TEXAS STATE PARKS

Junior Ranger

LIFE'S BETTER OUTSIDE

Activity Journal

TEXAS PARKS & WILDLIFE

Life's better outside.®

This Journal belongs to:

_____

Junior Rangers:

Learn how to protect the park's plants and animals.
Teach their families and friends about the park.
Follow park rules, protect the park and stay safe.

TEXAS PARKS & WILDLIFE

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Welcome, Parents and Adult Leaders!

We are delighted that you and your family or group are participating in our Junior Ranger program. The goal of this program is to encourage thoughtful fun, exploration, discovery, wonder and appreciation of Texas State Parks' natural and cultural resources. Working through the journal is a great way to spend time with your kids out in nature. It will also help them appreciate the importance and value of YOUR Texas State Parks.

You don't need to be an expert to help your child become a junior ranger. Your enthusiasm and encouragement are what matter most of all. If you need help with any of the activities, feel free to ask a park staff member.

Kids can keep this journal as a souvenir of their visit to a Texas state park. Present a completed journal to the office to receive a Junior Ranger Badge. Be sure to sign up for Junior Ranger e-mails and program updates at **www.TexasStateParks.org/juniorranger** (please note that some Texas State Parks may have their own site-specific Junior Ranger Program).

Have fun and we will see you in the parks!

Sincerely,
The Staff at Texas State Parks

How to become a Junior Ranger

This journal will help you become a Junior Ranger by exploring Texas State Parks. Every state park is different. Each has its own plants, animals, history and environment (such as desert or forest). Each has its own fun things to do, like hike, swim or climb.

Check off activities to earn your Junior Ranger badge. Visit more parks to earn more badges!

★ Level 1	★★ Level 2	★★★ Level 3
Ages 6-7, must complete at least **5** activities	Ages 8-10, must complete at least **7** activities	Ages 11-12, must complete at least **9** activities

Junior Ranger Checklist

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Staying Safe

Junior Rangers know how to be safe in wild places.

Park rules keep you safe. Park rules also protect the park and its wildlife. Listen carefully while a grown-up reads these rules to you. Talk about why the rules are important. Once you've finished, your grown-up can then put his/her initials on your checklist.

1. **Be prepared.** Wear the right clothes and shoes for your outdoor activity. Dress in layers. Then you can remove or add clothes to stay comfortable. Know your strengths and weaknesses. Before hiking a trail, find out how long and how difficult it is.
2. **Carry water at all times.** Drink a half to a full quart of water or sports drink every hour when it's hot. Carry your water bottle in your hand. Take small sips often. You can get heat stroke if you get too hot or don't drink enough water.
3. **Hike with a buddy.** Always let someone know where you are going.
4. **Don't collect.** Plants and animals need each other to survive. You never know what might be important. So, it is against the law to collect plants, animals or their parts in a state park. Don't pocket the past, leave rocks and artifacts where you found them.
5. **Keep wildlife wild.** Feeding wildlife can hurt them, and is against the law.
6. **Dead wood has life, too.** All kinds of critters and plants live on dead wood. Because of this, firewood gathering is not allowed in Texas State Parks.
7. **Save natural sounds.** Quiet time in the park runs from 10 p.m. to 6 a.m. Please be considerate of your fellow campers. Being quiet also helps you to listen for the sounds of night creatures, like owls hooting.
8. **Take your trash:** Take care of your park. Put trash in cans or dumpsters; recycle if you can.
9. **Stay on designated trails.** What grows by the inch but dies by the foot? Plants! Help protect wildlife and plants by staying on trails.
10. **Watch for harmful wildlife and plants.** Stay in mowed areas where you can see dangerous things like snakes and poison ivy. Never eat plants you find in the wild. They might be poisonous.

For additional rules and regulations: **www.tpwd.texas.gov/state-parks/parks/park-rules**

Leave No Trace!

Junior Rangers "Leave No Trace" of their stays at Texas State Parks. They help their friends and families do the same. Read these seven principles, then do the activities below.

1. **Know before you go.** Be prepared. Pack clothes to protect you from cold, heat or rain. Always carry a park map. Learn about the park from books, websites or other people.
2. **Choose the right path.** Stay on trails to protect the park and yourself. Set up camp in marked places. Campsites should be at least 200 feet away from lakes and streams.
3. **Trash your trash.** Pack it in and pack it out. Keep this park natural by picking up litter and putting it in its place.
4. **Leave what you find.** Take only pictures and memories. Leave plants, rocks and historical items as you find them. Dead wood has life, too. Please don't collect firewood.
5. **Be careful with fire.** If you're allowed to build a fire, only use existing fire rings. Keep your fire small. Make sure it is out and cold before you leave.
6. **Respect wildlife.** Keep wildlife wild by not feeding them. Leash your pets. This will protect them and the park's animals.
7. **Be kind to other visitors.** Remember you share the park with other people. Listen to nature. Try not to yell or make loud noises. You will see more wildlife if you are quiet!

