

# ALABAMA STATE PARKS

# JUNIOR RANGER

## Adventure Guide



ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION AND NATURAL RESOURCES

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# WELCOME, JUNIOR RANGER!

You're on your way to becoming a Junior Ranger! That means exploring, discovering, and helping protect Alabama's amazing outdoors. Every time you visit a state park, you'll learn something new. Stay. Play. Explore.

## What is a Junior Ranger?

A Junior Ranger cares about nature, enjoys outdoor adventures, and helps keep parks healthy and safe. In Alabama, we also call them Junior Park Naturalists.

## What are Alabama's State Parks?

Alabama has 21 state parks covering almost 48,000 acres, from Gulf Coast beaches to Appalachian peaks. You can hike, swim, bike, paddle, camp, fish, and explore!

## Who protects the Parks?

### PARK NATURALIST:

Teach about animals, plants, and nature.

### PARK RANGERS:

Keep parks safe and protect wildlife.

Together, they Serve, Protect, and Share—and you can too!



**Activity 1:** Draw yourself as a Junior Ranger or Junior Park Naturalist! What gear would you wear? What tools or animals might you see? Show us how you would explore and protect the park!





# FIND & DISCOVER AN ALABAMA STATE PARK



With so many cool places to explore, where will your adventure take you this time? Alabama is full of amazing parks, from beaches to mountains, rivers to forests. The easiest way to find a park near you is to visit [alapark.com](http://alapark.com)

## FUN FACTS!

- Alabama's State Parks cover beaches, mountains, caverns, forests, lakes, and rivers: there's adventure for everyone, no matter where you go!
- Alabama is one of the most biodiverse states in the whole country!
- Because we have mountains, rivers, forests, caves, and beaches, thousands of plants and animals live here—from tiny salamanders to giant oak trees. Each region has its own special wildlife waiting for you to discover!

**Activity 1:** Use the map to learn more about Alabama's land and regions. Then, see if you can match the correct answer to the questions!

1. What state can be found on Alabama's western border?
2. What state can be found on Alabama's northern border?
3. Which city is our state capital?
4. What state is below Alabama?
5. What is Alabama's highest point?
6. What state can be found on Alabama's eastern border?

TENNESSEE

FLORIDA

MONTGOMERY

MISSISSIPPI

GEORGIA

MOUNT CHEAHA



# PARK MEMORIES

Every visit to a state park is full of fun, surprises, and special moments. This is your space to remember your adventure and keep it forever in your Junior Ranger Guide!

**Activity 1:** Capture your park memory! Sketch something you saw or did at the park: maybe a waterfall, a wild animal, a flower, or a cool trail. If you took pictures, paste one here of your favorite moment.

Write a sentence or two about your memory. Who were you with? What made it special?

Use lots of colors and don't worry about getting it perfect. Your Park Memories are all about your adventure and the fun you had exploring Alabama's outdoors!



MY PARK MEMORY:



# RESPECTING WILDLIFE

When you are in nature, remember you are in the home of all the plants and animals. Let's be respectful of the places they live! What does that mean? Here are some examples:

1. OBSERVE FROM A DISTANCE
2. STAY ON DESIGNATED TRAILS
3. PICK UP YOUR TRASH & LITTER
4. LEAVE WHAT YOU FIND
5. NEVER FEED WILD ANIMALS

**Activity 1:** Look at the picture below circle all of the people who are NOT following the rules with wildlife.



**Activity 2:** Go outside for 15 minutes and list all the things you see, hear, and smell! (Remember to observe from a distance!)



# RECREATION & PLAY

Every visit to a **State Park** is a new adventure! You can hike in the woods, splash in a lake, or ride your bike on a twisty trail.

Want to learn about nature? Join a **State Park Naturalist** and look for birds, bugs, and animal tracks. Or, you can go swimming, paddle a kayak, or have a picnic by the water. You can even camp under the stars and hear the sounds of the forest at night.

There are so many ways to play and enjoy being outside with your family and friends. There's always something fun to do at an **Alabama State Park**!

