Junior Naturalist
— Activity Book —

FREE activity book for exploring nature!
Welcome!

This Junior Naturalist Activity Book is a great way to explore and learn about nature all around you.

Junior Naturalist’s Name:

We Are the Web

Everything in nature is connected. All living things rely on each other for survival.

1. Draw yourself inside the circle.
2. Draw arrows to show who eats whom and who uses what for shelter.
3. How many different connections can you make between the different plants, animals, and habitats?

Meets Mari the Monarch

Mari is a monarch butterfly caterpillar. Mari is short for mariposa, the Spanish word for butterfly. Caterpillars and butterflies like Mari are an important part of nature. And nature needs care from people like you! Follow Mari throughout this book to learn about nature and how you can help nature in your community.

Have fun!
Find a tree in your neighborhood that is taller than you. Look at the tree up close and from far away. How many birds, mammals and insects can you spot using the tree for food or shelter?

Big Woods

Many forests around central Minnesota are made up of deciduous trees. Deciduous trees lose their leaves each fall and grow new leaves in the spring. A lot of mammals, insects and birds live in these forests. Some creatures spend most of their time up in the tree canopies and others down in the understory or on the forest floor.

How many animals can you find hidden in this forest through the seasons?

- A shed deer antler
- American toad
- Barred owl
- Black-capped chickadee
- Blue spotted salamander
- Coyote
- Dark-eyed junco
- Cecropia moth
- Downy woodpecker
- Flying squirrel
- Garter snake
- Great-horned owl
- Grey fox
- Moth cocoon
- Pileated woodpecker
- Raccoon
- Shelf mushroom
- White-breasted nuthatch
- White-footed mouse
- White-tailed deer
- Wild turkey
- Wolf spider
In late summer, search your neighborhood for monarch butterflies (like me) sipping nectar from flowers. We are fueling up for our long migration to Mexico! Milkweed plants are important for monarch eggs and caterpillars because it is the only thing we eat. Adult butterflies feed on a wide variety of flowers. You can attract more monarchs by planting native flowers near your home!

Prairies and Pollinators

Prairies are open areas of flat or rolling grasslands. The lack of trees makes space for an amazing variety of tallgrasses, flowers, and animals—especially insects. A single prairie community can hold thousands of different types of insects! Insects and plants depend on each other for survival. Plants provide habitat and food for insects. Many plants rely on insects to pollinate them. As insects move from flower to flower, they spread pollen. This allows plants to create seeds and reproduce.

Tallgrass prairies provide habitat for the rusty-patched bumble bee, the first bumble bee protected by the Endangered Species Act.

How many bumble bees can you find as you color the prairie?
Wetlands, Rivers and Watersheds

Water is important to all life on Earth. Did you know that the water on Earth is all that we have? No new water can be created! Water changes shape and function as it travels through the ecosystem. Water can be found above ground and under the ground. It can be a liquid, solid (ice) or vapor (cloud).

Begin at any of the stops in the water cycle and see where they connect.

In your neighborhood, try to figure out where rainwater goes. Does it flow down a drain in the street, through pipes, to a river? Is it collected in a pond or garden? Tell a friend or family member what you think.
Wildlife and Habitat

Habitat is a place where animals can find food, water, shelter, and space. Wildlife needs healthy habitats to survive.

Look around your neighborhood and in parks for different types of habitats. In Minnesota, there are several types of habitats such as forests, fields, prairies, wetland, lakes, and rivers.

Draw some of the plants and animals that you think may live in these habitats.

What do you think could change the habitats in the parks you have visited? What do you think could happen to animals and plants if their habitat changes?
Nature Detectives

You are a Nature Detective. What do you think happened here in the snow? Study this picture and look for clues. Look at the animal signs. What animals were involved in this story? Write or draw a story about the animal signs you see.

What happened? Write or draw your story:

Tracks:  A. Coyote  B. Rabbit  C. Deer  D. Mouse  E. Owl

Nature has a story to tell! Animals leave clues such as tracks, eat marks, fur or feathers, and scat (poop)! As you explore, look for stories in the animal signs you see.
Recreation Nature Play

In Minnesota, each season brings new things to explore and play with! Can you find a fun activity to do in every season?

You don’t need a playground or a building to have fun and play.

Check off all the nature play activities you have done:

- [ ] Build a fort
- [ ] Make up a game
- [ ] Climb a tree
- [ ] Go snowshoeing
- [ ] Try canoeing
- [ ] Make music in the woods
- [ ] Balance on a log
- [ ] Find a leaf
- [ ] Build a snow fort
- [ ] Go fishing
- [ ] Make animal tracks in the mud
- [ ] Find a geocache

Make up your own:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Geocache</th>
<th>Snowshoe Tracks</th>
<th>Squirrel</th>
<th>Fishing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Flower</td>
<td>Tracks</td>
<td>Stick</td>
<td>Climb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fort</td>
<td>Snow</td>
<td>Cloud</td>
<td>Rock</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Game</td>
<td>Canoe</td>
<td>Bird</td>
<td>Tree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leaf</td>
<td>Puddle</td>
<td>Dirt</td>
<td>Mud</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Find and circle the words in the grid. Look for words in all directions: top-down, left-right, and diagonally.

Z F T R A C K S Y S N J F O Y P Z P C
K S I E V O Q G E O C A C H E R A R U L
S D Q S L W I J R O C K M H T F N O D O
N I K U H E U F O R T P Q N D U T J D U
O R U S I I A R S Q Z R G S T I C K L D
W T C V N R N F L C L I M B E L N H E M
S O P A D O R G O F L O W E R T R E E U
H A K O N F W E G H F S L K F F T U E D
O D K L I O H J L X X D Q N Y X O N J Y
E G A M E T E Q A E N F U L H B I R D W
Nature is everywhere—all you need to do is explore! Your neighborhood is the perfect place to discover interesting things in nature.

Use this Bingo Game to help you get started and cross off items as you find them. Remember: You won’t find everything the first time you try—keep searching!

Be a scientist or naturalist and write down or draw what you see:

Show a friend or family member what you discovered in your neighborhood and then try to find something together.
Careers
If you love being outside, you might want to work in the parks someday. There are many important jobs in the parks, including park rangers who keep us safe, maintenance workers who build and preserve trails and buildings, naturalists who teach about nature, and scientists who study plants and animals.

Use the tools below to draw yourself at work in the parks!

CONGRATULATIONS!
You are now a Junior Naturalist!
Thank you for taking the time to learn about the world around you. Now that you’ve explored nature in your neighborhood and in parks near you, there’s one more important thing you can do as a Junior Naturalist.

How will you help protect nature?

As long as people like you enjoy natural places, we must all work together to protect them. Then they will be here for you and your family and friends to come back and enjoy again and again.

Junior Ranger Park Representative

Thank you for learning and exploring with me! I’m happy that you will take care of habitats like mine so I can keep visiting you in your neighborhood. If you want to learn more about monarch butterflies visit MonarchWatch.org.
Come Visit Our Parks!

With over 27,000 acres of parks & trails to explore, Three Rivers Park District has something for everyone. Visit each park to get a sticker!

Learn more at ThreeRiversParks.org