Junior Ranger Challenge

★ Level 1

Look at the pictures on the next page. **Circle three good examples** of Leave No Trace. Draw an **X** over **three bad examples**.

★★ Level 2

Complete Level 1. Then write down **three** ways you have practiced Leave No Trace at this state park.

1.
2.
3.

★★★ Level 3

Complete Levels 1 and 2. Then list **three** ways you will "Leave No Trace" at school or home.

1.
2.
3.

Texas State Parks is a proud partner with Leave No Trace:
http://lnt.org/teach/peak/peakonline

Be Wise with Water!

Junior Rangers conserve water wherever they go.

Texas is a large state with both wet and dry areas. About half of our water comes from aquifers. The other half comes from reservoirs and rivers.

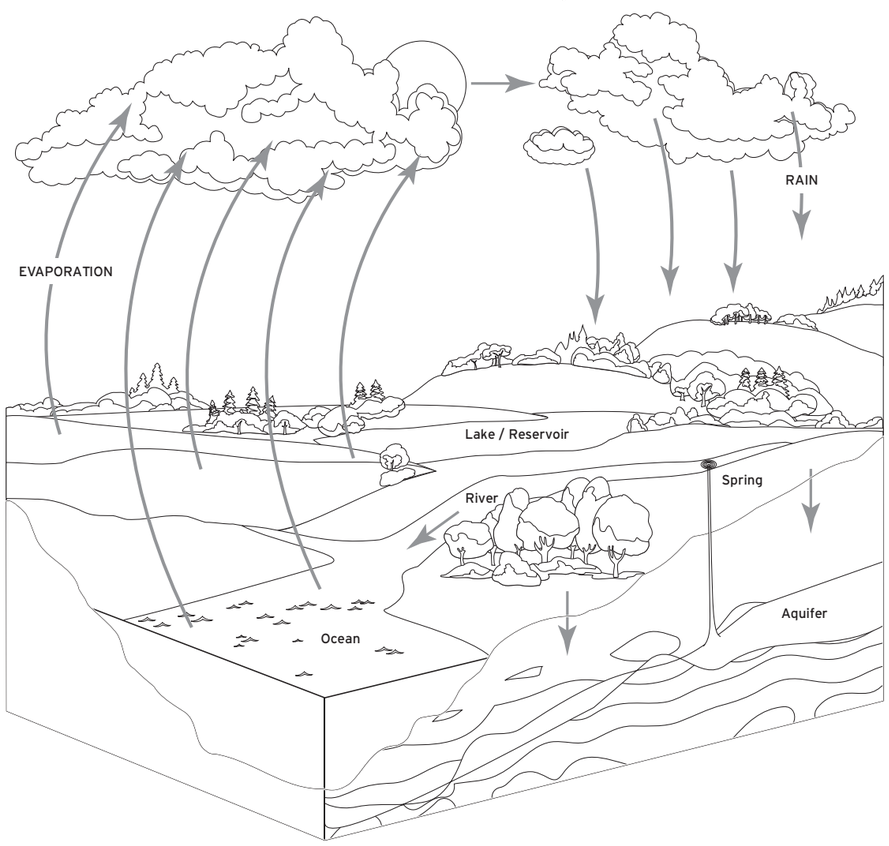
An aquifer is an underground "lake" filled with gravel, sand and water.

A reservoir is a lake made by building a dam on a river.

Did you know that every drop of water we will ever have is already here? And that all living creatures need water to survive? That means we must share the water. That also means we must not waste water.

All of our state parks have some kind of water source. Some have much more water than others. Saving water is important, no matter where you live or which park you visit.

The Water Cycle



Sign up for our Texas State Parks Junior Ranger newsletter at **www.TexasStateParks.org/juniorranger**

Junior Ranger Challenge

★ Level 1

1. List **three** ways you used water today.
2. Where did that water come from?
3. Draw a picture of water that you saw in this park. Draw or list the animals you saw in or near the water.