**Activity 1:** Complete the maze. Start in the middle. Follow the path that takes you on your favorite adventure.



**Activity 2:** Circle 3 adventures you would like to try in one of Alabama's State Parks. Then draw a picture (or take a picture and paste it here) of you and your family on your adventure. Don't forget to add the State Park name so you will always remember where you were.

GUIDED PROGRAM   PICNIC  
HIKING   BIRDING   FISHING  
KAYAKING   SWIMMING  
CAMPING   BICYCLING  
HORSEBACK RIDING  
STARGAZING



ADVENTURE 1: \_\_\_\_\_

ADVENTURE 2: \_\_\_\_\_

ADVENTURE 3: \_\_\_\_\_



# LEAVE NO TRACE

Alabama's State Parks are full of amazing forests, rivers, trails, and wildlife. As Junior Rangers, it's our job to help take care of these special places so everyone can enjoy them now and in the future. One of the best ways we can do that is by following the Leave No Trace principles.

**Leave No Trace** means doing our part to **preserve nature** by being careful with how we hike, camp, and play outdoors. That means picking up trash, staying on trails, respecting animals, and leaving things like rocks and flowers where we find them. When we follow these rules, we help keep our State Parks clean, safe, and beautiful for everyone — including the plants and animals that live there!

## LEAVE NO TRACE PRINCIPLES:



PLAN AHEAD & PREPARE



TRAVEL & CAMP ON  
DURABLE SURFACES



DISPOSE OF WASTE  
PROPERLY



LEAVE WHAT YOU FIND



MINIMIZE CAMPFIRE  
IMPACTS



RESPECT WILDLIFE



BE CONSIDERATE  
OF OTHERS



**Activity 1:** Today, you'll become nature protectors by completing special Leave No Trace missions that teach you how to take care of the outdoors, one small action at a time! Be sure to check mark each activity once you complete it.

- ☐ **LITTER BUSTER:** Pick up 3 pieces of trash you find on the trail or near your picnic area.
- ☐ **TRAIL GUARDIAN:** Remind a friend (or yourself) to stay on the path — no shortcuts!
- ☐ **WILDLIFE WATCHER:** Spot an animal and observe it quietly from far away. What did it do?
- ☐ **QUIET CAMPER:** Practice using your "nature voice" in the forest. Try not to scare the birds!
- ☐ **ROCK PROTECTOR:** Find a cool rock or stick — then leave it where it belongs. Nature needs it!
- ☐ **MEMORY MAKER:** Take a mental picture (or draw later) of something you liked instead of picking it up.
- ☐ **PACK IT OUT PRO:** Make sure no food or trash is left behind after your snack or lunch.

# HOW TO STAY SAFE IN A STATE PARK

Remember to always stay with your family and friends when you are exploring a State Park. If you do get lost, here are some steps you can take to be found:

## 1. STOP and stay where you are.

Staying in one place makes it easier for your family to find you.

## 2. HUG a tree!

Find a tree nearby and wrap your arms around it. You can even talk to the tree—they make great listeners!

## 3. Make yourself BIG!

You can wave your arms, yell, or blow a whistle to help people find you.

**AN IMPORTANT REMINDER!** No one is mad at you, and you have lots of people looking for you! Staying in one spot is the best thing to do to ensure you will be found quickly and easily.



**Activity 1:** Look at the two examples and circle which one best follows our staying safe rules!



A

or



B



C

or



D



E

or



F



# NATURE SCAVENGER HUNT

Our State Parks are full of all kinds of diverse life – from our magnificent trees all the way down to the tiniest ant, and everything in between. There are many natural items in the State Park, and it is your job to find them all. Some of these items will require you to pay close attention to nature. If you are up to the challenge, let's see how many you can find!

*(Remember to leave these things in the park for other guests to enjoy.)*

**Activity 1:** Search for these items in the park. Be sure to check mark each item once you find it!

- ☐ PINECONE
- ☐ BUG
- ☐ SPIDERWEB
- ☐ TREE
- ☐ FLOWER
- ☐ ROCKS
- ☐ BIRD
- ☐ LEAVES
- ☐ RUNNING WATER
- ☐ ANT
- ☐ PINE NEEDLES
- ☐ CLOUDS



**Activity 2:** Nature can appear in a wide range of colors. Try to locate items for each color and list what you see!

GREEN	BROWN	RED	BLUE	YELLOW	ORANGE



# FOREST FRIENDS & PLANT ID

Our Alabama forests are full of unique trees and each one has forest friends that live, eat, or play in them!

