *adaptations* you gave it.

[illegible]

Habitat—The place where an animal lives

Adaptation— a trait that helps an animal do its “job” in the environment; kind of like a tool kit (ex: claws = shovel)

Activity 10: Word Round-up ☐

The land that is a part of Franklin Mountains State Park today was once used by ranchers for pasture and miners looking for mineral wealth. See if you can find the ranching and mining terms listed below in the word find.

Word Bank:



Corral	Ore	Tin	Copper
Pick Axe	Spur	Lasso	Brahma
Smelter	Hide	Beef	Drive
Branding	Grazing	Investment	Long Horn

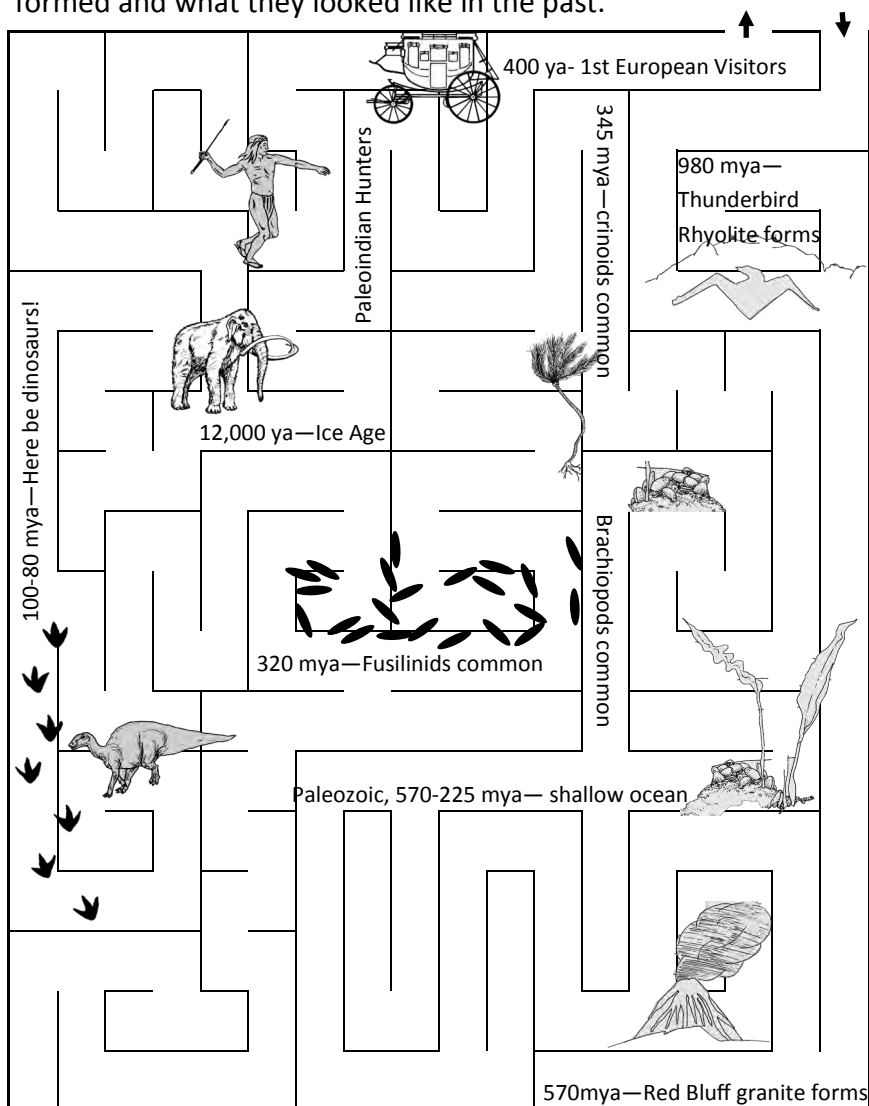
F E E B N X L Z E A C U V P G
 G N I Z A R G O K R C L S I D
 B R A N D I N G N T O M X C G
 A H X I B T F M N G E N S K L
 U W H F E S T E T L H U H A Y
 T M R V I L M R T D A O I X P
 M P T X A T R E V M R B R E T
 I P A L S X R E H S M I U N N
 U X L E J H W A J P R W V S I
 O Q V A I J R O G U E X V E T
 P N Z D R B Q D K R P Q T U N
 I K E D P R L T D L P W E T Q
 L A S S O M O R P F O P B O E
 F A M L O U Z C T L C R S K G
 N X B W I W U L K M F H R J U

Fun Fact: The Franklin Mountains are home to the only operating Tin Mine in production in the United States. It operated from 1909 to 1912 and ended up bankrupt.

Activity 11: Geology Maze



Follow the maze below to learn how the Franklin Mountains formed and what they looked like in the past.

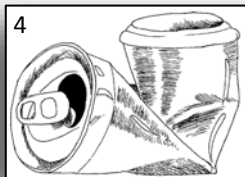
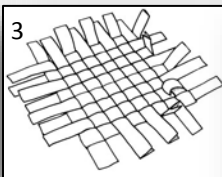
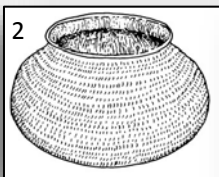
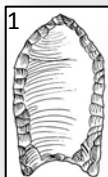


Fun Fact: Some of the rocks you can see at the Franklin Mountains may be 1.2 billion years old. That's older than your great, great, great, great, great, great grandparents!

Activity 12: Archeology Dig



Archeologists tell the stories of ancient people based on the “artifacts” (objects) they leave behind. Imagine you are an archeologist on a dig in the Franklins. You find these four objects.



Artifact	What do you think it is it made of ?	How do you think it was used?
1		
2		
3		
4		

What story does it tell?