★★ Level 2

1. List **four** ways you used water today.
2. Write a short paragraph about ways you could have used less water today.
3. Choose an animal in this park and draw a picture to show where it gets its water.

★★★ Level 3

1. Look at the water cycle illustration. Circle areas where you can do a better job of conserving water.
2. Imagine if this park's creeks, ponds, lakes or springs run dry. How would that affect the animals and plants that live here? How would they survive?
3. Imagine having only five big milk jugs of water a day for drinking, bathing, and everything else! Write a short story about your life if you could only use five gallons of water a day. Would you use water the same way you do now? Why or why not?

To learn more about saving water:
www.texasthestateofwater.org

Observing Wildlife

Junior Rangers enjoy watching and learning about wild animals.

Texas is home to many species of animals. Lots of them are hard to find (like snakes) while others are easy to see (like squirrels). Texas State Parks are great places to spot wildlife. To see wild animals, you must sit quietly and patiently or move slowly.

Many animals leave behind clues. Animal tracks and scat (poop!) are some of the easiest clues to spot. How can you find clues? Think about where an animal might live and where it might travel daily. Look closely: you might find a burrow, a nest, or even a trail to the nearest water source. Don't forget to look above and below you!

Junior Ranger Challenge

★ **Level 1**

Take a walk along a trail. Look for animals or clues. Draw **one** thing you find. Do you know what that thing is? If not, can you guess?

★★ **Level 2**

Pick a spot in the park, and sit quietly. Look, listen, smell and touch. Once you're done, list **three** wild animals or clues you see or hear. Do you know what they are, or can you guess?

★★★ **Level 3**

Take a walk or sit quietly. Use your senses to look for **five** animals or clues. Then answer these questions about each one: What do you think it was? Why do you think it was here? What would you do if it returned?

Need help with wildlife identification?
Want to share your discoveries with others?
www.projectnoah.org

Arts in the Parks: Park Poetry

Junior Rangers use art to describe what they see in nature. Find lots of things to draw and write about in a state park!

Junior Ranger Challenge

★ **Level 1**

Read each riddle poem. Draw a line to the picture it describes.

★★ **Level 2**

Complete Level 1. Then write your own riddle poem. Describe something you saw in this park, then see if your family or friends can guess what it is!

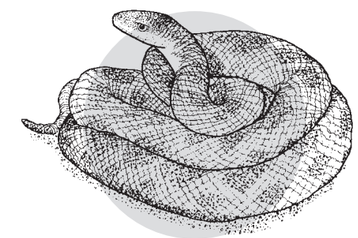
★★★ **Level 3**

Complete Levels 1 and 2. Then write a poem about your time in the park. Your poem can be a haiku, or a rhyming or non-rhyming poem. You get to choose!

I have plenty of backbone, but lack a good leg
I peel layers like onions, but still remain whole
I hiss when I have something to say
I can be long, like a flagpole, yet fit in a hole

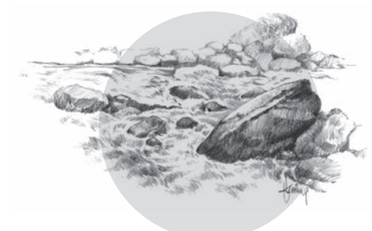
My tongue grabs insects on its sticky surface
I can be green or brown to blend in with the ground
I like wet places, especially ponds
Sometimes you'll see me on land, hopping around

I am born high up in the mountain range
I run for miles without getting faint
Animals, fish and plants live inside me
You can help me by conserving water with
a little more restraint



I'm up all night, swimming or climbing trees
I have a tail of black and white bands
My facial markings look like a mask
My front paws look a lot like your hands

I have big ears, but I am very small
My fur is soft like a baby's blanket
My tail feels like a fluffy cotton ball
I live in the forest on the floor



I have two legs and two wings
I tip my head underwater to grab a snack
I swim in the pond and waddle on land
You can hear me from far away,
I talk with a quack

I am part of a tree
I protect it like a coat
Carving your initials is not good for me
My name is also a sound certain animals make

I howl quite loudly, usually at night
I'm related to a pet you might find in your house
My fur can be brown, gray, yellow or white
Who am I?

Riddle poems courtesy of Tyler Finley and Get to Know Society ©

For more information about Arts in the Parks and to enter our art competition:
www.tpwd.texas.gov/state-parks/programs/arts-in-parks

When it's Dark in the Park!

Junior Rangers like to explore after dark. They know that not everything goes to sleep when the sun goes down. In fact, lots of animals become more active at night!