Some trees have smooth bark, like the American beech. Others, like longleaf pines, have rough bark and long, skinny needles. Trees like oaks grow strong branches and drop tasty acorns that many animals love to eat.

Look closely. Can you spot a tree's leaves, bark, or seeds? Can you see signs of animals nearby?

**Activity 1:** Trees provide shelter and food for many of our forest friends. Can you match the tree to its forest buddy?

- |                       |                          |
|-----------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. LONGLEAF PINE TREE | YELLOW-BELLIED SAPSUCKER |
| 2. OAK TREE           | BIRDS                    |
| 3. SWEETGUM TREE      | SQUIRREL                 |
| 4. DOGWOOD TREE       | RED-COCKADED WOODPECKER  |
| 5. RED MAPLE          | CATERPILLARS             |

1. Longleaf Pine Tree/Redcockaded Woodpecker 2. Oak Tree/Squirrel 3. Sweetgum Tree/Caterpillars 4. Dogwood Tree/Birds 5. Red Maple/Yellow-Bellied Sapsucker



**Activity 2:** People who study plants are called botanists. Can you find these leaves in the forest? Look closely at each leaf shape. Be sure to check mark each leaf once you find it!

☐ RED MAPLE



☐ TULIP POPLAR



☐ PINE TREE



☐ SWEET GUM



☐ SASSAFRAS



☐ RED OAK



☐ WHITE OAK





# NIGHT IN THE PARK

After the sun sets and we curl up in our sleeping bags, other creatures begin their day. Many animals only become active once the sun goes down. These animals are called nocturnal. If you observe from a distance, you may hear an owl "hoot" or see a bat flutter by in search of prey!

So many unique and awesome animals call our State Parks home. Can you find them all?

**Activity 1:** Many forest friends come out at night! Can you spot them hiding in the puzzle? Circle each animal's name when you find it.

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

- OWL
- SNAKE
- SKUNK
- FROG
- BAT
- OPPOSSUM
- FIREFLY
- RACCOON
- MOTH
- COYOTE
- FOX
- SCORPION

**Activity 2:** Many of our animals make unique sounds at night. Can you identify them all? Match the sound to the correct animal!

- |            |                    |
|------------|--------------------|
| 1. OWL     | AWOOOOO            |
| 2. FROG    | CHIRP CHIRP        |
| 3. COYOTE  | CROAK CROAK        |
| 4. CRICKET | HOOT HOOT          |
| 5. BAT     | SQUEE-SQUEEE-SQUEE |

1. Owl/Hoot Hoot 2. Frog/Croak Croak 3. Coyote/Awooooo  
4. Cricket/Chirp Chirp 5. Bat/Squeee-Squeee-Squeee



# POETRY & PARK REFLECTION

Alabama's State Parks are full of beautiful sights, sounds, and stories just waiting for you to discover. Sometimes, the feelings and thoughts you have when exploring nature are best shared through poetry – a fun and creative way to use words to capture what you see, hear, and feel.

Writing poems about your time at a State Park helps you notice details you might otherwise miss and lets you express what makes each place special. Whether it's the rustle of leaves or the song of a bird, your poetry can show your unique experience and help others see the park through your eyes.



**Activity 1:** While in the park, find a place to sit or stand. Think about what you see, hear, smell, and feel all around you. Is a breeze blowing? Are birds singing? Can you hear other junior rangers nearby? Use your observations to write a poem in the space provided below. Use your senses to describe the sights, sounds, smells, and feelings that make this place special. Your poem can be happy, peaceful, exciting, or whatever the park makes you feel!



# TUNE INTO NATURE

Alabama's State Parks are fantastic places to explore nature in new ways! Smell a flower, touch a tree, listen for birds, or look closer at the world beneath your feet.

We can learn a lot more about the wild world around us if we use all our senses. Joining a State Park Naturalist for a program or on a hike is the perfect way to practice tuning in to nature. You can extend your experience in a State Park by camping or staying in a cabin to enjoy nighttime sounds, sights, and smells!