Fun Fact: Prehistoric people have probably been using the resources in this area for the past 12,000 years!

Activity 13: Crossword



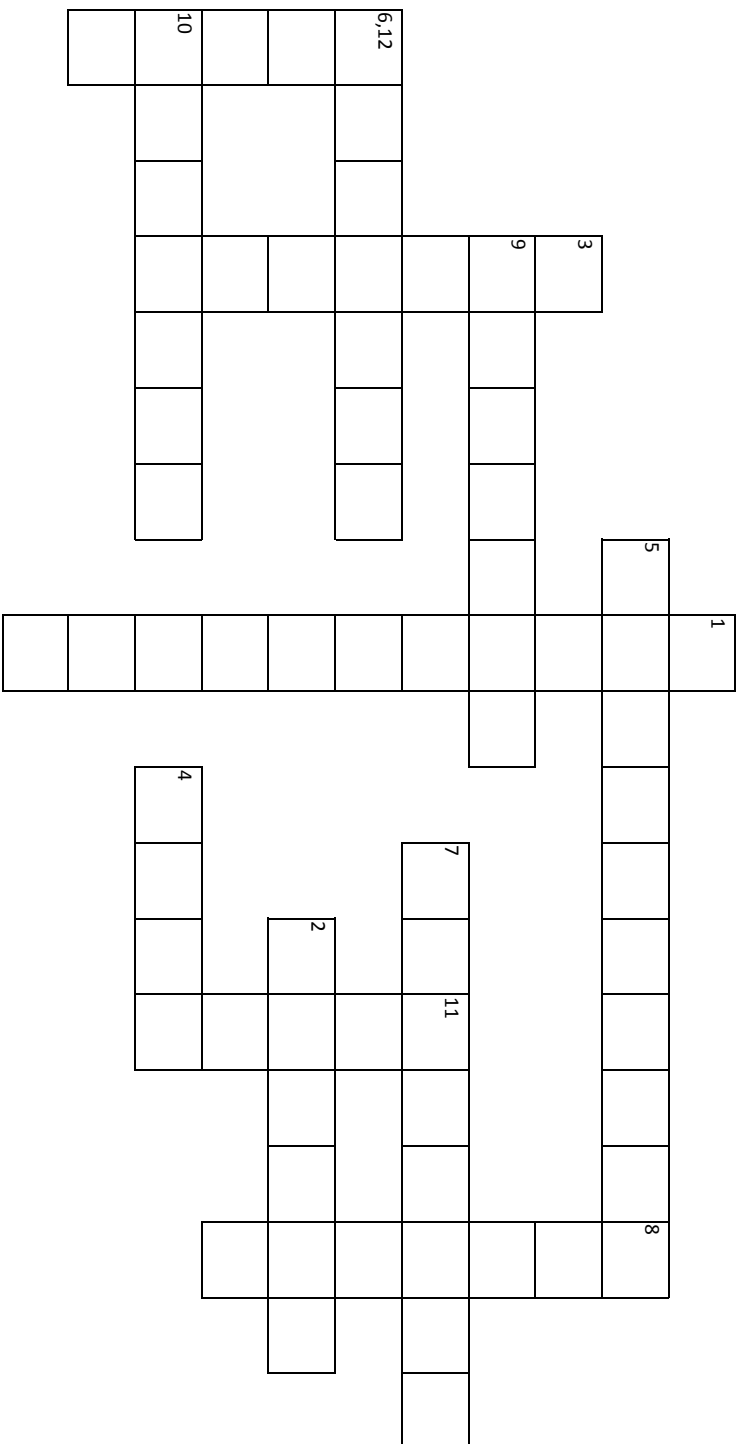
Look at the definitions below and fill in the crossword with the correct words that go with them. If you are stuck on a definition, ask a Ranger for help!

Down:

1. A type of rock formed by layers of *sediments*
3. a “cold blooded” animal that lays eggs and is covered in scales
6. a designated path hikers and mountain bikers use
8. the place or environment where a plant or animal lives
11. a group of desert plants commonly called “century plants”

Across:

2. A “warm blooded” animal that feeds its young with milk and is covered with hair
4. a unit of measure used in the US and England that is equal to 43,560 square feet.
5. a type of ancient rock imagery created by chipping away flakes of the rock surface
7. to draw, carve, or spray-paint on any public surface (**not** the same as ancient rock imagery!)
9. a species that is found in one place in the world, and nowhere else; we have two snails like this in the park
10. a type of rock formed by volcanic activity
12. The way something feels to the touch



Activity 14: Litter Gitter!



As you explore the park, you will likely notice pieces of trash where they shouldn't be. Help us out by doing the following.

For campers—conduct a “sweep” of your campsite and picnic area before leaving the park. This means slowly walking over every part of it (if you are with a group, have everyone line up and each cover a section) and checking for any bits of trash that you or a past visitor may have left.

For hikers—carry a trash bag with you as you hike, and pick up any stray bits of trash you see. Encourage your fellow hikers to do the same!



Fun Fact: At Texas State Parks, anything that is 50 years old or older is considered an historical artifact. Here are some examples of historical trash you should NOT remove from the park.



Have you completed the activities? Bring this journal to one of the FMSP Rangers. Be prepared to answer any questions they may have. Once they have looked over your work, you will recite the Junior Ranger Pledge below and receive your badge and pin.

FMSP Junior Ranger Pledge

As a Junior Ranger, I promise to:

Be respectful of Franklin Mountains State Park visitors and resources.

Be curious and explore the world around me.

Protect all public lands and make them better for future visitors.

Continue to learn about new places I visit and share what I learn with others.

Junior Ranger Signature

Date

Park Staff Signature





**4200 Smith School Road
Austin, Texas 78744
www.tpwd.texas.gov**

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