Many animals are nocturnal. Nocturnal animals sleep during the day and come out at night. It's cooler then. It's also easier to hide from other animals that might eat them. Grab your parents and a flashlight and explore the night life in a Texas State Park!

Junior Ranger Challenge

Level 1

Write the name of **one** animal you see or hear at night.

Level 2

List **two** nocturnal animals that you see or hear. Also list what they might eat.

1.

2.

Level 3

Write down **three** nocturnal animals that you see or hear. List what they might eat. What body parts or traits help them at night?

1.

2.

3.

Animals aren't the only things that come out at night. Look up into the sky tonight. How many stars can you see?

A constellation is a group of stars that form a shape in the sky. Try to spot any constellations that you know. Or make up a new one and give it a name! Draw your constellations in the box below.

Junior Ranger Challenge

Level 1

Draw **one** constellation and write its name (real or made-up!).

Level 2

Draw **two** constellations. Write their names and a sentence about each.

Level 3

Draw **three** constellations. Write their names and a sentence about each.

For more information and to find what's in the sky tonight, visit:
www.texasastro.org/star_charts.php
http://stardate.org/nightsky

Life's Better Outside.

Junior Rangers believe that life is better outside! Getting outside is fun. It also makes you (and your parents) healthier, happier and smarter!

Junior Ranger Challenge

★ Level 1

Draw a line from each word to its picture. Write down **two** things that you did at the park (like ride your bike or have a picnic). Which was your favorite and why?

★★ Level 2

Draw a line from each word to its picture. Write down **four** things that you did at the park (like take a hike or look at stars). Which was your favorite and why?

★★★ Level 3

Draw a line from each word to its picture. Write down **five** things that you did at the park (like go swimming or draw a picture). Which was your favorite and why?

Stargazing

Backpacking

Canoeing/Paddling

Nature Viewing/ Photography

Ranger Tours

Outdoor Cooking/ Picnicking

Hiking

Fishing

Geocaching

Nature Arts & Crafts

Biking

Camping

Rock Climbing

Nature Journaling

Nature's Recyclers

Junior Rangers know that there are no trash cans in nature. When we throw something in the trash, the waste collector takes it to the dump. Plants and animals don't have waste collectors. Instead, they have recyclers.

Recyclers are plants and animals that reuse stuff in nature. What do they reuse? Plants and wood. But they also use stuff we think is gross like poop and dead bodies! Recyclers make sure nothing gets wasted in nature.

Junior Ranger Challenge

★ Level 1

List **three** natural recyclers in this park.

1.

2.

3.

★★ Level 2

People can recycle, too. List **three** things you can recycle at the park or at home. Recycling means less trash goes to the dump!

1.

2.

3.

★★★ Level 3

What if nature's recyclers disappeared? List **three** problems we would have without their help.

1.

2.

3.

Sign up for our Texas State Parks Junior Ranger newsletter at **www.TexasStateParks.org/juniorranger**

Here are some of nature's recyclers. Draw a picture of one.

- **Earthworm living in the dirt**
- **Life on a rotting log (like bugs and moss)**
- **A plant-eating animal (like termites or rabbits)**
- **Vulture eating a dead animal's body**

For more information about recycling in Texas:
www.recyclingstar.org
www.earth911.org

Explore the Past

Junior Rangers like to hear stories about the past. Those stories help you understand the present. They also help you imagine the future.

Texas is known as the Lone Star State. Texans are proud, independent and hardworking. We raise lots of cows, grow lots of cotton, pump lots of oil, and love football.

We also have lots of natural resources. Natural resources are things like water, trees, animals, rocks, oil and land. Millions of people have come to Texas to use our resources. History tells the story of these people.

Each state park has history, too. See the park's website to find out more. Some parks have interpretive centers to tell their stories. Interpret means to explain. An interpretive center is a place in our state parks where things are explained.

Junior Ranger Challenge

★ Level 1

1. Texas is known as the Lone Star State. Can you guess why? (Hint: Picture the Texas flag.)
2. Name **three** special things that happened in this area in the past.

★★ Level 2

1. Why do you think this place was made a park?
2. Trails, hills, ponds and other things in parks usually have meaningful names. List **three** named things in the park. Can you guess how they got their names?

★★★ Level 3

1. Draw a picture of this park as it might have looked 600 years ago. Include people, animals and plants.
2. Help us protect this park's past. Visitors should never tear up old buildings or take artifacts (things made by people in the past). If they do, then that part of the past is gone. Write a paragraph about how to enjoy the old things and places in the park. Talk about protecting them from harm.