Alabama State Parks has something for everyone, so visit a State Park near you and tune in to nature!

**Activity 1: Look, listen, touch, and smell!** When you notice something from the chart, cross it off. Can you find them all?

SEE	TOUCH	SMELL	HEAR
	Something Soft		
	Something Rough		
	Something Moist		
	Something Pokey		

(There is no need to activate your taste buds for this activity! Also, please be respectful to the plants and animals in our State Parks by not removing anything from nature)

**Activity 2: Get low. I mean REALLY low!**

Breathe in slow. Breathe out slower. Closely inspect the soil, rock, or sand you are resting on. Notice how it feels against your skin. Once you are comfortable, use your sense of sight to watch the bustling action that is happening below you while out in nature. Bugs of all sorts are going about their business looking for food or heading back to their homes. The study of insects, our bug friends that have 6 legs, is called **entomology**.

Channel your inner entomologist and observe beetles and ants as they move beneath you. Now imagine yourself that small. What would your surroundings look like to you? Would a small pile of soil or sand look like a mountain? Would the blades of grass look like leaves?

Write (or draw) your thoughts on a bug's life below.

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# BE A PARK PROTECTOR

What does a Park Protector do? These important individuals help keep our State Parks beautiful, wild, and safe. Examples include our Park Rangers, who make sure our guests and wildlife are protected; our Park Naturalists, who connect guests to the wild in an impactful way; and even our amazing volunteers, who help clean up our State Parks to help keep them beautiful.

Did you know that you can also be a Park Protector? Park guests who help keep our parks beautiful, wild, and safe are the most important of all. Without caring visitors like you our Alabama State Parks wouldn't be the gems they are!

**Activity 1:** In the comic strip below, draw a Park Protector at work!  
This Park Protector could be a Park Ranger, a Park Naturalist, or even you!

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**Activity 2:** Our Park Protectors, staff members, and volunteers work hard each day to make sure you have a positive experience visiting any of Alabama’s State Parks.

Pick a Park Protector from the list below (or find your own park hero) and write them a short thank you letter for all they do. You can hand deliver your letter, send it through the mail, or even email it. Receiving a letter from you will make their day!

You can write your letter to a Park Ranger, Park Director, Deputy Park Director, Park Manager, Assistant Park Manager, Park Naturalist, Campground Host, Gate Attendant, Maintenance Team, or Custodial Staff. For more suggestions about who to write your letter to, speak with State Park staff at the camp store or front desk in the lodge.



# JUNIOR RANGER PLEDGE

Alabama's State Parks are full of amazing wildlife, beautiful trails, and fun places to explore. Every visitor helps keep the parks safe, clean, and enjoyable for everyone! By taking this pledge, you promise to respect nature, follow park rules, and help others have a great experience too.



**Activity 1:** Sign the pledge below to join the mission of our Junior Ranger team!

I, \_\_\_\_\_, **PLEDGE TO RESPECT WILDLIFE,  
LEAVE NO TRACE, AND HELP OTHERS ENJOY  
OUR STATE PARKS SAFELY.**



CERTIFICATE OF  
**ACHIEVEMENT**

*THIS IS TO CERTIFY THAT*

---

*IS AN OFFICIAL ALABAMA STATE PARKS*

**JUNIOR RANGER**



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**PARK RANGER**

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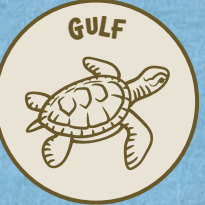
**STATE PARK**

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**DATE**

# PARK PASSPORT

How many parks can you visit? Use this tracker to record your adventures! Every circle represents one of Alabama's 21 State Parks. Each time you visit a park, color in its circle to track your progress. How many circles can you fill? See if you can visit them all!





# PARK POSTCARD

**Activity 1:** Design a postcard "Wish You Were Here!" postcard featuring your favorite Alabama State Park. Draw the landscape, animals, or things you saw. Be sure to include the park's name in bold letters like a real postcard design!

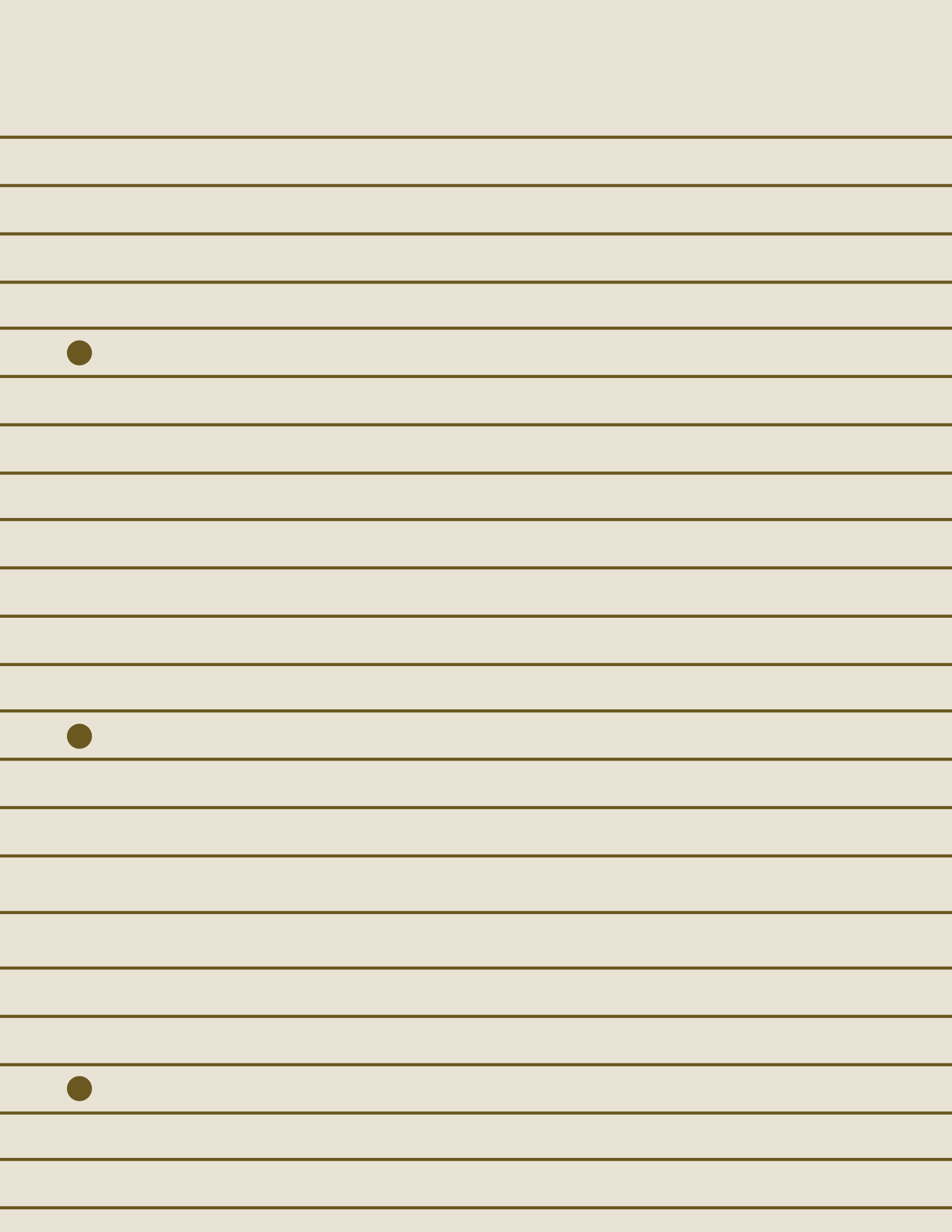


WISH YOU WERE HERE!

# NOTES:







ALABAMA STATE PARKS

# JUNIOR RANGER

## Adventure Guide



WAY TO GO,  
JUNIOR RANGER!

You've earned your badge and proved you're a protector of the outdoors. Now, take your skills on the trail—keep exploring our 21 State Parks, and help care for Alabama's amazing wildlife and landscapes.

Visit [alapark.com](http://alapark.com) to learn more about Alabama's State Parks!



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