Sign up for our Texas State Parks Junior Ranger newsletter at **www.TexasStateParks.org/juniorranger**

For more information about history in Texas:
www.texasbeyondhistory.net
www.tshaonline.org/handbook

What does a Park Ranger do?

A park ranger has a busy and exciting job. Every day is different! Part of his job is to keep you safe and happy while you enjoy YOUR park. Rangers also protect the plants, animals and history of your park.

"The best part of being a park ranger is being outside and seeing visitors have fun. Every day is different and one day I can be teaching kids to fish, the next helping check in visitors and keeping our park clean and safe and the next helping out on a prescribed fire. I love seeing children enjoy the outdoors!"

Find a park ranger outside or at headquarters and ask these questions:

1. What do you like best about being a park ranger?
2. What is the hardest part of being a park ranger?
3. What is the strangest or funniest thing you have seen at this park?
4. What is your favorite place at this park?
5. When did you decide to become a park ranger?
6. *Ask a few questions of your own!*
7. How can I help this Texas State Park? (Write down the answer below.)

For more information about careers and jobs with TPWD:
www.tpwd.texas.gov/business/jobs/career_opportunities.phtml

Take care of your Park!

Did you know that Texas State Parks belong to you? YOU can help protect them by becoming a park steward. A steward is a person who takes care of something.

Whether you come to camp, hike a trail, watch wildlife or just have fun outdoors, you can help take care of the park. You can help keep it nice for others to enjoy. You can be a park steward!

Name three ways you can take care of your park when you visit:

1.

2.

3.

Junior Ranger Pledge

I promise to teach others about what I learned. I promise to help protect this place so others can enjoy it, too. I promise to follow park rules when I visit a park. I promise to be safe when I'm outdoors.

Junior Ranger Signature **Date**

Park Staff Signature

State Park Resources for Kids

Many state parks offer the programs listed below, but be sure to ask before you go or check the park's website.

Ranger-led Programs
We lead programs on birding, plants, animal tracks, stargazing, photography and much more.
Check our events calendar or park headquarters to see what programs are available.
www.tpwd.texas.gov/calendar/all-events

Free Fishing and Go Fish!
Did you know you can fish at any state park for free? No fishing license is needed! Go Fish! programs help families learn the basics of fishing through fun, hands-on activities.
For more information, visit our family fishing page: **www.texasstateparks.org/freefishing**

Texas Geocache Challenge
Geocaching ("gee-o-cash-ing") is the hunt for any of more than 2 million items cached (hidden) all over the world. In the Texas Geocache Challenge, you search for caches that reveal facts and stories about Texas State Parks.
www.texasstateparks.org/geocache

Texas Outdoor Family
At our camping workshops, learn to set up and break down camp and a tent, start fires, cook outdoors, use a GPS and geocache. Rangers introduce you to fishing, kayaking and hiking. We provide the equipment and the experts. Find out more at **www.texasstateparks.org/tof**

Stars Over Our Parks
Texas is known for big, dark skies, making it the perfect place for stargazing. Visit our Stargazing page to find great places and resources for stargazing.
www.tpwd.texas.gov/state-parks/parks/things-to-do/stargazing-in-state-parks

Buffalo Soldiers Program
Our program teaches outdoor skills while making connections between history and culture. Texas Buffalo Soldiers deliver programs at schools, parks and community events.
To learn more, visit **www.texasstateparks.org/buffalosoldiers**

Archeological, Cultural or Historical Tours
Step through the doors of historic homes and inns, or explore frontier forts. Walk along the paths where the Buffalo Soldiers served or visit the birthplace of Texas. Our tours bring history to life!
Find a tour near you: **www.tpwd.texas.gov/calendar/all-events**

Junior Ranger Explorer Packs
Parents can check out a Junior Ranger Explorer Pack for their kids at many state parks. Each Explorer Pack comes with tools for exploring the great outdoors.
To find participating parks, visit **www.texasstateparks.org/juniorranger**

Arts in the Parks
Whether you draw, paint, write, take photos, shoot videos or create music, visiting a park can stir up your creative juices.
Visit our Arts in the Parks page for resources and ideas: **www.texasstateparks.org/artsinparks**

Outdoor Learning Resources and Activities for Kids
The Outdoor Kids page **(www.tpwd.texas.gov/kids)** has activities and ideas for kids including fun educational nature apps. For a list of outdoor learning resources, **visit www.tpwd.texas.gov/learning**